

SOLOMON, BURT. *Where They Ain't: The Fabled Life and Untimely Death of the Original Baltimore Orioles, the Team That Gave Birth to Modern Baseball*. New York: The Free Press, 1999. Pp. 320. 22 Photographs/Illustrations, appendix notes, index. \$25.00 cb.

Burt Solomon, a professed Baltimore Orioles fan, has given fellow Orioles fans fuel to increase their hatred of the New York Yankees, or he has provided some reason for them to now cheer for those fellows from the Bronx. On second thought, forget that. No self-respecting "Baltimore Colts Fan" could ever root for the now "Indianapolis Colts." After reading Solomon's *Where They Ain't* the Orioles fans will never root for the Yankees again unless a victory by the Yankees will propel the O's into the playoffs.

Solomon has traced the beginning of the New York Yankees back to the city by the bay—Baltimore, Maryland. This retracing of the 1901-1902 American League Orioles revealed that they were moved to New York and became the Highlanders and, later, the now world famous Yankees. This is only the tip of the iceberg, as Solomon uncovers the history of (as he calls them) "the original Baltimore Orioles." Highlights of Solomon's work include the players making the Orioles good in the early years, such as Wee Willie Keeler; innovations that changed the style of playing the game; the politics of big cities and baseball; and the business side of baseball.

Where They Ain't opens with information about the vulnerable side of one of the all-time greats of the game, Wee Willie Keeler. Only fifty years of age and in failing health, Keeler summons his close friends around him to say that he will not die until after the new year and not sooner as they expect. The first player in the history of the game to earn at least \$10,000 a season, Keeler, known as the "Brooklyn Millionaire" (p. 4), was now a pauper. Also famous for describing his secret to hitting as: "Keep your eye clear, and hit it where they ain't," Keeler made it to that new year before dying.

Most people know Keeler for his playing days in Brooklyn; however, it was his days, prior to those in Brooklyn, those in Baltimore that Solomon captures in this work. The reader will also find that players such as Keeler had a hard time leaving cities in which they began their professional careers, but that the business side of the game, along with the strong-arming tactics of the owners, made it easier to move with their teams.

Solomon does get into the ongoing debate of which team was actually the first in professional baseball. He also brings in the religious notion that rationalized the development of the sport, quoting Keeler's question about the game, asking "Was this not Gods work?" (p. 19).

Solomon must be given credit for this work. He has done his homework. Contemporary owners look like forthright and upstanding Sunday school teachers when compared to those of yesteryear. The behind-the-scenes actions of many owners and city politicians as described in this book are down-right criminal. Things were so bad according to the players that they issued a 638-word manifesto, stating:

There was a time when the League stood for integrity and fair dealing; to-day it stands for dollars and cents. Once it looked to the elevation of the game and an

honest exhibition of the sport; to-day its eyes are upon the turnstile. Men have come into the business for no other motive than to exploit it for every dollar in sight (p. 25).

Leading this group of unpopular owners was Albert Spalding, who on many occasions refused to pay players salaries above \$2,000, but then would sell that players' rights to other clubs for \$10,000 dollars and shared none of it with the players sold. Showing that baseball was not just a meaningless kids' game, Solomon informs readers of the connections between railroad barons, oil barons, city leaders, and the government.

Getting back to the game itself, Solomon recounts the glorious days of the early 1890s when "Charm City" (Baltimore) was at its best winning professional baseball titles and having its share of noted visitors. While hosting the 1894 championship game the city was said to have given visitors a taste of all its charm. At the top of the city's offerings were its parades. Solomon called the parade for this title game Baltimore's grandest. Readers will see that the current Camden Yards Ballpark was once Camden Station railroad depot. And while a main attraction today, Eutaw Street was even more of a mainstay to the city in the 1890s. Other noted names around the current park that were prominent in the early championship years for parades and charm were Lombard Street, Sharp Street, Charles Street, Pratt Street and the harbor itself.

With all the well-placed logic that Solomon presents, it is hard for even this hardcore Orioles fan to buy into the notion that the team is the one that gave birth to modern baseball. To say that the city played a significant role in the development of the game is true, but to credit it with providing its birth is a pretty big stretch, one that might be unwarranted.

Solomon does, however, bring to life the long forgotten role that "Charm City" played in shaping the game of baseball. The team, under the leadership of then manager Ned Hanlon, invented the sacrifice bunt, the hit-and-run, the infamous Baltimore Chop, and the squeeze play. While it is nice to know that your home area team is being given historic credit for such innovations in baseball, there are others offering credit to their favorite team for many of the same game strategies. Their evidence may be just as compelling, but for now it is Baltimore.

This work is a wonderful example of weaving sport with other aspects of society to develop a perspective of leisure that is appealing to numerous segments of the populace. Those who believe that modern players and owners are greedy will say "wow," when viewing the tactics of owners from early years of organized baseball. Solomon makes reading baseball history pleasurable with *Where They Ain't*.

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