

501 Baseball Books Fans Must Read before They Die

Ron Kaplan

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This book of books contains all you need to know about baseball, including controversies, category by category.

Ron Kaplan has created the ultimate baseball literature encyclopedia with his new book, *501 Baseball Books Fans Must Read before They Die*. The book about books includes everything a fanatic or casual follower of the sport could ask for. It covers the history of America's great pastime from the post-industrial age all the way up to the current modern era. The various publications within this compilation aren't ranked, but rather categorized in the hope that "they will provide an entry into the fascinating world of baseball literature, with its connections to other areas one might not normally associate with the game."

Kaplan is a sports and features writer and editor for the *New Jersey Jewish News*. His writing has appeared in the *Huffington Post*, *Baseball America*, and *Mental Floss*.

501 Baseball Books is much more than a book about baseball books. The works in Kaplan's anthology feature discourse on race, gender, politics, economics, war, religion, and other important topics. A lot of the featured books put these issues in a historical context in relation to the sport, while others shed light on them from a more contemporary perspective.

It's hard for us to imagine major leaguers being forced to find a second job to provide for their families during the Great Depression, or swapping their flannels for military uniforms during World War II. From the infamous Black Sox Scandal and Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier to Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, and the dark cloud of the steroid era, Kaplan gives credit to authors who don't shy away from controversial subjects.

By choosing to categorize rather than rank the books, Kaplan makes "no claim that the five hundred (or so) titles you will find herein are necessarily the best baseball books." Kaplan lets readers decide what books to identify as favorites. His goal was to create a list of "some of the best, well-produced and quirkiest examples," of baseball scholarship. The table of contents introduces a collection of categories such as ballparks, business, history, pop culture, and statistics. Anyone who enjoys reading about baseball will find something they love in this extensive guide.

A self-proclaimed pack rat and baseball junkie, it's amazing enough that Kaplan was able to read all 501 of these books—to offer comprehensive summaries of each and every one is a truly remarkable accomplishment.

ANDREW KIPP (Summer 2013)

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