



Red Smith on Baseball: The Game's Greatest Writer on the Game's Greatest Years

By Red Smith

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"August Adolphus Busch Jr., the new president of the Cardinals, is a chubby gentleman called Gussie, about the size of a St. Louis brewer. He has horn-rimmed glasses, a zillion dollars and an air of pleased bewilderment. He rides to the hounds and travels by bus." It's not hard to pluck a memorable passage from the sportswriting of Red Smith. In more than fifty years as a newspaperman, notably with the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *New York Times*, he earned a reputation as the best writer ever to confront the game of baseball?astute, clever, witty, and stylish. In this bountiful selection of his most memorable columns?175 of them, from 1941 to 1981?baseball fans can recapture some of baseball's greatest moments and most unforgettable characters. Jackie Robinson's debut is here, and so is Hank Greenberg hitting home runs; Enos Slaughter scoring the winning run in the seventh game of the 1946 World Series; Stan Musial, Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio, Lou Boudreau; the sly antics of Charles Dillon Stengel; Durocher's lip; Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra, and scores of others. It's a baseball feast. Readers who are not baseball fans will have to be satisfied with just wonderful writing. With 14 black-and-white photographs.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

It was Smith who once deemed 90 feet between bases the most perfect measurement in the universe. Those who feasted on his columns in, most notably, *The New York Herald-Tribune* and *The New York Times* until his death in 1982 would have no trouble ascribing the same measurement of perfection to his prose. Smith was the Pulitzer Prize-winning sportswriter other writers--not just sportswriters--went to school on, and baseball was the classroom that coaxed the best from his wizardry with the language. He was also the guy who insisted writing is easy; you just open a vein and bleed.

The 167 columns that make up *Red Smith on Baseball* are uncannily fresh with the drops of Smith's vitality, elegance, heart, intelligence, perspective, and wit. Spanning four decades from 1941-1981, it's a dazzling collection of literature written on deadline, and an important step toward righting the injustice of Smith's work being out of print for so long. Rolled through his typewriter, the history he witnessed on and off the field--Jackie Robinson breaking the color line, the '69 Mets, Curt Flood's challenge of the reserve clause, Enos Slaughter's mad dash from first, Don Larsen's perfecto, the departure of the Dodgers and Giants, the introduction of the D.H.--seems less like dispatches from the past than postcards wishing you were here in a forever present.

Like all those who are best at what they do, Smith knew how to get himself up for the game. He came equipped with an added gear to shift into when the stakes were raised. And while that talent is on display throughout *Red Smith on Baseball*, nowhere is it more awe-inspiring than in his epic recounting of Bobby Thompson's 1951 "shot heard 'round the world." An abrupt and improbable end to an unbearably improbable pennant race, Thompson's home run brought histrionic screams of "The Giants win the pennant!" pounding through the radio; in the pages of the *Herald-Tribune* the next morning, readers were chilled by the proportion and scope in Smith's poetry: "Now it is done. Now the story ends. And there is no way to tell it. The art of fiction is dead. Reality has strangled invention. Only the utterly impossible, the inexpressibly fantastic, can ever be plausible again." Smith could see more than the event, he could see the big picture and the small, often overlooked moment that lived within it; his ending to the Thompson story wasn't about the Giant triumph but its flip-side--the despair of the hurler who'd served up the pitch. "Ralph Branca turned and started for the clubhouse," Smith wrote. "The number on his uniform looked huge. Thirteen."

Red Smith on Baseball is as essential to a good sports library as any single book can be. But to compartmentalize it as *just* a sports book would be to somehow miss the larger accomplishments of a modern master of the English language. --Jeff Silverman

From Publishers Weekly

The Trojan War had Homer. Baseball had Red Smith. Through his unmatched diction, allusions and irony, through his penetrating observations and well-considered opinions, through a style verging on poetic--Smith turned the everyday drama that is the game into beautiful, enduring art. This magnificent collection of selected columns showcases some of baseball's mythic figures, revealing that it was Red Smith who helped give them their legendary status. Standouts include pieces on Joe DiMaggio, Branch Rickey, Casey Stengel (whom Smith clearly enjoyed listening to) and Bill Veeck Jr., baseball's greatest promoter. Smith's essays on Bobby Thomson's "shot heard 'round the world," Mickey Mantle's first game and Don Larsen's no-hit pitching in the 1956 World Series are all worthy of memorization, and his trenchant views on the reserve clause and the night World Series games are strikes down the middle. As a bonus, the collection offers

readers a fascinating look at how baseball writing has changed over the years, as have American attitudes. By the end, for example, women are no longer referred to as "tomatoes," and "coloreds" have become "blacks." A majority of the essays deal with the three great New York teams and the St. Louis Cardinals, but this should in no way prevent any baseball fan from enjoying this book. (Apr.)
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From [Booklist](#)

Smith wrote about baseball from the late 1920s until his death in 1982, and that full range is reflected here. He was a columnist for 40 years, and the freedom of that format allowed him to shine. One of his most famous pieces summed up New York Giant Bobby Thomson's pennant-winning home run in 1951: "Now it is done. Now the story ends. And there is no way to tell it. The art of fiction is dead. Reality has strangled invention." Smith's flair for the dramatic was exceeded only by his insight into human nature. His brief profiles often revealed more about his subjects than entire biographies could manage to do. Smith's passion for baseball is also evident here: more than the individual heroes or the memorable games, he cherished the spirit of the game. This collection shows Smith at his best, placing the game on center stage and allowing his own person to fade into the wings. Almost 20 years after his passing, Smith's work still propels readers to the ballpark. Thanks, Red. *Wes Lukowsky*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mike Hendrix:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite book and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your short lived problem; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled Red Smith on Baseball: The Game's Greatest Writer on the Game's Greatest Years. Try to the actual book Red Smith on Baseball: The Game's Greatest Writer on the Game's Greatest Years as your friend. It means that it can to become your friend when you sense alone and beside that of course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know everything by the book. So , let us make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

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