
BRYANT, HOWARD. *Shut Out: A Story of Race and Baseball In Boston*. London: Routledge, 2002. Pp. 296. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$27.50 cb.

Howard Bryant's *Shut Out* offers an interesting look at the tumultuous history of race relations and major league baseball in Boston. Although Boston enjoys a reputation as the nation's cradle of liberty and the home of the abolitionist movement, the city's more recent history is not marked by racial tolerance. Bitter conflicts over busing in the 1970s and 1980s, and the high-profile racially-charged Stuart murder case in 1987, illuminate the depths of Boston's racial troubles in the late twentieth century. As Bryant shows, these events and others frame the boundaries in which the mostly-white history of the Red Sox franchise has unfolded in the last six decades.

The Red Sox's persistent reluctance to consider black players meant the club missed opportunities to sign future superstars: Jackie Robinson in 1945 and Willie Mays in 1949. Long after Robinson crossed the color line in Brooklyn, the Boston franchise was still all white. Indeed, the Red Sox was the very last major league team to integrate (Elijah "Pumpise" Green in 1959), fielded few black players in subsequent years, and perhaps most startlingly, listed just *one* black player on the roster in 1979 (Jim Rice) and again in 1990 (Ellis Burks). Additionally, from the 1960s to the 1990s many talented black players were "run out" of town amidst conflicts with management and local sports-writers. From these many incidents, Bryant argues, a reputation grew of a baseball franchise and a city that are essentially hostile to African-American athletes.

Bryant's focus is appropriately directed on the people whose decisions created this antagonistic environment. The bigotry of owner Tom Yawkey and the men he selected to run his franchise before, during, and after integration—especially Eddie Collins, Joe Cronin, and Mike "Pinky" Higgins—were pivotal. Bryant also indicts Boston's major newspapers for their relative silence on racial issues surrounding Major League Baseball in general, and the Red Sox in particular, until the 1980s. The story of racial exclusion in the pressrooms and the frequent *apologia* for Yawkey's racism articulated by certain members of the city's press corps (e.g., Will McDonough of the *Globe*) provides a significant "back story" throughout the book.

With this book Bryant has unearthed a few historical gems. One is the tale of city councilman Isadore Muchnik, who threatened to withhold a required municipal permit for Sunday baseball unless the Red Sox agreed to provide a tryout for black players in 1945. Such linkages between the baseball club and the city's political structure serve Bryant's purposes well. Another is the considerable attention Bryant gives to Larry Whiteside, an African-American journalist who integrated the *Globe's* sports depart-

ment in the 1970s. Bryant also presents numerous testimonials from key black ballplayers who struggled with racism in Boston: Pumpsie Green, Reggie Smith, Tommy Harper, Cecil Cooper, Jim Rice, Luis Tiant, Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd, and Mo Vaughn. This rich material gives voice to the range of frustrations, outright exclusions, and daily slights common to the experience of so many black players in Boston.

The strength of Bryant's research is oral history that spans about 120 interviews. What appears to be a solid reading in relevant newspapers supplements the interview data, but the bibliography seems rather brief. Moreover, the book forgoes endnotes for an awkward chapter-by-chapter section called "source material." This makes it difficult to align Bryant's assertions with the documents from which they come. Last, Bryant's writing employs an overabundance of the future conditional tense—i.e. "would be"—that can grind a reader into exhaustion. On balance, however, *Shut Out* is reasonably well-contextualized, provocative examination of a storied franchise's racial struggles in one of the nation's oldest cities.

—DAN LERNER

Binghamton University, State University of New York