

The Cubs Quotient: How the Chicago Cubs Changed the World

Scott Rowan

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Rowan offers an entertaining documentation of the Cubs' influence on American history.

At a key moment in *It's a Wonderful Life*, the angel Clarence tells a despondent George Bailey how each life touches so many others. That seems to be the premise behind *The Cubs Quotient*, an unusual and entertaining examination of American and global history as seen through the prism of the iconic ball club. The author has collected dozens of stories to make his point on how the Cubs impacted politics, society, race, vice, innovations, entertainment, and the sport itself. Many of the stories are legitimate in their assertions, albeit reflecting the author's opinion as much as the facts.

In many cases, the Cubs themselves did not change the world; people associated with them did. In the chapter "Cubs Shooting Leads to Movie History," it's actually an ex-Cub Eddie Waitkus, who had been traded to the Philadelphia Phillies shortly before he was shot by a crazed fan. This became the basis of Bernard Malamud's classic baseball novel, *The Natural*, which was turned into a popular feature film.

Rowan presents his cases with a light and entertaining manner—part conversational, part academic. He cites from copious sources to back up his claims, and he details some truly historic events.

The most accurate section is the final one on the game itself. Few of the assertions are in dispute: The all-star game originated in Chicago, although it was not a Cubs invention but that of a newspaperman. That any of these seventy-plus nuggets "changed the world" is a matter of interpretation.

None of that takes anything away from the amusing content of *The Cubs Quotient*. It's a testament to Rowan's creativity to see how he connects the dots, shaping the information to fit into his premise: it only makes sense that the Cubs, one of the oldest and most lovable sports franchises, should have such an impact on American and world culture.

One of the unique aspects of the books is its interconnectivity to the Internet, which works better with the e-book version. Expecting readers of the non-electronic version of *The Cubs Quotient* to take the extra step of logging in on the publisher's website might be asking a bit much, but those who make the effort will be rewarded with additional text, video, and audio pertaining to the text.

RON KAPLAN (Summer 2014)

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