

**Bruce Chadwick**, *When the Game Was Black and White: The Illustrated History of Baseball's Negro Leagues*. Abbeville Press, New York, n.d. Illus. pp. 191. \$US24.95.

Satchel Paige, Cool Papa Bell, Josh Gibson, Ray Dandridge, Mule Suttles among many others were legends in American baseball between the 1920s and the 1940s. These players were barred from playing in baseball's Major Leagues simply because their skin was black. We learn about the players and personalities who made up baseball's black leagues in a beautifully illustrated book by noted baseball writer Bruce Chadwick.

Chadwick's book is meant for the general audience, but also has much value for the academic and the student of sports history. The book is attractively presented and the characters from the old Negro Leagues come alive through the numerous photographs collected by Chadwick. In addition, many colourful quotes from interviews add further spice to the text.

White and black observers alike state that black players should have and certainly could have played in the major leagues well before Jackie Robinson appeared for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Chadwick also provides readers with statistics that measure the success of players from the Negro Leagues when compared with Major Leaguers. He also tells numerous stories of successes by black players and teams against white major league teams and players. There is no question that the top African-American players were good enough to play in the majors and fans flocked to see these players, especially Satchel Paige. It appears that only opposition from team owners kept African-Americans out of the Major Leagues from the late 1880s until 1947.

A few criticisms of the book can be made. The thematic presentation leads to the repetition of much information and some of the inserted special sections are poorly placed cutting off the flow of the main text. Still, this book adds to our knowledge of the experiences of African-Americans in baseball admirably told by Robert Peterson in *Only the Ball Was White* (1984). The pictures alone are worth the price of the book and the text makes for enjoyable and informative reading.

For someone like myself who grew up on the exploits of former Negro League players like Hank Aaron, Willie Mays and Ernie Banks, it was a delight to revisit and read again about the stars who paved the way for their success. Chadwick concludes that the sacrifices of these African-American baseball players did much to change the face of American society:

All those bumpy bus rides they endured, all the black and white seating sections in ballparks, the angry orders that 'niggers can't dress here', the segregated restaurants, run-down black-only hotels, dirty laundry, 'redneck' cops, bigotry, and racism - all those things meant something. The Negro Leaguers didn't just change baseball, they changed their country forever (p. 177).

Whether Chadwick's final point holds true is debatable, but it is certain that these baseball players entertained millions and enabled future African-Americans to play as equals in American Major League Baseball.

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