



The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract

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In 1985, when Bill James, by then already baseball's "Sultan of Stats" "(The Boston Globe)" and author of a bestselling annual compendium entitled "The Baseball Abstract," wrote a 700-page book entitled "The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract," he produced an immediate classic. Lawrence Ritter, author of "The Glory of Their Times," called it one of the three greatest baseball books ever written. Jonathan Yardley of "The Washington Post" wrote, "My own shelf of genuinely first-rate baseball books is very small, but a place will have to be found on it for this one."

It's back.

"The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract," like the original, is really several books in one. The Game is a history of baseball, decade by decade, from the 1880s through the 1990s. For each decade, the "New Abstract" offers a bulleted summary incorporating the obvious -- highest batting average, best won-lost record by team -- and the eccentric. Included in the latter are such categories as Heaviest Player (for the 1930s: Jumbo Brown, a 6'4" 295-lb. pitcher), Most Admirable Superstar (for the 1960s: Roberto Clemente), Worst-Hitting Pitcher, Best Minor League Player, innovations in equipment, and dozens more. Also in each decade/chapter are essays on How, Where, and by Whom the game was played; uniforms; Best Minor League Teams; articles on forgotten achievements such as Wally Moses's remarkable 1936 campaign, or Jim Baumann's 72 home runs for Roswell, Texas (the minor league home-run record) in 1954.

In *The Players*, James ranks -- and writes about -- the top 100 players at each position in major league baseball history. To support these rankings, he introduces a remarkable new statistic called "Win Shares," a way of quantifying individual performance and equalizing the offensive "and" defensive contributions of catchers, pitchers, infielders, and outfielders. If you've ever wondered whether Rogers Hornsby or Eddie Collins was the greatest second baseman in history (answer: neither); who made the greatest contribution to his team entirely based on his defense (Bill Mazerowski...and it's not close); how Mike Piazza, Barry Bonds, Alex Rodriguez and other superstars of today stack up against the legends of baseball; who were the greatest infielders and pitching staffs in baseball history; or who had the career home-run record before Babe Ruth (Roger Connor, ranked #22 among the first basemen in baseball history), then *The Players* is the greatest argument starter -- and settler -- ever.

And there's more: Reference sections covering Win Shares for each season for every player who gained at least 300 shares; and Win Share charts for twenty-four representative teams, from the 40-120 1962 Mets to the 114-48 1998 Yankees.

A defining -- perhaps definitive -- look at baseball history and players' achievement...an entertaining and enlightening volume that will be referred to again and again..."The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract" is a triumph, an irresistible addition to any baseball fan's library.

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