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From Reader Review Leo Durocher: Baseball's Prodigal Son for online ebook

Howard Harrison says

I have been waiting for true, factual, definitive biography of Leo for a long time and this one did not disappoint. Bravo Mr. Dickson. A thoroughly enjoyable read.

Dan Tillinghast says

Very interesting book about a fascinating man.

Bob says

I received a prepublication copy from the publisher.

Leo Durocher is an outsized figure in baseball history. Dickson's book tries to cover a lot of ground in just about 300 pages. Most of the emphasis is on Durocher's turbulent off-field life. The baseball field was just another stage for Durocher to perform on. He is the prototype for the angry, dirt-kicking umpire. Whether or not his managerial acumen made his team's to succeed is for the readers to decide.

Richard says

Baseball at its best!

Great nostalgic trip back to honor a real old time baseball figure. The story is loaded with history and within three are ancedotes.

Lane says

A good biography of Leo Durocher's baseball career and personal life. It is well written and easy to read. I would have rated it higher but I did not feel there was much new information as he was a person in the news my whole life. Probably the best part for me was the early years and the summation of the conflicting stories of Durocher's managerial career and interactions with the press. A great baseball manager but his belittling combative style often produced poorer results than his players were capable of obtaining.

Steve Phillipson says

If you grew up when Leo was the manager of the Cubs, this book is a must read. Who knew he was so Hollywood back in the day? A lot of great baseball history about a guy whose career in baseball included playing with Babe Ruth, managing Ernie Banks, and helping bring Jackie Robinson up to the big leagues.

Paul Brewer says

One of my all-time favourite memoirs is Durocher's *Nice Guys Finish Last*, an entertaining romp that Dickson shows has moments when the subtitle 'based on a true story' might have been helpful.

No such comment can be made of Dickson's almost well-measured account of a Hall-of-Fame manager. It's not quite 'just the facts, ma'am', as Dickson is more than a mere compiler of events from one man's life. Especially in the earlier chapters, Dickson's book goes into the times as much as the life. Durocher's career embraced the two seminal periods of baseball history -- the 'classic age' of Ruth and pre-war Dimaggio, and the 'pivotal decade' of 1947-58, when major-league baseball truly became national by both integrating and by placing teams outside the favoured cities of the East and Midwest. Durocher even had an 'autumn engagement' in the tumultuous early years of labour strife, although his career was effectively finished by the time free agency sprang on the scene.

Dickson's focus on time as much as life, however, peters out in that seminal decade, and I found that a problem. Durocher's supposed relationship with gangsters, his great support for integration, and his Los Angeles connections all connect to issues that in different ways shed light on the nature of the United States. (Indeed, the persistent shadowy presence of 'gangsterism' throughout urban American life during the twentieth century is a great unexplored theme, despite some fine efforts that focus rather more on the gangsters themselves than the effects of their largely background presence in politics and culture.) It's also a fact that when Leo's on the outs, so is Dickson's book. So long as Durocher is in charge of a ballclub, Dickson's narrative flows along splendidly. Consigned to the broadcast booth or the coach's box, and things seem to come to a stop. (It is at this point that some useful digressions into the 'times' were obvious by their absence. The last chapter, covering Durocher's late-life disappointments in Hall of Fame elections, is particularly plodding.

At the end of the book, one has to conclude that for all his unpleasantness, Dickson thinks Durocher a good bloke. I dunno about that. One could almost imagine Durocher's life as presidential timber in these present times.

Monte Lamb says

Leo was quite the guy! The author does a good job of balancing Leo's cantankerous acts on the baseball diamond and his flamboyant life style. Many of his actions would be considered way overboard today, but his hard-nosed style seemed to work early in his managerial career. He did rub too many people the wrong way, especially Commissioner Happy Chandler who suspended him for one year in 1947. You can't look at Leo's successes on the field without balancing it against all his problems with the press, umpires, and others. What you do get is a smart, cocky baseball man who just wanted to win. The book reads easily and is well-balanced in my opinion. If you like baseball, it's a great read.

Lance says

One of the most colorful characters to don a baseball uniform, Leo Durocher had his share of unusual stories as both a player and a manager. Controversy seemed to follow him from the Bronx to Cincinnati to Brooklyn to Manhattan to Chicago and then to Houston. But through it all, he also gained admiration both as a defensive player and an intelligent, gutsy manager.

Author Paul Dickson tells many of these tales about Durocher, both on and off the field, in an even-handed balanced manner. While Durocher had his admirers, he also had many enemies. The one person who seemed to have the biggest grudge against him was the second commissioner of baseball, Happy Chandler, who suspended Durocher for the entire 1947 season when he was managing the Brooklyn Dodgers. The evidence that was presented to Chandler was the type that would not hold up in a court of law and Dickson also mentions a letter from a prominent public figure who was Catholic and demanded the suspension because of Durocher's courting and subsequent marriage of actress Lorraine Day, who was married at the time they started seeing each other.

While that was the story that seemed to affect Durocher's career the most (even to the point of keeping him out of the Hall of Fame until he passed away as Chandler had sway with the Veterans Committee) there is plenty more written about Durocher. The allegation that he stole Babe Ruth's watch when the two were teammates on the Yankees, the allegation of stealing signals for the Giants that allowed Bobby Thompson to hit the home run that won the 1951 National League pennant for the Giants (something everyone on the field for both teams denies) and his poor treatment of future Hall of Famers Ernie Banks and Ron Santo when he managed the Chicago Cubs are all covered.

His off-field life is also covered fairly in and good detail. His extensive debts, his taste for expensive clothing, his three marriages and divorces and his post-baseball life all make for interesting reading and the writing about them is very good. The reader will get the complete picture of Durocher, both on and off the field. Any reader who is interested in the life of "Leo the Lip" will enjoy this book.

<http://sportsbookguy.blogspot.com/201...>

Andrew Langert says

I had already read Paul Dickson's outstanding biography of Bill Veeck, the controversial owner of several baseball franchises, including my Chicago White Sox. While Veeck was a pain in the neck to many people, he was a really good man. Leo Durocher, every bit as controversial as Veeck as a player and a field manager, was not a good guy and Dickson does not sugarcoat this.

Like his Veeck book, this book (published this year, 2017) on Durocher is extremely well-researched and thoroughly covers his life inside and outside the game of baseball.

Lots of great baseball history in this book: Babe Ruth, the Gashouse Gang in St. Louis and Bobby Thompson's pennant-winning home run in 1951, the "shot heard around the world". And, of course, for us Chicago fans, there was Durocher's tenure as Cubs manager, highlighted (or lowlighted) by the infamous collapse of the 1969 Cubs.

Durocher was a very self-centered egomaniac. You don't read much about him doing things to help other people. However, he was in favor of breaking the color line in baseball and was Jackie Robinson's first manager. However, he gave Robinson a hard time. Soon afterwards, he became the manager of the Giants

and had a great relationship with Willie Mays, a young black player who really struggled on his arrival to the major leagues. Later, another black player, base-stealing expert Maury Wills of the Dodgers was vocal about his positive relationship with Durocher. But, again on the other hand, he treated Ernie Banks very poorly when he managed Banks with the Cubs.

Off the field, Durocher hung out with show biz types and gamblers. He was suspended from baseball for one year (1947), apparently for associating with crime figures.

Excellent book! Who will Dickson write about next?

Steven Peterson says

This is a very fine biography of one of baseball's prodigal sons, Leo "the Lip" Durocher. Between playing and managing, he lived in the eras of Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb up through Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle, and Ernie Banks. He managed three teams for fairly long stretches--Dodgers, Giants, and Cubs. As a manager, he won over 2,000 games--rating him very high on the list of winningest managers. But it's not so much the statistics; his persona also grabbed attention.

The book takes a look at Durocher's life from his birth (he was born as French Canadian--his name would have been pronounced De-rochay) to his death. In between, a lot of things happened! A brouhaha with Babe Ruth over a watch (did Durocher steal it from the Babe or not?), acrobatic fielding as a shortstop--and a rather weak stick (career batting average=.247), represented his league in the All-Star game as a player, time as a player-manager (as his playing career wound down). He was a scrappy player who could get under other players' skin with his bench jockeying and aggressive performance.

As a manager, he was no less scrappy and aggressive. As one reads the book, one is struck by how many games he was ejected from and his suspensions for being a "bad boy." Arguments with umpires were the stuff of legends, with kicking dirt on them, screaming at them, sometimes hitting them. He would fight to the very edge of the rules to win a game (and may have gone across the line a time or so!). He was hard on his players, and there were occasional revolts against his manner (Dodgers and Cubs). He could rip players to shreds (it is almost shocking to read of him trying to ride Ernie Banks (Mr. Cub) out of baseball. While he won a lot of games, he could blow it, too. His performance as manager with the Cubs is often looked at as a not so great job--overplaying the team in the miserable hot summers in Illinois, burning them out perhaps? He was also an early supporter of allowing African-Americans play major league baseball.

We also learn of his personal life--his four marriages, his friendship with George Raft, his heavy involvement in gambling, his involvement with a Hollywood Crowd, including Frank Sinatra.

All in all, an even handed look at Durocher, warts and all. The reader gets a sense of the best and the worst of the man.

Harold Kasselman says

He began his professional career when Cal Coolidge was President. he played with Babe Ruth and against Ty Cobb. He was a manager until his last gig with Houston in 1975. He was a rogue, a character, one of the best defensive shortstops in his era, and one of the most controversial persona of all time in baseball history. Paul Dickson does a wonderful job in presenting the dichotomy of Durocher. He was at once gregarious and

gruff, approachable and aloof, aggressive and kind. For me he was an earlier version of Billy Martin but with gambling as his addiction rather than alcohol. Of course Dickson had a lot of material to work with because of Durocher's antics over many decades Still Dickson does a great job in presenting all of the fights, associations, the rebellions, the fight for integration, and the closing bitter years in an efficient manner without missing the essentials. Durocher was from a different pre-Marvin Miller era and knew only one way to play the game. He steadfastly stood for that kind of ball and managerial style even when it was clearly outdated. As kind and genuine were his efforts to integrate and fight for Monte Irvin and Willie Mays, so was his rancor and jealousy towards Ernie Banks, Ron Santo, and Ken Holtzman (whom he berated for his Jewish ethic) in his latter years. While Durocher may have gotten a bum rap from Happy Chandler in 1947, Durocher was a lifelong liar, egocentric, arrogant, and pugilist who offended his teams, the press, and the fans. Maybe you will come out differently about Durocher, but that's what makes a great book. There is plenty to debate and Dickson provides some wonderful stories and background to the last rogue of baseball.

Rob Neyer says

This is the best book about Durocher that's been written, and will likely hold that place for some time. Maybe forever. But I will admit that I felt a bit empty after reading, as I did *not* after reading Dickson's fine book about Bill Veeck.

Minor quibbles: Dickson relied solely on traditional playing statistics, he didn't mention Durocher's horrible decision to play a badly injured Pete Reiser in the second half of the 1941 season, and Adolfo Phillips isn't mentioned at all.

Still, Dickson obviously did tremendous research and hits all (or almost) all of the many high and low points of Durocher's incredible career in baseball. What's missing, for me anyway, is meaning. Why was he the sort of man that he was? How did he treat his child and his step-child, and what did they come to think of him? Maybe I ask for too much. But the biographies that stick with me are those that don't just tell me what happened, but why. And there's very little why in this book.

Andrew says

Author Paul Dickson chose to take on the task of separating truth from legend in writing the biography of one of those larger-than-life characters, baseball legend Leo Durocher. Separating – but not ignoring, as in Durocher's case, the legend WAS a large part of the man himself. A legend he cultivated in both the world of baseball and in the Hollywood aura in which he spent so much of his time.

“Leo Durocher: Baseball's Prodigal Son” does a great job of documenting one of the most colorful characters in baseball history, casting him neither as heroic nor demonic (although some of his actions certainly fell into each of those categories). Certainly some of the other people whose lives intersected with Durocher's had their own opinion – and Leo probably not only earned their praise or condemnation, but probably did his best to provide opportunities to reinforce that feeling,

Durocher was a dichotomy. He was an early advocate of allowing the African American to play in the major leagues, but then did not get along with Jackie Robinson. (In fairness, race was never an issue; baseball style and effort were.) He mingled with underworld characters, but was innocent of any actual charge when

Commissioner Happy Chandler finally suspended him for a year – again, ironically, missing the opportunity to be the manager of the team who first integrated the Majors. He managed the Cubs, but never got along with “Mr. Cub” Ernie Banks. And author Paul Dickson captured all of this in one of the few biographical “page turners” that I’ve ever come across.

Anyone interested in baseball’s history should snap this book up at their earliest opportunity.

RATING: 5 stars.

DISCLOSURE: I was provided with a complimentary copy of this book in a random draw. No obligations were requested nor bestowed, although a reasonably prompt HONEST review was hinted at.

Dave says

A really good biography about one of the controversial figures in American Sports, in the first half of the last century. Leo is best known as a competitor who said he would trip his own mother if it would mean winning a ballgame. Durocher was in the middle of such events as the 27 Yankees, the Gashouse Gang in St. Louis, helping smooth the way for great players like Jackie Robinson, and Willie Mays. The collapse of the Cubs, in 1969 which cleared the way for the Miracle Mets. His personal life and his controversial nature often obscured contributions to the game. He was known ladies man married several times, was often in the company of gangsters, and was suspended by baseball commissioner Chandler. All in all this was a good book. It would appeal primarily to baseball fans
