

John E. Dreifort (ed.), *Baseball History from Outside The Lines: A Reader*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2001. pp. xviii + 363, US\$24.95 (Paperback).

In recent years there has been an explosion in academic interest and writings on sport. Courses across the disciplines are popping up at different campuses around the globe. Numerous specialised journals are devoted to studying historical, sociological, legal, economic and business/management aspects of sport. In addition, there seems to be a never ending stream of books and monographs produced on different aspects of various sports. To paraphrase Larry Gerlack, sport represents a rare intersection of academic and public interest (p. xi; Larry Gerlach, 'Not Quite Ready for Prime Time: Baseball History 1983-1993', *Journal of Sport History*, Summer 1994).

Contrast this situation with sports scholarship thirty years ago. Only a handful of scholars were brave enough, foolhardy, headstrong or poor souls unable to withstand the angels beckoning them in the distance to conduct sports' research. The following quotation from Dreifort concerning American baseball could serve as a totem pole for all sports' research:

For most of its existence, the study of baseball has been relegated to the "academic bush leagues" by the professional historical community. Those professional scholars who undertook more than an occasional foray into the field risked loss of credibility among their peers. One suspects that there existed a sense that anything that could be so much fun must not be serious academic material ... This began to change as a result of the domestic turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s, which gave rise to increased interest in American social and cultural history within the professional historical community ... Although skeptics continued to abound, serious scholars began to recognize that baseball, along with sport history generally, was an important ingredient in understanding the American character and the nation's past (pp. xii-xiii).

In *Baseball History From Outside the Lines: A Reader*, Dreifort has brought together eighteen essays, written in the last two decades, which examine various aspects of baseball's history. Various chapters examine the origins and growth of baseball, issues pertaining to race, gender, business and organisation/management, industrial relations and international dimensions of baseball. The chapters make for fascinating reading. Dreifort has chosen writings that focus on baseball as contested terrain, of what might be called the contradictions between baseball as myth – as the national pastime – and baseball as practice.

Baseball developed as a sport and place for communion in the middle years of the nineteenth century. Ronald Story provides an insightful account of how baseball became the national pastime by the end of the century. His analysis is linked to "youth culture"; of how young males developed an interest in baseball – as both players, and later, as spectators – as a "refuge" from the harshness of American life in the 1860s and 1870s. In turn, Michael Kimmel, examines how the masculine virtue of baseball enabled men to escape their misery. For Kimmel, baseball, in the period 1880 to 1920, provided an opiate for the male masses, acting as a form of social control. He says, 'If the masculinity expressed on the baseball field was exuberant, fiercely competitive, widely aggressive, it was so only in a controlled and orderly arena, closely supervised by powerful adults, as such, the masculinity reconstituted on the baseball field also fielded a docility and obedience to authority that would serve the maintenance of the emerging industrial capitalist order' (p. 57).

From the latter part of the nineteenth century baseball operated a colour bar which denied African-Americans the chance to play in white controlled major (or minor) league teams. Jerry Malloy's chapter brings together material on the early African-American experience of baseball. His major source is a long forgotten 1907 publication, entitled *Sol White's Official Guide: History of Coloured Base Ball*. White was a leading black player and manager of his era. Malloy says of White, that his 'greatest triumph, in a lifetime of devotion to the game he loved so dearly, was the historian's quintessential bounty. To wit, he rescued merit from oblivion' (p. 91).

John Pendleton provides information on inter-racial games (black and whites on the same team) played in Wichita, Kansas, from 1920 to 1935. He documents the playing of, what has the appearance of being a bizarre, game between a branch of the Ku Klux Klan and an African-American team in 1925, which occurred without any "negative" incidents. The African-Americans won 10 to 8. Pendleton explains Wichita going against the national grain of Jim Crowism as being due to the small percentage of African-Americans in the mid-West. They were "too small" a group to constitute a "threat" to the "mainstream". Pendleton maintains that the baseball experience in the mid-West aided civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. Jules Tygiel provides details on the career

and times of Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to break baseball's colour apartheid in 1947.

William Simons examines the career of Hank Greenberg, a slugger with the Detroit Tigers in the 1930s and 1940s, as an exemplar of a second generation immigrant Jew merging into the American "melting pot". Simons highlights the "controversy" surrounding Greenberg playing on Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year) against the Red Sox in a tight pennant race in 1934. Greenberg played, hitting two home runs in the Tigers 2 to 1 victory over the Red Sox. Simons contrasts the positive praise from the media for Greenberg deciding to play for the team – America – with the anti-Semitism he encountered on the field, and from the stands. A succinct history of women's playing of baseball, from 1966 to 1954, is provided by Debra Shattuck.

David Voight provides a chapter on the fixing of the 1919 World Series, and Norman Rosenberg on the appointment in 1920, and the role of Kenesaw Mountain Landis as baseball's first Commissioner. Rosenberg links the appointment of Landis to the antitrust exemption baseball received from the Supreme Court in 1922 (*Federal Baseball Club of Baltimore v. National League of Professional Baseball Clubs* 259 U.S. 200 (1922)). This "process" enabled baseball to be governed by "private" rather than public law. Rosenberg wryly notes

From the onset of their anti-trust problems, baseball's leadership had used claims that "the game" was an integral and morally uplifting, part of American culture to bolster the dubious legal argument that the national pastime should not have to abide by the same rules as less pure aspects of American business (p. 111).

Bruce Kuklick provides a study of the demise of the Philadelphia Athletics, prior to moving to Kansas City in the mid 1950s. The club's demise is linked to the incompetence of aging owner and manager, the legendary Connie Mack. Kuklick's account has overtones of King Lear, as Mack and his three sons jostled for control of the Athletics. Kuklick presents a case study of an organisation collapsing in on itself. Daniel Marburger examines baseball's industrial relations culminating in the 1994/1995 232 day industrial dispute. He explains most of baseball's labour-management problems in terms of the lack of cohesion between wealthy and less-wealthy clubs.

Donald Roden documents the emergence of baseball in Meiji Japan. He mainly concentrates on a series of games between Americans based in Yokohama and students of the Ichiko (Tokyo) team. The schoolboys won twelve games, lost two. Roden argues that the games excited national interest. He says 'the possibility that excellence in America's "national game", demonstrated in competition with American teams, would compel Westerners to reconsider fictitious stereotypes about the unmanly Japanese. Baseball was, in this sense,

an instrument for the rectification of the national image' (p. 289). In a similar vein, Samuel Regaldo, interprets developments in Latin American baseball as a vehicle for countering American hegemony and beating the "gringos".

Dreifort has brought together an excellent compilation of recent writings on a range of issues associated with baseball; of the space where sport, society and culture intersect. *Baseball History From Outside the Lines* makes for compelling reading and is highly recommended.

Braham Dabscheck
School of Industrial Relations
University of New South Wales