

Baseball books home run

By **MARK ALBERSTAT**

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF organized baseball there have been books on the sport. The selection and quality of these books has exploded in recent years. The following are reviews of three recent books.

The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract by Bill James is not just another book on baseball — it is the book on baseball. Now if you know about Bill James and his yearly abstracts and don't like them, like myself, don't tune out yet. This book is nothing like that schlock.

The Historical Abstract takes you from 1870 to today in the history of baseball in a way you will not find anywhere else. I believe this book is totally unique in the annals of baseball literature. The book is divided roughly into three sections: the decades, the players, and the records.



The decades, in my estimation, is the most interesting. Fortunately it is also the longest. The section maps out baseball history decade by decade. It goes over the great teams, the great players, the terrible teams and the players who should have been pumping gas at the corner Shell station. It also tells you which ethnic groups were dominant during the

decades and when certain people were born during the decade. Did you know Joe Dimaggio was born in 1914 as was Jona Salk? The section also tells you about some of the strange nicknames of the decade, the best drinkers, the ugliest players and the best looking ones. One interesting part you will not find elsewhere is a decade by decade synopsis of how the uniforms advanced.

The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract, by Bill James, published by Random House, (\$36.75).

The next section is on the players. This book does not tell you about the Gherigs and the Ruths, oh no, for Bill James the chapter looks at positions. That's right: if you want to know who was the greatest shortstop, catcher or left fielder was, this section has it.

The final section is the records and it is what has come to be expected from James: odd and fun to read, but nothing to write home to mom about. *The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract* is distributed in Canada by Random House, is a hardback and costs \$36.75.

A Baseball Winter is, to say the least, an original book. It details the trades, behind the scenes and front office moves of the New York Mets, the California Angels, the Atlanta Braves the Philadelphia Phillies and the Cleveland Indians.

There are many, many books about baseball on the book stands these days. This book, however, creates a new mold. *A Baseball Winter* does not tell you about how the players got to where they are, does not thank all of their fathers and little league and minor coaches. Instead, this book tells you what it was like to negotiate Dwight Goodens salary and what was behind the now famous

trade that put Garry Carter in a Mets uniform.

A Baseball Winter, by Terry Pluto and Jeffery Newman, published by Collier MacMillan, (\$25.50).

At the beginning of the book the reader is amazed by the amount of money flying around. At the middle by the overblown figures. By the end of the book the reader will accept the salaries as just simply a part of the game.

Don't think that this book is only about money; it also discusses managing a team, what the winter meetings are like, what a baseball front office is like, and what happens to injured or veteran players during the off season.

If you are a baseball fan and are tired of all the biographies that seem to be the same, this book is for you. The book is published and distributed in Canada by Collier Macmillan and costs \$25.00.



Collier MacMillan has published two books that are almost completely stats and history.

This may sound boring to some but anyone who loves baseball also loves the history of the sport. What two teams could be more historic than the Cubs and the Dodgers, except possibly the Yankees.

The Cubs by Art Agrens and Eddie Gold has the career statistics for every Cubbie from Bert Abbey to Dutch Zwilling, and everyone in between. These statistics are fun to pour over, look at, do some minor research with, but it is not something one reads for the sheer enjoyment of reading.

The Cubs, by Art Ahrens and Eddie Gold, published by Collier MacMillan, (\$16.95).

One part of the book which is truly enjoyable is the year by year summary of every season since 1876. Now don't get me wrong, the reader should not sit down and read one hundred and ten years worth of Cubs history; there are not many Cubs fans who would do that. The part which is good about this section is that the reader can compare eras and decades. If you ever wanted to compare the Chicago cubs of 1984 with those of 1884 or 1964 or any

other year, you can.

Along with each year you can also read a short synopsis of the year, who was hot, who was not, who broke in and who should never had been there.

There are also two sections of photographs which are fun to look at but nothing to write home about.

The book is a large sized paperback and sells for \$16.95. If you like stats you'll love this book.



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