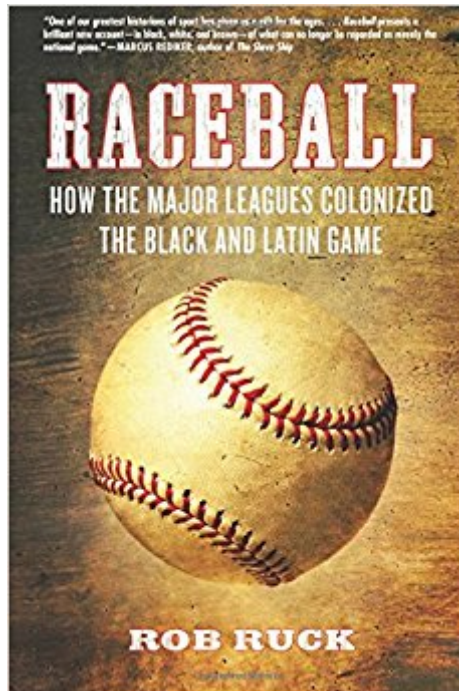




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Raceball: How The Major Leagues Colonized The Black And Latin Game



Synopsis

From an award-winning writer, the first linked history of African Americans and Latinos in Major League Baseball. After peaking at 27 percent of all major leaguers in 1975, African Americans now make up less than one-tenth--a decline unimaginable in other men's pro sports. The number of Latin Americans, by contrast, has exploded to over one-quarter of all major leaguers and roughly half of those playing in the minors. Award-winning historian Rob Ruck not only explains the catalyst for this sea change; he also breaks down the consequences that cut across society. Integration cost black and Caribbean societies control over their own sporting lives, changing the meaning of the sport, but not always for the better. While it channeled black and Latino athletes into major league baseball, integration did little for the communities they left behind. By looking at this history from the vantage point of black America and the Caribbean, a more complex story comes into focus, one largely missing from traditional narratives of baseball's history. *Raceball* unveils a fresh and stunning truth: baseball has never been stronger as a business, never weaker as a game.

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Customer Reviews

Ruck (*The Tropic of Baseball*) states the cold, hard facts of the Major Leagues' racist history, its vast economic benefits from the demolition of the once-proud Negro Leagues, and the current Latin player influx in his new book. Ruck, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, explores how baseball fever spread through Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and other Latin countries. He traces the forgotten link between the great Negro baseball stars, including Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson,

and their Caribbean counterparts touring outside the U.S. before appreciative fans in the 1940s. Neither the Negro nor Latin player desired playing stateside because of the rigid Jim Crow laws, until the end of WWII, when America broke the color barrier with Jackie Robinson's entry to the big leagues. Ruck's gutsy account of this major sport with a tarnished past is thought provoking, arguing that "the integration of Black America has cost the price of its soul plus a crucial part of its social cohesion." (Mar.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Raceball proves that Ruck remains at the top of his game. Incorporating personal interviews with many former players and personalities, such as Harold Tinker, Ted Page, Mal Goode, and August Wilson, who have since passed away, Ruck relies on their voices from the grave and his deep knowledge of black and Latin baseball to make his narrative truly sing." —•Brad Snyder, author of *A Well-Paid Slave* "One of our greatest historians of sport has given us a gift for the ages: a history of baseball that captures its multicultural dynamics in original and profoundly illuminating ways." —•Marcus Rediker, author of *The Slave Ship* "A profound look at why Latinos have replaced African American baseball players, helping the reader understand the game as a business. Definitely a must-read for those who love the game, regardless of origin, race, or ethnicity." —•Juan Marichal, MLB Hall of Famer "Some are well-versed when it comes to the Negro Leagues. Others are aficionados about the rise of Latinos in baseball. But Rob Ruck is one of the few writers who can be called an expert in both fields. Perceptive and insightful, *Raceball* is a pleasure to read." —•Tim Wendel, author of *The New Face of Baseball and High Heat* —• "One of our greatest historians of sport has given us a gift for the ages: a history of baseball that captures its multicultural dynamics in original and profoundly illuminating ways." —• Synthesizing a lifetime of pathbreaking research, *Raceball* presents a brilliant new account —• in black, white, and brown —• of what can no longer be regarded as merely the national game. —• —• —• Marcus Rediker, author of *The Slave Ship*

I finished *Raceball* today. I found the book very informative, especially for those interested in baseball history. Rob Ruck provides an explanation as to why baseball has declined in the black community. The historian also explains the decline of professional baseball leagues in places such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. Why has baseball almost died out amongst African Americans? Rob Ruck gives various reasons. One was the breaking of the color barrier by Jackie Robinson back in the 1940s. Prior to that, the Negro National League was popular amongst the

community. Then, black baseball fans preferred to follow the Major Leagues and Robinson's progress there rather than the goings on in the NNL. In addition, the commercialization of baseball in the 1980s led to it being less of a community sport amongst blacks as more fans nationwide followed the MLB teams rather than local teams. In addition, per Rob Ruck, universities offered more lucrative scholarships for football and basketball, thereby leading to more black youth pursuing those sports instead. Baseball still remains popular amongst the Latin community, especially amongst Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. However, professional leagues have strongly declined in Latin American countries where baseball is historically popular. That was also for various reasons. The fiercely patriotic Mexican millionaire Jorge Pasquel attempted to create a Mexican league to rival the MLB. However, the MLB won the competition due to better funding as well as instituting rules making it more challenging for Americans to play in the Mexican league. In addition, MLB franchises created baseball academies in Caribbean islands, especially the Dominican Republic, which employed young baseball players to develop talent for the Major Leagues. As a result, professional teams were replaced by talent academies in those places. *Raceball*, although not always a page turner, is certainly a good read.

I had to read *Raceball* for Professor Ruck's class at the University of Pittsburgh. It was one of the best books I've ever had to read for school and would definitely have read it had I not been in school. Ruck takes an indepth look into the history of black and latino baseball, starting as early as the beginning of the 20th Century with US Soldiers in Latin America, to the Negro National Leagues rise and fall and also looks at how Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic have become the talent hubs of today's modern game. Ruck uses a lot of great examples and has a lot of unique insight. You wont be sorry if you pick up this book.

This book has it all; it is thoughtfully presented, well researched, interesting to read, and if you love the game, you'll love the insight!

excellent

Living outside of the country, this book has brought me up to date on the dominance of players from the Dominican Republic and the reason for that trend--money for the owners. Of course, the Dominicans are excellent players and play for the love of the game. If we changed our policies towards Cuba, baseball would be that much better still. The reasons for the decline in the numbers

of Black Americans playing baseball has more to do with the high price of tickets and salaries than anything else, it seems, as well as the very minor role played by college baseball. Playing baseball requires a network of funding and organizational support whereas basketball is still a playground sport where pickup games easily bring into prominence top players, even in poor neighborhoods. Baseball is more complicated. Football works for blacks because the colleges accept the role as minor leagues for the NFL.

As both a Cuban American and a lover of baseball history, I was eager to read this book. The story of Caribbean baseball is undertold, but well represented in folklore and pictures scattered around in places like Key West. Its fascinating to think of the possibilities had baseball followed the example of the winter leagues, where the best players in the world - white, black, and latino - all played on the same fields without worrying about race. Unfortunately, the writer frequently slips into political mode and shows his liberal bias constantly. Calling Casto "left leaning" is a monumental understatement, and he blames the US embargo for the economic situation in Cuba, completely ignoring Castro's alignment with the Soviet Union and its communist principles. While decrying the loss of baseball control for Caribbean countries, he significantly under emphasizes the economic boon that has come to many latin players in the last 50 years - financial opportunities on a magnitude that would NEVER have come to them under communistic systems. To enjoy this book, you'll have to spit out a lot of bones to enjoy the meat....

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