ForeWord Reviews

SPORTS & RECREATION

And the Fans Roared: The Sports Broadcasts That Kept Us on the Edge of Our Seats
Joe Garner
Bob Costas, narrator
Sourcebooks
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Hyperbole. The lifeblood of sports broadcasting. ESPN-type channels and their insatiable need for dramatic footage magnify every play, exaggerate every action. Announcers preparing for a record-breaking affair practice their calls ahead of time, based on what might happen. So much for spontaneity.

From hundreds of thousands of games across the athletic spectrum, Garner has separated the wheat from the chaff in And the Fans Roared, his follow-up to And the Crowd Goes Wild. Like the original, this book comes with two CDs, narrated by Costas, which contain the original calls of such memorable events as Babe Ruth's farewell, George Foreman's victory over Joe Frazier, and Reggie Jackson's three consecutive homers in the 1977 World Series, and Tiger Woods demolition of the U.S. Open just a few months ago.

Baseball, football, and basketball lend themselves well to this audio format. Others sports, such as tennis, ice skating, and gymnastics, do not. Taken together with the text, however, they all come together neatly.

Certain milestones included in And the Fans Roared, though no less historic, make for less drama than others. Cal Ripken, Jr., took thirteen years to break Lou Gehrig's "iron man" record. Pete Rose played over two decades on his way to wrest the all-time hit crown away from Ty Cobb.

Other moments happen as fast as a heartbeat and can put an ordinary player on par with the games' immortals: With one swing of the bat, Joe Carter led the Toronto Blue Jays to a world's championship in 1993. On the other hand, Bill Buckner will forever be remembered for his error which allowed the Mets to return from the dead in Game Six of the 1986 Series. Jim O'Brien, born with serious physical deformities, overcame his afflictions and kicked the longest field goal in NFL history.

Sports have often been spoken of in terms of life and death, but truer words were never spoken during the 1989 World Series between the Oakland Athletics and the San Francisco

Giants, which was interrupted by a major earthquake. The routine banter in the broadcast booth belied the very real danger, which delayed the games for ten days while the Bay Area tried to right itself.

Magic Johnson's biggest fight, against the HIV virus, was put on the back burner as he returned for one last hurrah, taking to the court, and earning MVP honors, in the 1992 NBA All-Star Game.

Not every event in sports carries the same weight, but they are all important in their own right and all enjoyable to relive.

Ron Kaplan