

The Hidden Language of Baseball



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Baseball is set apart from other sports by many things, but few are more distinctive than the intricate systems of coded language that govern action on the field and give baseball its unique appeal. During a nine-inning game, more than 1,000 silent instructions are given—from catcher to pitcher, coach to batter, fielder to fielder, umpire to umpire—and without this speechless communication the game would simply not be the same. Baseball historian Paul Dickson examines for the first time the rich legacy of baseball's hidden language, offering fans everywhere a smorgasbord of history and anecdote. Baseball's tradition of signing grew out of the signal flags used by ships and soldiers' hand signals during battle. They were first used in games during the Civil War, and then professionally by the Cincinnati Red Stockings, in 1869. Seven years later, the Hartford Dark Blues appear to be the first team to steal signs, introducing a larcenous obsession that, as Dickson delightfully chronicles, has given the game some of its most historic—and outlandish—moments. Whether detailing the origins of the hit-and-run, the true story behind the home run that gave "Home Run" Baker his nickname, Bob Feller's sign-stealing telescope, Casey Stengel's improbable method of signaling his bullpen, the impact of sign stealing on the Giants' miraculous comeback in 1951, or the pitches Andy Pettitte tipped off that altered the momentum of the 2001 World Series, Dickson's research is as thorough as his stories are entertaining. A roster of baseball's greatest

names and games, past and present, echoes throughout, making *The Hidden Language of Baseball* a unique window on the history of our national pastime.

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目录:

[The Hidden Language of Baseball_ 下载链接1](#)

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