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Dean A. Sullivan. *Middle Innings: A Documentary History of Baseball, 1900-1948.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. xviii + 238 pp. $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8032-4258-6.

Reviewed by Jeff Powers-Beck (East Tennessee State University)
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Documentary histories–largely compilations of vintage newspaper articles–are not for every sports fan, and not even for every historically-minded baseball fan. Yet Dean A. Sullivan devised a successful formula for such a compilation in his 1995 book, *Early Innings: A Documentary History of Baseball, 1825-1908*, providing useful journalistic accounts of the mist-shrouded beginnings of American baseball. His sequel history, *Middle Innings*, attempts to replicate that success in a historical period that is much more amply documented and that is populated by baseball's titan players.

In the six chapters and 105 entries of *Middle Innings*, Sullivan, like a far-ranging shortstop, spans an immense amount of ground. Among the many subjects are the formation of the American League, the first World Series games, the maverick Federal League, the Black Sox scandal, the first radio broadcasts, the teams of the Negro Leagues, the institution of the Hall of Fame, the first night games, war-time play, and the racial integration of baseball. Then there are the legends that cast long shadows across baseball history: Ty Cobb, Walter Johnson, Babe Ruth, Satchel Paige, Jackie Robinson, and others. Sullivan would have to be the literary equivalent of Ozzie Smith or Honus Wagner to cover so much territory without an error in his brief two hundred pages. Indeed, in his preface, he recognizes the book's limitations, acknowledging that "it was not possible to cover every notable event and player in this era," although he has tried "to provide as representative a look at baseball as one volume one" (p. xi).

The task of historical coverage that Sullivan sets out in *Middle Innings* is made all the more difficult by the broad focus of the volume. A central premise of the book is that youth, college, semipro, minor league, and exhibition teams "were as representative ofbaseball as the major league clubs" (p. xi). So between occasional pieces on Cobb, Ruth, and Robinson are interspersed articles on the Waseda University Japanese team that toured the U.S. in 1905; on "Indoor Baseball" and "Kicking Baseball" in 1910; on the Army-Navy baseball game of 1922; on Margaret Gisolo, a fourteen-year-old girl who played American Legion ball in 1928; on the first Olympic baseball trials in 1936; and on the All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League in 1946. While some of these articles are truly important, others seem oddly inconsequential or just plain odd ("Kicking Baseball"). Fans who open the book looking for year-by-year World Series stories will be very much disappointed, as will readers seeking accounts of Ruth's mythic "called shot" in the 1932 Series, Carl Hubbell's fanning of "murderers' row" in the 1934 All-Star Game, Bob Feller's opening day no-hitter in 1940, and Larry Doby's integration of the American League in 1947. Such feats, however notable, do not make Sullivan's list of"representative" events.

To be fair to Sullivan, however, some of the offbeat articles that he has chosen are truly striking and cause the reader to reconsider the social complexities of baseball during this period. One such fascinating piece is an article from *Spalding's Minneapolis-St. Paul Amateur Base Ball Year Book* in 1905, which casually mentions the superb pitching of the semiproChippewa Falls, Wisconsin team in 1904. That Chippewa Falls team was led by the Negro League pitcher George H. Wilson, who also played for the Page Fence Giants and the Chicago Union Giants. To know that Negro League players sometimes teamed successfully with white semipro players in the United States (usually in the northern Midwest), as well as with white players in Cuba, is significant. Seeing Wilson on the book cover, dressed in an old-time uniform, standing confidently beside the white Chippewa players, changes one's view of baseball's integration, however subtly. It is to see the ghost of Fleet Walker, the first black professional baseball player, during the worst of Jim Crowe, haunt the national pastime.

While *Middle Innings* sometimes wanders into left field looking for minor league stories, the editor also gloves some fine specimens of sport writing, which capture "the excitement and immediacy of the game" (p.

xiii). The book features a splendid cadre of sports writers, including Damon Runyon, Hugh Fullerton, Fred Lieb, Sol White, Grantland Rice, Shirley Povich, and Sam Lacey. Several of the best pieces are entrancing descriptions of climactic moments. These gripping tales include *The Kansas City American*'s account of Smokey Joe William's thrilling eleven-inning triumph over Chet Brewer in 1930; John P. Carmichael's ecstatic hyperbole on Gabby Hartnett's "homer in the gloamin"' in 1938; and Lyall Smith's proud celebration of Hank Greenberg's pennant winning homer in 1945. Other notable pieces include Fullerton's prescient analysis of the 1919 Series; Sam Lacey's surprising essay "Will our Boys Make Big League Grade?" in 1944; Stan Baumgartner's entertaining *Sporting News* interview with Connie Mack in 1946; and Rice's moving farewell to Babe Ruth in 1948.

These classic examples of baseball writing still convey "the immediacy of the game" and are still very much worth reading some fifty or eighty years after publication. Although Sullivan's collection pitches its share of balls, it is these well-placed strikes that get *Middle Innings* out of middle-inning trouble.

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