

Eddie Gold and Art Ahrens, *The New Era Cubs 1941-1985*. Bonus Books, Chicago, 1985. Illus., index, pp.viii + 274. \$U.S.14.95.

The authors are obsessed Cubs' fans, as witnessed by their collaboration on two earlier books: *Day by Day in Chicago Cubs History* and *The Golden Era Cubs 1876-1940*. Their current collection of vignettes about the men who played for or coached the Cubs is a sequel to the latter book.

Gold and Ahrens provide scores of interesting stories. Both Eddie Waitkus and Joe Pepitone, for example, were shot near the heart yet survived to play for Chicago, while at least one former Cub, Hiram Bithorn, was shot to death.

The cavalcade of names inevitably stirs many memories for a man born and raised in Chicago, albeit on the south side. But the more I read the more I yearned for more than anecdotes and statistics about players who were often more memorable than immortal. Not enough insight was provided on larger-than-life figures in Cub uniforms like Hank Sauer. Even 'Mr. Cub', Ernie Banks, remains an unexplored figure despite six pages of narrative. And what about the owner of the team, P.K. Wrigley, the chewing-gum magnate? Some players loved him, like Banks and Jose Cardenal; others could not abide him. Even though Wrigley was discussed in the previous volume, the Cub story after 1941 - which is meant to be read on its own - necessarily requires a section on Wrigley.

The New Era Cubs is entertaining and informative and will be enjoyed by baseball fans of all persuasions, but it is not sufficiently analytical. The authors sandwich their discussion of Ron Santo's public abuse of a teammate (centerfielder Don Young) in July 1969 between the team's league-leading performance to mid-season and its failure to win the pennant, without discussing a possible correlation. Similarly, the author's express bewilderment over the plethora of player trades over the past 45 years - especially the many that were clearly unbeneficial for the Cubs - but rarely bother to investigate or explain the reasons behind the trade. Nor do they spend any time on the teams rather than the individuals.

When they do penetrate behind the public facade of baseball in Chicago, the authors can provide vital explanations. Ralph Kiner's

unpopularity is understandable, as is Claude Passeau's tiny glove, and the temporary batting binges of Lou Novikoff, Keith Moreland and Ryne Sandberg all become comprehensible.

Gold and Ahrens have written a book that is well worth reading. I found myself returning to it time and again. The statistics are blended into the narrative in an unobtrusive manner and journalistic expertise is evident throughout.

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