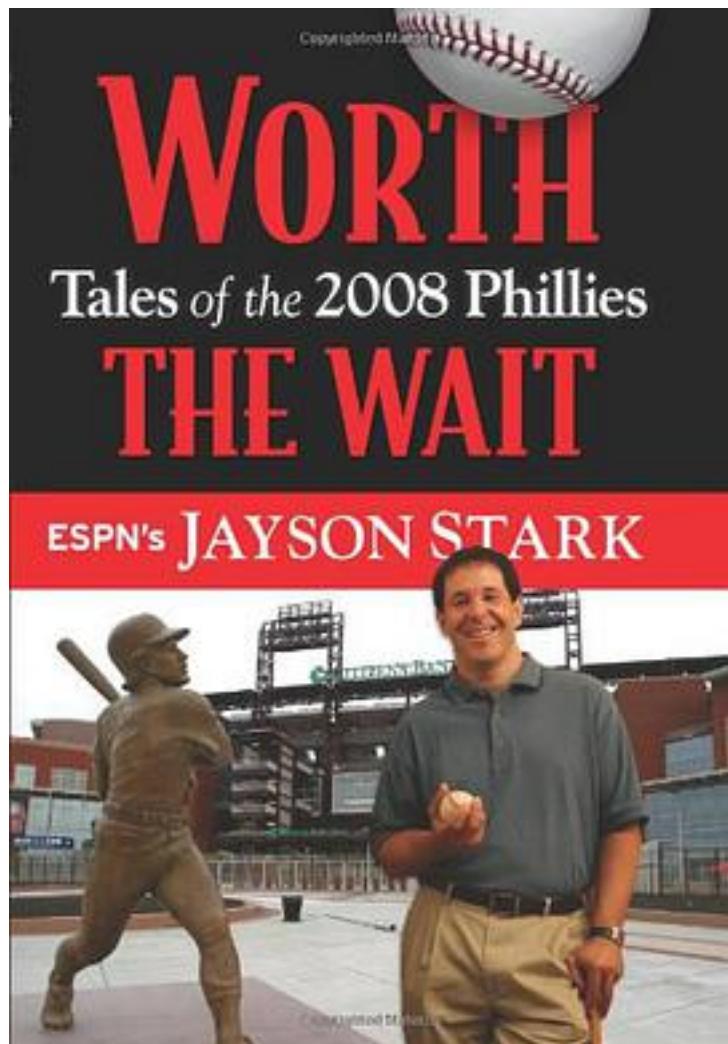


Worth The Wait



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For 25 years, Philadelphia waited for a team like the 2008 Phillies to come along. Waited for a team that could end the longest title drought of any city in America that fields teams in all four major professional sports. Waited for that one magical postseason run that could unleash a quarter-century of pent-up frustration. And then these '08 Phillies hopped on that magic carpet and made it happen. They roared from behind in the last two weeks of September to overtake the Mets. They wiped out CC Sabathia and the Brewers in the National League Division Series. They did in Manny Ramirez and the Dodgers in the National League Championship Series. Then, finally, they survived the Rays--and Bud Selig's attack of the rain gods--to win the World Series, in a rain-delayed, three-and-a-half-inning grand finale unlike any other finish in World Series history. That championship run was more than just the end of their city's interminable sports nightmare. It was vindication for a group of men whose fans had once decided wouldn't win, couldn't win, didn't know how to win. For Charlie Manuel, the countrified manager who overcame years of derision--and personal October tragedy--to become a certified Philadelphia hero. For shortstop Jimmy Rollins, the outspoken face of the franchise, a man who dared to speak openly of rewriting his team's tortured history. For Pat Burrell, the former No. 1 overall pick who had been a Phillie longer than any of them. For Brett Myers, their Opening Day starter who had been banished to the minor leagues in midseason and returned a new man--not to mention a man who was about to become October's least likely offensive dynamo. This was a team built around a compelling cast of characters: ultra-cool emerging ace Cole Hamels; 45-year-old left-hander Jamie Moyer, who led the team in wins; energetic center fielder Shane Victorino, who somehow turned into a villain in laid-back L.A.; and Brad Lidge, a closer who finished off a perfect season with one last perfect pitch. Before they came along, the Phillies had won only one World Series in 125 seasons. But unlike so many Phillies teams that were haunted by that history, this team was inspired by it, by the chance to place its own inimitable stamp on the franchise. And as the 2 million people who attended their championship parade can attest, it was worth the wait.

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