



A People's History of Baseball

Mitchell Nathanson

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Baseball is much more than the national pastime. It has become an emblem of America itself. Stories abound that illustrate baseball's significance in eradicating racial barriers, bringing neighborhoods together, and building civic pride. In *A People's History of Baseball*, Mitchell Nathanson probes the less well-known but no less meaningful other side of baseball: episodes not involving equality, patriotism, heroism, and virtuous capitalism, but power--how it is obtained, and how it perpetuates itself. Exploring the founding of the National League, Nathanson focuses on the newer Americans who sought club ownership to promote their own social status in the increasingly closed caste of late nineteenth-century America. His perspective on the rise and public rebuke of the Players Association shows that these events reflect both the collective spirit of working and middle-class America in the mid-twentieth century as well as the countervailing forces that sought to beat back this emerging movement that threatened the status quo. Even his take on baseball's racial integration that began with Branch Rickeys "Great Experiment" reveals the debilitating effects of the harsh double standard that resulted, requiring a black player to have unimpeachable character merely to take the field in a Major League game, a standard no white player was required to meet. Told with passion and occasional outrage, *A People's History of Baseball* challenges the perspective of the well-known, deeply entrenched, hyper-patriotic stories of baseball and offers an incisive alternative history of America's much-loved national pastime.

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