

Daley's Diamond: The Baseball Writing of Arthur J. Daley

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Arthur Daley wrote over 10,000 sports columns in the *New York Times* from 1942 until his death in 1974. He covered all sports, but baseball held first place in his heart and over half of his articles dealt with the national pastime. For Daley the romance and personalities the game overshadowed social issues. A stickler for preparation, his interests ranged from stars to lesser known figures. He alternated columns about past stars with ones treating contemporaries. Daley achieved widespread recognition during the 1950s and 1960s, becoming the first writer to receive the Pulitzer Prize for sports writing and later winning the Grantland Rice and Sportswriter of the Year awards.

Daley's style and approach was illustrated in his coverage of three major events: Jackie Robinson's first major league season in 1947, the fixing scandals of 1945 and 1950, and the baseball strike of 1972. Although he gave limited attention to Robinson, Daley sympathized with the pioneering effort, praised Robinson's contributions, and condemned those who protested against him. Daley's treatment of gambling and fixing in sport inspired novelist Bernard Malamud to explore the theme of a talented athlete gone wrong in the *The Natural*.

The 1972 baseball strike found Daley older and tilting toward the baseball establishment. While fellow columnists "Red" Smith and Dave Anderson focused the labor dispute, Daley gave the event much less attention and sadly concluded: "Baseball was once such a glorious sport. Now it is a cut throat business with management and labor snarling at each other as if they were on the docks or in factories . . . There was a time when strike had only one connotation on a ballfield. It's different now and that's a pity,"

Daley represented the Baroque stage of the hero worshiping sportswriter- that group of writers called the "Gee Whizzers" by David Voigt, "hacks" by Michael Novak, and the "hero sandwich school" by Randall Poe. He flourished as fashion moved to a more critical, analytical approach. Although he was aware of the issues that fascinated his junior colleagues, Daley's greatest contributions lay in his linking of baseball's past with its present and in his focus on the game's personalities. His career suggests that good best baseball writing has room for myth and nostalgia as well as investigative journalism.