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Rody Johnson. *The Rise and Fall of Dodgertown: 60 Years of Baseball in Vero Beach.* University Press of Florida, 2008. xiii + 302 pp.p Illustrations + photographs. $24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-3194-1.

Reviewed by Jeff Donnelly
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Commissioned by Jeanine A. Clark Bremer

Ebbets Field South

In the gathering darkness of a fall afternoon, we were running final laps around the rock pile that served as a football practice field at Brooklyn Prep, a few blocks from Ebbets Field, home of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Suddenly, the neighborhood erupted in that special Brooklyn roar of joy, and the Prep's many Dodger fans began leaping and jumping as they headed for the locker room. It was 1955, and the Dodgers had won the World Series. As Rody Johnson remarks in *The Rise and Fall of Dodgertown*: "'Wait til next year' was this year" (p. 57)!

Johnson's book provides another perspective on this triumphant moment in Brooklyn Dodger history. That afternoon in 1955, residents of Vero Beach, Florida, gathered around two of the television sets in town, and they too celebrated the Dodgers' triumph over the hated Yankees of New York and Fort Lauderdale. Throughout *The Rise and Fall of Dodgertown*, Johnson interweaves Dodger history with tales of Dodger spring training in Vero Beach, from spring 1948 through St. Patrick's Day, 2008. More than a narrative of baseball, Johnson's work shows how Dodgertown influenced Florida history.

While much of Johnson's story revolves around the athletes, coaches, managers, and front office bosses, there is an important subtext. He places their baseball adventures in the larger narrative of American history, especially the challenge to the racial hierarchy of American life. The very existence of Dodgertown illustrates this. While the African American players did not mind staying at Miami's segregated Lord Calvert hotel because it was a "quality hotel that catered to Negro entertainers," that arrangement did not suit general manager Branch Rickey (p. 26). Rickey wanted all the players to be able to stay together, and achieved this by creating Dodgertown in Vero Beach, providing training facilities and lodging on one property controlled completely by the ball club.

While this practice placed the Dodgers at the leading edge of racial change, it did not mean that change came quickly in all respects. It was not until 1962 that the grandstands of Holman Stadium, the public ball field in Dodgertown, were integrated. Even then, Johnson relates, it took the efforts of African American Dodger players like Tommy Davis, who went out into the right field stands of Holman Stadium, where African American fans traditionally sat, took people by the hand, and led them to places throughout the stadium's seating area. Davis told Johnson later, "(We) … told them to sit wherever they wanted from here on" (p. 85).

When we recall that Davis did this only a few years after and a few miles south from where civil rights leader Harry T. Moore and his wife, Harriette, were murdered in Mims, Florida, the action of Davis and the other Dodger African-American players becomes all the more poignant and significant. There was more than baseball going on under the sun.

As Johnson points out, the Dodgers spent more years at Vero Beach than at either Ebbets Field or Chavez Ravine. As the chronological narrative rolls along, so many names–Branch Rickey, Walter O'Malley, Leo Durocher, Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Duke Snider, Sandy Koufax–and so many stories and anecdotes mark the path that the most demanding of Dodger fans would be satiated. In a very helpful bibliographic essay, Johnson details both his sources and how he used them in each chapter, a practice this reviewer wishes more authors would follow.

The Rise and Fall of Dodgertown is a book appealing to a niche–Dodger fans and baseball fans–but containing significant social history of a time and place of great change in American life.

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