

Book Review

# Cheering for the home team

By MARK ALBERSTAT

**C**heering for the Home Team is not your average baseball book.

It is not filled with players shooting craps or coke, it does not dig up scandals or destroy friendships. What it does is tell a sharp and accurate history of organized baseball in Canada.

The author, William Humber, is not an ex big-leaguer trying to cash in on the recent explosion of sports memoirs, but a true Canadian sports journalist who is deeply interested in sports history, especially, in this case, baseball.

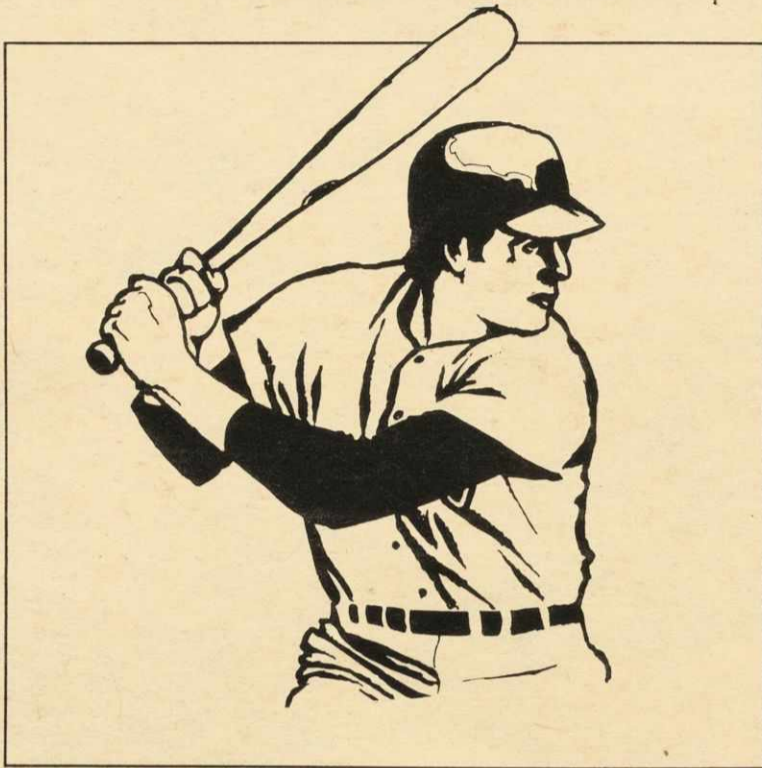
Humber, in his opening paragraph of the book, tells how one year before Abner Doubleday "invented" the game of baseball in Coopertown, N.Y., two teams played the game on a June afternoon in Beachville, Ontario.

The first half of the book deals with baseball in western and central Canada (as it apparently should). It is in these regions that Humber says were the first organized and semi-professional players.

He goes into depth about the Guelph Maple Leafs, who for their first seasons didn't have proper uniforms so they pinned a red cloth maple leaf to their shirt fronts, and also the London Tecumsems. These two teams, as Humber clearly shows, were the local powerhouse and crowd-drawers of early baseball in Canada.

The author also goes into detail about some of the true shapers of Canadian baseball such as George Sleeman (organizer-owner) and Edward "Tip" O'Neill (player).

There is one chapter in the book dedicated to Maritime Baseball and our contribution to the sport. This would prove particularly interesting to any Maritimer interested in baseball who does not know the local roots.



Humber then goes on to discuss black players and teams in Canadian baseball and describes Jackie Robinson's ground-breaking this side of the boarder with the Montreal Royals. This chapter also talks of William "Hippo" Gulloway of the Woodstock amateur team in 1898, who was the last black to play organized baseball until 1946.

The next and last chapter deals with "The Big League's Return to Canada: Birth of the Expos and Jays." The content of this chapter is self-explanatory, by its title. The author does bring up some interesting points about both organizations.

The book's full title is *Cheering for the Home Team—The Story of Baseball in Canada* and is published by The Boston Mills Press for \$24.95. It can also be found at the Halifax City Regional Library.

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