

The major game within the game of baseball is salary negotiations at the time an outstanding player becomes eligible for free agency. Then, Abrams says, “tricks, bluffs, and clever play are part of the game” (xiv). Free agency has made the salary negotiating game all that more difficult for owners, who no longer bargain from a position of absolute power. The introduction of agents, a natural evolutionary result of the advent of free agency and arbitration, has formalized and made more adversarial the relationship between owner and player. Worse, from a management perspective, even the best of players might go in the tank once a huge salary has been negotiated—any megasized contract is a calculated gamble that may or may not pay off. The system does not always achieve “fairness,” Abrams concludes, but it is “the result of an efficient exchange between the owner and his players” (44).

Despite his stated intent, Abrams has not provided an easy read, especially when he delves into complex analysis using strategic planning, auction theory, and game theory. His approach is often anecdotal, if not episodic, and the absence of a strong chronological framework is unfortunate. Even the logic of the chapter sequence is not readily apparent, and curious distracting digressions are interjected into chapters. The book particularly suffers from the absence of a controlling central thesis. His narrative, in the end, is not blessed with the interpretive insights of the professional historian, or the statistical analysis of the social scientist. Journalists will wince at his lackluster prose. The lengthy chapter that creates a fictional negotiation between the New York Knights and Roy Hobbs (the central figure in Bernard Malamud’s novel *The Natural*) provides insights into the process, but it is also a major distraction because it is mere speculation. That said, *The Money Pitch* provides the best word to date on this complex issue and should serve as a useful reference work for years to come.

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BRASHLER, WILLIAM. *Josh Gibson: A Life in the Negro Leagues*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000. Pp. xiv + 193. Illustrated. Index. \$14.95 pb.

This reprint is still an important book for anyone interested in the career of this great catcher. Though originally published in 1978, much of what the author has to say has not been recaptured in other works. Brashler states in his introduction that he is not attempting to right a wrong by writing this book because that can never be done. Instead, he is simply trying to tell the reader about Gibson—the man and the ball player. He wants to explain his achievements in a different era while also illuminating who Josh Gibson was. Brashler accomplishes his goal in a variety of ways. He retells many of the great stories of Gibson’s mammoth home runs, but also includes stories from Sam Bankhead, Jimmie Crutchfield, and others who knew Josh well.

Brashler tries to break down some of the myths that surround Gibson’s career. This is not done to lessen the greatness of the catcher, but instead to show how some of these stories came about. Brashler wants to be as accurate and objective as possible, but ac-

knowledges how difficult this is in this case. Much of the history of the Negro Leagues exists only in the minds of the players and fans so it is difficult to corroborate such tales as that of a Gibson home run flying out of Yankee Stadium. Brashler does not ignore these stories. Rather, he discusses the merits and possible truth based on what we do know from reliable sources. This is a difficult task to accomplish without destroying the great career Gibson had, but Brashler does it well.

Brashler relies heavily on the accounts of other players to develop Gibson's personality and character. One thing they all seem to agree on is that Josh was generally fun-loving and happy. He took his baseball seriously, but he also knew how to have fun. He was a quiet leader according to his fellow teammates. He did not speak up in the clubhouse, letting his bat and arm do his talking for him. Brashler is able to document this view of Josh from a variety of sources and places.

The text is well organized and chronological. Brashler follows Josh from his earliest days until his death in early 1947. The primary focus centers on Josh's days with the Homestead Grays and his career in Latin America. South of the border, Josh was a great hero and he was paid nicely for his achievements—but he was still a member of the Grays. While following Josh south, Brashler also includes some of the reasons why players went, who went, and what the owners thought. This helps to round out the story.

Brashler includes no bibliography or notes to help a serious researcher. Throughout the text he does make it clear he used a number of interviews, newspaper articles, and photographs to put together the picture of Josh that he has. He does a nice job of using multiple sources on any given story. It would have been helpful, however, to have included some mention of the specific sources he used, especially in his discussions of the end of Josh's career and life, since so little is really known about what was happening. Many of the accounts are pure speculation.

Brashler's text makes an excellent contribution to the field of sport history, particularly to the study of the Negro Leagues. He gives a balanced account of the life of one of the greatest players in the game, but he does not try to mythologize him. Instead he simply tells us about Josh and lets the reader make his or her own judgements about Gibson's place in the game. There have been other accounts written about Gibson and the Homestead Grays, but this is one of the most balanced and broad. Brashler does not just tell Josh's story, but recounts what life was like for many Negro League players.

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