

Just when you thought everything had been written about baseball, along comes this remarkably fresh look at the old ball game, together with a provocative series of inquiries that redirect our thinking about the game. Is baseball really like life? How does it reflect a more traditional moral universe? What is the current preoccupation with statistics doing to the game? Why is there so much talking and arguing in baseball? Does baseball consciously reenact the mythology of the Old West? In this sophisticated, literate, and thoroughly entertaining book, Richard Skolnik addresses these and many other intriguing questions while he explores the underlying tensions in the nation's pastime. On the surface, baseball seems to reflect old, unchanging, more innocent traditions--a harking back to a rural past, a simpler time. But how does that idealistic image jibe with the modern era of big-business baseball, where money considerations dominate, free-agency erodes established loyalties, and specialists are more common than players with all-around skills? Skolnik tellingly probes the symbols of baseball and examines the way the game is played and the way it is viewed and interpreted. As debate builds in the sports community over the future of the game, the consideration of these tensions takes on a special significance and even poignancy. Skolnik finds that perhaps even in its contradictions, baseball can still be interpreted as a living symbol and expression of America. But no baseball book should be too serious. Juicy quotations from the players, dramatic incidents, lively play-by-play accounts, and turn-of-the-century illustrations add spice and zest to a book that every thoughtful fan of baseball is certain to savor.

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