

is undoubtedly correct when he writes, "People both outside and inside basketball are ignorant of the professional game prior to World War II" (p. 160). *The Originals* admirably rectifies this memory loss and bestows upon the Celtics "some of the long-forgotten recognition that they richly deserve" (p. viii). It does so with the same intelligence and vigor that Nelson himself brings to the basketball court, as anyone who has played with or against him will surely recognize.

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- KAHN, ROGER. *A Season in the Sun*. 1978. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Pp. 199. New afterword, illustrations, index. \$12.95 pb.
- KAHN, ROGER. *Good Enough to Dream*. 1985. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Pp. 365. New afterword, index. \$15.95 pb.
- KEELER, JAMES J. *Our Team! Insights from the Publicly Owned Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1999. Pp. xiii + 160. Notes, illustrations, index. \$24.50 pb.

These three books give us snapshots of baseball, for the most part below the major league level, in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The two Roger Kahn books are re-publications by the University of Nebraska Press. In *A Season in the Sun*, Kahn takes his readers on a tour of baseball in the bicentennial summer of 1976. In 1983, Kahn's love affair with baseball led him to purchase and operate a baseball franchise in the low minors. *Good Enough to Dream* recounts that experience. The story of the creation of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons as told by James Keeler begins in the early 1980s and continues into the nineties.

For those of us who long for the days before free agency, Kahn's look at 1976 reminds us that baseball's good old days were not really so good. Kahn remembers he and his father "talked seriously (and joyously) about baseball. That was a serious thing and that was enough" (p. 7). His father-son talks, however, were before the generation gap, MTV and over-organized youth sports. It was a sign of the times that Kahn could not duplicate those conversations with his own son.

Kahn spent the 1976 season talking with players, coaches, managers, and owners from Siloam Springs, Missouri, to Puerto Rico to Portland. The most successful franchise at the time was the Dodgers. No longer the Bums of his youth, the Dodgers lived far from the playground of the *Boys of Summer* and had replaced the Yankees as the franchise most likened to IBM. Even iconoclastic Bill Veeck, back in Chicago, seemed incapable of recreating the excitement he brought to parks in earlier years. At the minor league level, Kahn saw even less excitement. Visiting Pittsfield, Massachusetts, he found a crowd of 110. Only in Puerto Rico did he find baseball to be "a joyous pastime, played mostly for the wonder of the game" (p. 119).

In *A Season in the Sun*, Stan Musial summed up Kahn's 1976 findings when he said "now is not the time to buy a ball club" (p. 174). Kahn did not follow Musial's admoni-

tion. In 1983 he purchased controlling interest in a broken-down franchise, playing in a broken-down stadium, in the broken-down town of Utica, New York.

Kahn has always been a masterful writer. In *Good Enough to Dream*, Kahn captures his readers and pulls them into his world. If you loved "Hoosiers," "Rudy," "Bad News Bears," or "Long Gone," you will cheer aloud for the misfit Blue Sox in their race for the New York-Pennsylvania League pennant against well-stocked farm teams of the Yankees, Mets, and Orioles. Kahn convinces readers that Roy Moretti should be relieving in the Bigs and Barry Moss will manage there someday soon.

Running a minor league team far from the world of players' unions, agents, and lawyers seemed like an opportunity to go home to boyhood. Kuhn found out the fun was for the fans. Rather than soft summer nights listening to the sounds of the game, he found the minor leagues of 1983 "as stable as a balloon in a tornado" (p. 46). A short-season schedule without a day off, meeting payrolls, salving egos, long rides on old school buses, and keeping creditors at bay made baseball in the low minors "a brutal business" (p. 295).

By the end of the eighties, minor league baseball had gone through a renaissance. Kuhn's Utica club drew 42,000 in 1983. In its first year of operation, 1989, the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre franchise drew 445,000. At the beginning of the decade, a New York-Penn League franchise could be had for \$15,000; before the decade ended an International League franchise went for over \$2 million.

It is not fair to Keeler to read him after two Roger Kahn books. Kahn's are rich in the anecdotes and lore of the game, while Keeler's has the cadence of public policy reports. Keeler's book is better compared with Arthur T. Johnson's *Minor League Baseball and Local Economic Development*. Indeed, the main point of Keeler's study is to challenge Johnson's thesis that the economic impact of minor league stadiums generally does not justify the cost to the taxpayers of new stadium construction.

Lackawanna County Multi-Purpose Stadium and the Red Barons offer a fascinating model for minor league cities. Public ownership of both the stadium and the team makes the franchise a true community asset, hence, it is "Our Team!" Proponents of the stadium and its \$22 million price tag never justified the public investment as a downtown redevelopment project, as has been the case in most cities. What it did economically was to open up for development a whole new area outside the downtown city, Keeler estimates the investment has led to \$150 to \$200 million in economic development in the stadium's first decade of operation. Keeler downplays the fact that Pennsylvania Governor Bob Casey, who was from Scranton, pushed through state grants that amounted to one-half the stadium costs. Still, it was not a bad investment.

The Lackawanna stadium, of course, was on the leading edge of a wave of baseball stadium construction. The revival of the minor leagues in the last quarter of the century, peaked in the nineties as city after city has found ways to justify spending taxpayers' money on new ball grounds, mostly to benefit team owners. By the end of the decade, cities without minor league franchises were scrambling to construct parks for teams playing in independent leagues. The minor league landscape of 2000 resembles that of 1976 no more than does the major leagues; both have been changed forever.

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