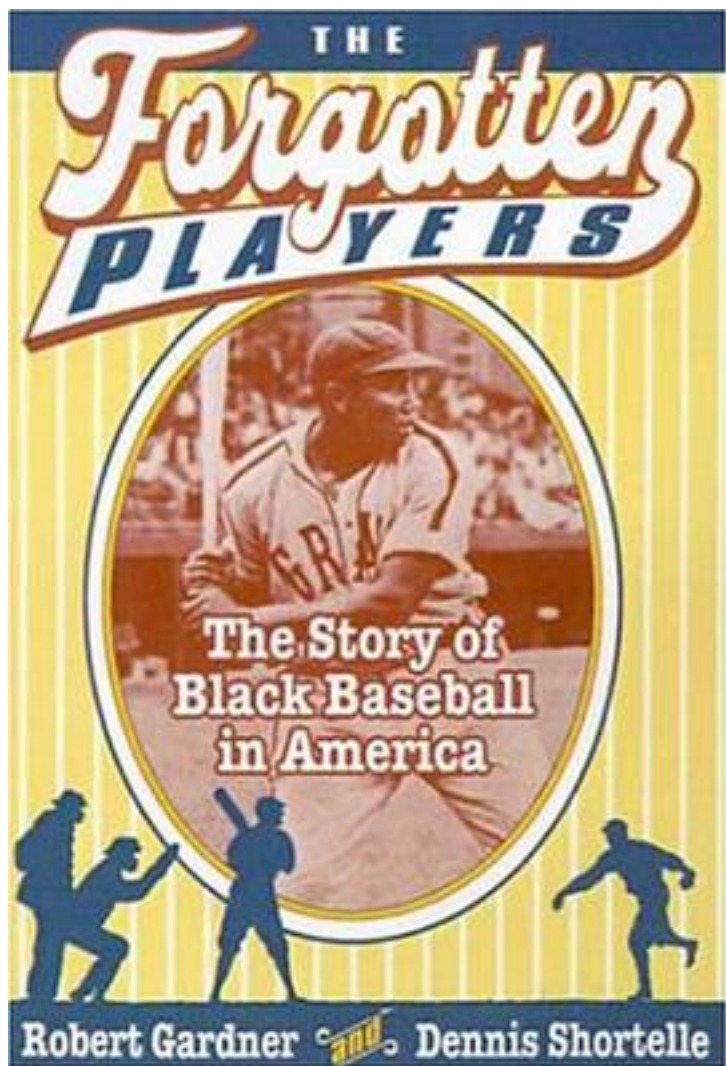


The Forgotten Players



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From Publishers Weekly Although there have been more than a dozen adult books on baseball's Negro Leagues--the all-black aggregations that predated Jackie Robinson's breaking the game's racial barrier in the late '40s--this is among the first for younger readers. Happily, Gardner and Shortelle (*The Future and The Past*) have drawn on those previous works to produce an excellent overview of this relatively unknown aspect of the game and of American racial history. In their introduction, the collaborators promise that theirs will not be a "book about how many games were won by . . . Satchel Paige, " but an examination of what it was like to be a black athlete, barred from the spotlight that accompanied a career in so-called organized baseball. They trace the origin of baseball's color barrier in the late 19th century, then profile Rube Foster and Gus Greenlee, the fathers of the two major organized Negro leagues. Most important, they spend as much time examining the daily life of the black players, their constant struggle with racism and their intense pride of accomplishment, as they do events on the playing field. The book is crisply written and solidly researched, a welcome addition to the YA sports shelf. Photographs not seen by PW. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus Reviews A sturdily documented history of blacks in pro baseball, from Reconstruction to the dissolution of the Negro American League in 1960. Gathering information from published material, plus scrapbooks and resources of the Baseball Hall of Fame library, the authors describe--with rare and welcome specificity--the growth and decline of black teams and organizations, the Negro Leagues' exciting, characteristic style of play, and the effects of segregation and prejudice on the players' daily lives. Combining league games with relentless barnstorming, black teams showed talent at least equal to their white counterparts, and often generated more income; Gardner and Shortelle suggest that Branch Rickey was driven as much by financial and legal motives as by conscience when he signed Jackie Robinson. Individual careers aren't detailed, but there are surprises: unknown Bill Foster pitched more league victories than Satchel Paige; at least two players hit more (league) home runs than Josh Gibson. Well-founded, frank, and coherent; clearer than Cooper's *Playing America's Game* (p. 58). B&w photos; bibliography; end notes; index. (Nonfiction. 11-14) -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. See all Editorial Reviews

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