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had been executed by drug dealers and dumped in a ditch in the Seattle area at only nineteen years old.

Outraged and confused, Merlino embarked on his journey to reunite his team. The team's coach, Willie McClain, Sr., believed that sports, and particularly basketball not only represented a vehicle for upward social mobility but also had the power to unite disparate groups of people and teach the valuable life lessons of teamwork, trust, and responsibility. Although this question is addressed with conflicted sentiments by the different characters throughout the book, Merlino's own acceptance of this claim seems to go unresolved. On one hand Merlino sees the effects sports have on young children such as Tyrell Johnson whose identity became so wrapped up with being an athlete that when reality struck he wandered aimlessly through life, unsure of what to do next. On the other hand, the team's best player, Eric Hampton, took advantage of the opportunities afforded to him through sport, went to college, obtained a high paying job, and started a family. But what went wrong with Tyrell? Merlino understands the complexity of that answer, and so he lets that question linger.

Despite the concentration on the history of societal issues regarding black and white Seattle and the complex relationships between the two groups—or maybe because of this—*The Hustle* finds a home with those interested in sport history and Seattle history in general. The reader will gain a unique insight into Seattle's dynamic integrationist past, one that may be believed by the everyday observer to be far more progressive than it actually was.

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NATHANSON, MITCHELL. *A People's History of Baseball*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. Pp. xiv+275. \$29.95 pb.

More than just a sport or game in the United States, baseball is considered the “national pastime.” For more than one hundred and fifty years society has ascribed cultural, historical, indeed emblematic importance to baseball and how it reflects American values and beliefs such as equality, heroism, and capitalism. In his well-written and cogently argued book, *A People's History of Baseball*, Mitchell Nathanson, a professor of legal writing, challenges these established narratives and provides “counter-stories” that raise questions about power, manipulation, and truth. *A People's History of Baseball* is not a traditional, chronological history of the sport; rather, it is an attempt to deconstruct the prevailing romantic and patriotic narratives of baseball. In doing so, Nathanson provides the reader new perspectives of historically entrenched stories about baseball history.

*A People's History of Baseball* is organized into six chapters with overarching historical themes and episodes: the rise of baseball and the founding of the National League; the autonomous and sovereign nation of Major League Baseball with its extralegal authority; Branch Rickey, race, and integration of baseball; the rise of the players, their union, and the transformation of the game; the denial of history and the concepts of collective versus

individualistic thinking; and finally the sportswriters and their role in preserving and propagating the accepted narrative of baseball. Probing social, political, economic, legal, and cultural history, Nathanson questions how and by whom the narrative of the history of baseball is and has been constructed and suggests that beyond the superficial surface of baseball's history is a darker side of control, egoism, greed, suppression, and the egregious manipulation of fans and truth.

Central in baseball's narrative is the belief in the transformational quality of baseball, the "baseball creed." The origins of baseball in the mid nineteenth century, Nathanson argues, are embedded in social policy, economic standing, and especially the values of the Protestant-WASP establishment, and games were played to demonstrate a superior social status. After a period of turmoil and scandal which destabilized baseball, club owners initiated a coup d'état and founded the National League in 1876 as an "owner's league" where all control over players (such as the all-important Reserve Clause of 1879) and league governance rested with them. It was an exclusive, elite club whose member-owners journalists praised as saviors of Victorian values. While society changed with immigration shifts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so too did the baseball creed. Baseball offered immigrants and children a chance to acculturate into mainstream American society, club owners were seen as promoting "American" values and contributing to an American identity, and as Nathanson writes, "baseball became more than just a game but symbolic of America as a whole" (p. 27). Baseball "magnates" championed the superiority of their game and themselves, institutions deferred to the overt patriotism of the game, and the federal judiciary and legislature reinforced baseball's political, social, and legal power. When the reputation of baseball and its creed were once again questioned in the wake of the 1919 "Black Sox" scandal, the result was the concentration of power in a newly established commissioner and friend of the owners, Kennesaw Mountain Landis, who was given authority to take any action he felt necessary to protect baseball as an institution and ensure the moral integrity of the game. Baseball created its own system of justice separate from federal law, including its authority to ban and punish players.

Nathanson has researched thoroughly, writes persuasively, and does not shy away from challenging even the most revered narrative in baseball: Branch Rickey, Jackie Robinson, and the integration of Major League Baseball. Insightfully, Nathanson points out that despite the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision institutionalizing segregation, Major League Baseball and its Commissioner Landis publicly denied the existence of a color barrier in baseball and punished anyone who contradicted him. Far from being the result of Branch Rickey's humanity, compassion, and belief in equality, the integration of baseball was a process begun by African-American participation in the world wars. Politicians, especially in New York, Nathanson argues, as well as African-American, alternative, and even Communist newspapers in America and the international press problematized the integration of baseball as early as the 1930s and increasing during and immediately after World War II. Scam tryouts for black ballplayers began as early as 1945. Rickey, according to Nathanson, recognized the impending segregation of baseball and was able to manipulate and take control of it while securing inexpensive talent for his ballclub. As Rickey's legend and status grew, baseball created a new, revised narrative to further its baseball creed and define baseball as a force of democracy and racial equality.

In *A People's History of Baseball*, Mitchell Nathanson reveals not just his masterful knowledge of baseball but also a profound and nuanced understanding of the complexities of American society. His book is a welcomed and long-needed contribution to the history of baseball, and with its challenge to accepted historical narratives it also contributes to a much more focused understanding of American cultural and historical studies.

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O'CALLAGHAN, LIAM. *Rugby in Munster: A Social and Cultural History*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2011. Pp. 300. Tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. €39.

This meticulously researched study traces the development of rugby union in the Irish province of Munster from “minority sport” to “mainstream cultural product” (p. 1). With this in mind, Liam O'Callaghan's stated aim is “not only to tell the complex story of rugby football in Munster but also to probe that complexity by extrapolating key themes from the story and analyzing them within the broader context of the social and cultural history of both the province and the country as a whole” (p. 1). To this end, whilst the first two chapters offer a chronological account of the origins and subsequent development of Munster rugby, the remaining five are thematic in approach, focusing in turn on social class, violence, politics, economics, and the impact of professionalism. These are followed by a thought-provoking conclusion in which the author summarizes the main points that emerge from his study and concludes that there has been “a remarkable re-imagination of the game's history in the province—one that strives to underline social homogeneity” (p. 230). Indeed, according to the author, “mediated discursive threads have given the Munster team and fans a powerful sense of their own traditional uniqueness” (p. 231).

As these concluding remarks indicate, O'Callaghan is at pains throughout the book to demonstrate that rugby in Munster has never been monolithic and has consistently assumed different characteristics depending on locale. Moreover, the book vividly reveals that “localisation was the essence of Munster rugby” (p. 238) and that “the pub, club and parish remained synonymous” (p. 239). This is not, however, the dominant view of Munster rugby that is held by outsiders, even those who have a genuine interest in and knowledge of the game. Two perceptions dominate such thinking about Munster rugby—first, that it is more socially inclusive than rugby in many other parts of the world, including the rest of Ireland as well as England and, second, that it is defined by the success of the provincial team in the era of professionalism and European club competition.

O'Callaghan addresses the former widely held view by showing that rugby's social character differed and continues to differ markedly in the province's two main urban centers and rugby strongholds, the cities of Cork and Limerick. In what is arguably the book's most interesting chapter, on class and community, it is argued that “the complexity of the social appeal of Munster rugby is much vaunted yet poorly understood . . .” (p. 67). Inner-city and working-class involvement with the game in Limerick was not replicated in