

Swanson, Ryan A. *When Baseball Went White*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.

Ryan Swanson's book *When Baseball Went White*, explores the relationship between the politics of reconstruction and baseball. As the Civil War ended, North and South relations remained fractured as many Southerners clung to Lost Cause sentiments and resented the North for its role in taking away the way of life they had just fought to maintain. For many places in the United States, adjusting to the society of the new thirteenth and fourteenth Amendments became challenging, and many African Americans worked hard to find their place in various communities, as segregation became the new norm.

With historians only pursuing the desegregation of baseball, Swanson stands out by completing baseball's complex history with detailing its segregation. Swanson promotes the book as a reconstruction history as politics combined with the creation and popularization of baseball clubs. He also wants the reader to look at the book as a new perspective on race relations during the later nineteenth century. Attributed to continuing tensions between The North and South, baseball was advocated by the Northern associations as a way to forget the past and create a national pastime that could be celebrated by all. This concept would lead Northerners to create a divide between black and white baseball as a way to appease the South. In return most black clubs found it hard to find places to play, as well as fair treatment by white clubs. Although discussions during this period would lead many to believe that integration in baseball would have been endgame, black players never had the intention of joining white clubs, but instead voiced equality through the desire to play white clubs and join associations. Although the color line was drawn during the amateur days of baseball, the arrival of professionalism in the early 1870s represented the final blow to segregating baseball. As reconstruction also wined down, it was made known that the dream of unity in baseball was not likely. To help further his analysis,

Swanson divides up his book into three sections, each containing a chapter that discusses either one of three cities including Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Richmond.

Although the birthplace of civil rights during the 19th century, Washington D.C. still regarded segregation as a key component during reconstruction. Washington also led the efforts to create baseball into the national pastime. In Richmond, segregation was an unspoken rule. As a representation of the Confederacy, Richmonders continuously surrounded themselves with reminders of the Confederacy to keep their way of life relevant. Like most of the South, it took longer for baseball to become popular. What seemed like the oddball on the topic of segregation, Philadelphia was considered one of the first places to draw the color line during the 1867 Pennsylvania Association after the Pythians petitioned to join, but failed in the end due to white members pleas to withdraw. Although baseball would remain popular in the city, black clubs would eventually slowly fade out as violence began to spread after the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment and the death of Octavius Catto, a famous player on the Pythians who impacted the African American community greatly.

Although one cannot overstate the importance of this book to the complex understanding of sports history, Swanson tends to fall short in his organization. The three parts that are provided in the book isn't able to flow effectively and can be hard to follow since the three cities do not follow the same pattern. This can lead to confusion and forgetting important information which may cause the reader to return to previous chapters. Swanson also points out in his introduction that "Baseball is a perfect conduit for the study of race relations during reconstruction". Although this is true for the cultural or sports historian, its reach only goes so far when diving into segregation. Lack of sources make it also hard to believe as the beginnings of baseball were

not heavily sourced as Swanson explains. For this reason, his arguments don't speak volume as much as one would expect, but that doesn't make the book unreadable.

For someone who is not too familiar with baseball's history or wants to understand Reconstruction from a different perspective, Swanson's in-depth analysis depicts the topic well. It will make the reader understand how both the North and South contributed to the segregation of baseball clubs. Where Swanson undoubtedly shines the most is through his utilization of primary sources such as newspaper articles as well as significant figures who helped shape baseball's amateur and professional associations, even if few exist. For a reader who is not an expert on baseball, the book has easy to understand language. Although confusing at times, Swanson's book is essential for a broader understanding of our country's nuanced history of baseball and race.

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