

Tink Wilson

J.J. Parker

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Jim Bouton's classic *Ball Four* shook up the sport of baseball as no book since has ever been able to do — until now. *Tink Wilson* just may be the *Ball Four* for our times although the setting is the pivotal year of 1963.

The book recounts another era long before the current superstar status of ballplayers resulted in equally soaring egos and salaries. These were players like the main character who worked in auto parts stores during their off-season. No endorsement deals no lucrative signings of autographs at card shows. They played hard on and off the field.

Recreating a fictional season of the San Diego Padres when the team was still part of the Pacific Coast League was a challenge in itself. It is this retelling of the action in both arenas that makes all 644 pages of this book come alive.

Baseball fans will think they're in home run heaven. All the incredible minutiae you'd find in agate type in stats books is here but in a narrative form. The well-researched background on the old Pacific Coast League blends so perfectly into the coming of age story that the reader will feel they are sharing a post-game beer with Tink and hearing this in person.

And there's enough sex in this book to satiate any reader. The language might be too much for younger readers but there's far worse on rap songs on MTV.

The book is told in the form of a diary kept by a fictional young player. And that's the beauty of this book. The narrator is not blessed with an overabundance of education. So he spells many words phonetically. It just so happens that every one of those spellings contributes to creating a pun that will make you laugh out loud. That alone is well worth the price of admission to the bleachers.

The main characters will make the reader wonder which 1960s player they are really based upon. There are plenty of clues and if one were a betting man there's the potential for winning many a bar room bet with at least a half-dozen well-known names.

J. J. Parker isn't a household word but he has a lot of innate talent and hopefully will share more of it with readers in books to come. It may just be the best baseball book ever written since Ring Lardner's *You Know Me Al*. Reading this is quite like discovering a mint rookie card for Barry Bonds or Sammy Sosa. What a find!

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