

much better that our fascination with muscle and sweat comes with a context, that the high drama of Michael Jordan or the McGwire/Sosa showdown, the dark tragedy of the Simpson trial, the hokey melodrama of the World Wrestling Federation, and even the edgy comedy of the Worm or Tonya Harding—in short, the entire carnival excess of our limitless fascination with the athlete is rooted in this century's evolving distrust of the intellect and our deep fascination with the body. Professor Segel's work, beautifully written, handsomely ornamented with photographs, and impeccably researched, does what any good culture study needs to do—shows us something about our own moment in history.

Arlen Davis

Wil Linkugel and Edward J. Pappas. *They Tasted Glory: Among the Missing at the Baseball Hall of Fame*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1998. 248 pp. \$28.50.

Spring training arrives. Your team's chances look much better now thanks to last year's Rookie of the Year pitcher/sluggger who's bound to shine even brighter this year. You brag about your team's chances, and, before some other team's fan can respond "sophomore jinx" in the sports fan chat room, that "sure-fire" all-star Hall-of-Famer turns up injured, out for most or all of the season. He comes back and never seems quite as good as he was, becomes injured again, fades into obscurity. Linkugel and Pappas's well-researched *They Tasted Glory* focuses on just that type of scenario for players such as Mark Fidrych, who won 19 games in 1976, received the *Sporting News* Rookie of the Year award, and never really came back successfully after injuring his arm the following year.

In their Introduction, Linkugel and Pappas assert accurately that their book is about "what might have been." Although the writers emphasize that point a bit too often for my taste, many of the players they focus on certainly would be candidates for the Hall of Fame had they sustained the career performance levels they'd achieved in a shorter time if injuries (Pete Reiser), illness (Kirby Puckett), military service (Johnny Beazley), even death (Lyman Bostock) had not intervened.

They Tasted Glory contains chapters on seventeen players who either had outstanding short careers or one or two seasons when they seemed to dominate the league before declining. Statistical evidence is well-handled and compelling at times. Smokey Joe Wood's 2.03 ERA in 11 seasons as a pitcher and .298 batting average in 5 seasons (mostly part-time) as an outfielder provide argument for his inclusion in the Hall as do stats like Kirby Puckett's .318 average in 12 seasons. Linkugel and Pappas naturally point out that players like Ross Youngs, Sandy Koufax, Roy Campanella, and Dizzy Dean made the Hall of Fame with "shortened careers" like those of Wood and Puckett.

But the majority of players featured, such as Hal Trosky, Paul Dean, Vean Gregg, Tony Conigliaro, shone briefly before fading, and the manner of fading is often the most interesting reading in this book. The authors use contemporary game descriptions, interviews, and even box scores to bring us into the season(s) of success and the time(s) of failure. I knew the stats of most of these players already, but reading about Vean Gregg's minor league career before and after his three consecutive 20-win seasons deepened my sense of his ability and his determination, coming back to pitch for the Senators at age 40 after seven seasons out of the majors.

Inevitably, one can't read of the sore arms of Paul Dean and Boo Ferris or the bad knees of Tony Oliva without thinking how modern medicine might have prolonged their playing days, but that kind of what-ifing is about as useful as my old college roommate's

calculations of when Ted Williams would have beaten Ruth's home run total if he hadn't served in World War Two and Korea. Thankfully, *They Tasted Glory* generally avoids that trap, giving us the events as they played themselves out, making useful comparisons between the players who fell short of the Hall of Fame mark and their contemporaries who did not (Gregg vs. Alexander; Score vs. Feller).

When I was around ten, I remember buying a 32M baseball game and forming a 6-team league with my tolerant father. One of his teams did not include the Cepedas and Killebrews of the day, nor did it have historical players I knew like Tinker and Chance. His ace was Ewell "the whip" Blackwell, the best pitcher he'd seen as a boy in Syracuse watching the minor-league Chiefs. After reading this book, I know more about Blackwell and his sixteen-game winning streak, about others also who could dominate baseball, if only for a brief time.

Philip Wedge