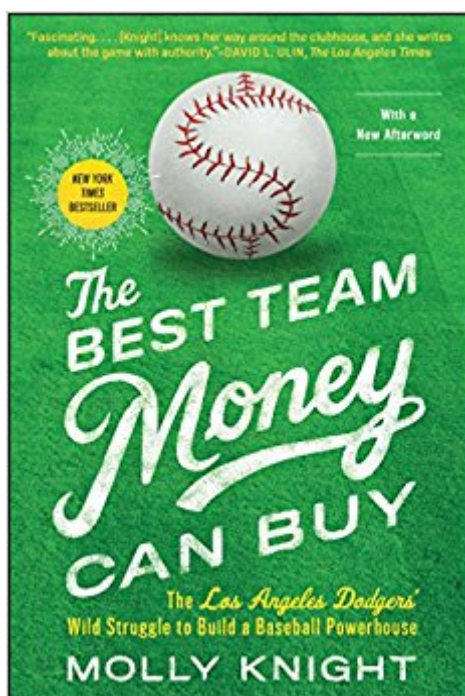


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# The Best Team Money Can Buy: The Los Angeles Dodgers' Wild Struggle To Build A Baseball Powerhouse



## Synopsis

With a new Afterword covering the 2015 season. The bestselling, inside-the-clubhouse story of two tumultuous years when the Los Angeles Dodgers were re-made from top to bottom, becoming the most talked-about and most colorful team in baseball. “It’s as if Molly Knight ushers you behind the closed clubhouse doors.” (Buster Olney, ESPN) In 2012 the Los Angeles Dodgers were bought out of bankruptcy in the most expensive sale in sports history. Los Angeles icon Magic Johnson and his partners hoped to put together a team worthy of Hollywood: consistently entertaining. By most accounts they have succeeded, if not always in the way they might have imagined. In *The Best Team Money Can Buy*, Molly Knight tells the story of the Dodgers’ 2013 and 2014 seasons with detailed, previously unreported revelations. She shares a behind-the-scenes account of the astonishing sale of the Dodgers, as well as what the Dodgers actually knew in advance about rookie phenom and Cuban defector Yasiel Puig. We learn how close manager Don Mattingly was to losing his job during the 2013 season—and how the team turned around the season in the most remarkable fifty-game stretch of any team since World War II. Knight also provides a rare glimpse into the in-fighting and mistrust that derailed the team in 2014 and paints an intimate portrait of star pitcher Clayton Kershaw, including details about the record contract offer he turned down before accepting the richest contract any pitcher ever signed. Exciting, surprising, and filled with juicy details, “a must-read for fans of the Dodgers and all Los Angeles sports teams.” Knight’s undercover work is like none other (Library Journal). *The Best Team Money Can Buy* is filled with “fascinating perspectives” (Los Angeles Times) and “interesting anecdotes about some of baseball’s most compelling figures” (The Sacramento Bee).

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## Customer Reviews

“From the outside looking in, the Dodgers have been a bubbling cauldron of personality, talent and moods, with the occasional dollop of jealousy. In *The Best Team Money Can Buy*, it's as if Molly Knight ushers you behind the closed clubhouse doors to see it for yourself.” (Buster Olney, ESPN) “Fascinating perspectives. . . . [Knight] knows her way around the clubhouse, and she writes about the game with authority.” (David L. Ulin *The Los Angeles Times*) “With unprecedented access, Knight brings readers inside the clubhouse and the front office as no other writer has with any team, showing us a modern-day soap opera playing out at 60 feet 6 inches.” (Keith Law, Analyst for ESPN's "Baseball Tonight") “A well-written book that offers a nuanced look into the dynamics of a big league clubhouse. . . . A must-read.” (Brendan Gawlowski *Baseball Prospectus*) “In *The Best Team Money Can Buy*, Molly Knight lifts the curtain on one of the premier franchises in sports, taking readers beyond the field and into the clubhouse, board rooms and homes of some of the most compelling athletes of this generation. It is a rocky path—but a rollicking ride—for a glamour team bankrolled by billionaire owners who lifted the team from bankruptcy and will try anything to win a championship. With keen observations culled from tireless reporting, Knight deftly paints an intimate, nuanced portrait of the people behind it all, bringing these characters to life as nobody has before.” (Tyler Kepner, national baseball writer for *The New York Times*) “An entertaining chronicle of two Dodger seasons. . . . Knight supplies plenty of juicy clubhouse details.” (Gene Maddaus *L.A. Weekly*) “For any self-respecting fan, putting this book down would be like trying to eat just one garlic fry. . . . An agile exploration of the Dodgers' vertiginous 2013 season. Knight had her notebook out for all of it.” (*Los Angeles Magazine*) “Consistently absorbing. . . . Knight is a talented journalist, and there's enough tumult in these pages to hold the attention of even a casual fan.” (Kevin Canfield *The San Francisco Chronicle*) “Entertaining . . . offers interesting anecdotes about some of baseball's most compelling figures, among them Clayton Kershaw, Zack Greinke, Don Mattingly and the enigmatic Yasiel Puig.” (Ailene Voisin *The Sacramento Bee*) “Knight delivers an elegant précis of a baseball team's season, and you don't have to be a Dodgers fan to enjoy it.” (*Kirkus Reviews*) “A compelling, well-examined book that exemplifies what occurs behind the scenes. A must-read for fans of the Dodgers and all Los Angeles sports teams. Knight's undercover work is like none other.” (*Library Journal*)

Molly Knight wrote about baseball for ESPN the Magazine for eight seasons. Her work has also appeared in The New York Times Magazine, Glamour, SELF, Baseball Prospectus, and Variety. A native of Los Angeles and lifelong Dodgers fan, she lives in LA. *The Best Team Money Can Buy* is her first book.

The first 50 pages or so are a fascinating and insightful look into the McCourt ownership debacle (and divorce) and how the new owners bet the ranch on buying the team. After that, with the exception of Clayton Kershaw and Don Mattingly, it's simply a soap opera of overpaid prima donnas. Many years ago Sparky Lyle wrote a book about the 1978 NY Yankees entitled "The Bronx Zoo". It was a far more entertaining behind the scenes look because the players (Reggie Jackson, Ron Guidry, Goose Gossage, Lyle), manager (Billy Martin) and owner (Steinbrenner) were all bigger than life characters. The Dodger players are not bigger than life characters except in their own minds. If you are a passionate Dodger lover or hater you might enjoy this behind the scenes look. If you are neither of those, borrow a copy and read the first 50 or so pages.

I was shocked at how absorbing this book was to read. Often I couldn't put it down. I didn't expect a book about the most recent iterations of the LA Dodgers to be quite this interesting, but what a beautiful mess that team is. Such an eclectic and discordant mix of talent, wealth, entitlement, immaturity, and insecurity. Year after year, statistical projections predict the Dodgers to be at the very top of the league and then each season unfolds into a melodramatic roller coaster ride for them. Molly Knight's book provides all the most intimate details of these adventures. Starting off with the story of the transition of the LA Dodgers franchise from bankrupt pathetic embarrassment under crook owner Frank McCourt to the financially flourishing Guggenheim ownership regime with lots of behind-the-scenes details, the book (paperback version) covers the period of 2012 to 2015 focusing on the human side of the game without ever drifting into the territory of hero worship or platitudes or cliches. Just lots and lots of fascinating, entertaining stories about very proud and powerful personalities trying to coexist. Knight certainly knows baseball and when she does discuss the play on the field or statistical performance, she handles it adeptly. But the heart of this book is its human stories---the peculiarity of pitcher Zack Greinke, the pouty star outfielder Matt Kemp, paranoid middle man manager Don Mattingly, the loose cannon polarizing rule-breaker Yasiel Puig, the focused and determined superstar Clayton Kershaw, and so much more. The style sometimes reminded me of Dan Okrent's classic book "Nine Innings" in which the description of a single

ballgame sets off lengthy tangents detailing the history of this or that player, all the events of their career that led them to that point. My only complaint (a minor one) is that things seem to fade toward the end, as though she wasn't sure how to conclude this great book. I was really hoping for super in-depth detail and discussion of the organization assembling what Knight calls "The Best Front Office Money Can Buy" but felt that section was a little too truncated. That powerhouse front office, an All Star team of former GMs and sought-after execs, is (I think) the most fascinating thing about the current Dodgers and I hoped for more stories about how that all came about and how they managed to function. Was shocked to see Knight mention a few times that the team had missed out on a trade or a signing because the front office was too focused on some other matter. Sounds like exactly what this braintrust was built to avoid and completely contradicting the stories that were coming out during the 2014-15 winter meetings when all the ex-GMs in the front office were wheeling and dealing separately, divide-and-conquer style. But I guess all of that is a story for another book.

Was kind of disappointed in this book, as a season ticket holder. There was really not much else in it other than her being there when Kershaw signed his contract that we didn't know already. But for those not knowledgeable about the Dodgers it is a good read.

As a born and raised from Brooklyn fan of the Dodgers I read anything and everything about my beloved "Bums". Most books are pure historical but this one is the history (excuse my definition) is so recent it's current. To know how the Dodgers got to the position they're in right now the fact that they have done so much to reshape the entire franchise from top (owners) to bottom players managers coaches in such an explosively short period of time is both mind blowing and exciting. The author fills in all the missing pieces and behind the scenes drama that doesn't appear in the papers or TV. Or at the very least she puts it all in one tantalizing place. She combines not only the "soap opera" goings on between mega-millionaire ballplayers with egos mostly large intellects high and low along with mini-biographies that are extremely concise and interesting. The portions dedicated to the best one-two pitching combo in baseball

of Kershaw and Greinke are particularly illuminating. It's comforting knowing what a good person Kershaw is off the field and reassuring knowing what an ultra-competitive guy he is on the field. He is certainly one ballplayer whose drive will not be diminished due to a large contract. As far as Greinke, I knew he had some "issues" with depression type problems earlier in his career but the background information provided puts it all into a new more crystallized light. It makes me want to root even harder (if possible) for Greinke. I was happily amazed at just how much Zack loves baseball and all its intricacies and his dedication. As an old-school Brooklyn-Los Angeles fan his acquisition reminds me of when the Dodgers got Preacher Roe whose record with the "Bums" from 1948-1954 was \*\*93 wins & 37 losses\*\* and that's the path that Zack is on. (Please do Zack!). Additionally it's pretty entertaining some of Greinke's "Cosmo Kramer" type no-holds-barred comments. The real power of this book is that even with the tons and tons of knowledge I have of the Dodgers I'm so thankful to how much I learned that I didn't know. I didn't realize how much power was taken away from Ned Colletti before his title was changed. How little he really had to do with the blockbuster Red Sox deal that brought over Adrian Gonzalez and all the others. And also how the whole deal was really about Gonzalez! The mindset of the new owners is so refreshing and outsiders don't realize that it isn't just a matter of spending giant dollars. It's truly looking at the big long term picture such as huuugggeeeeee I mean huge TV contracts and spreading the investment out over future years and future income. This book is a "true-blue-revelation" and the only minor blemish is the overuse of metaphors such as "quacking" body parts but that's akin to saying you didn't like the fingertip in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling.

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