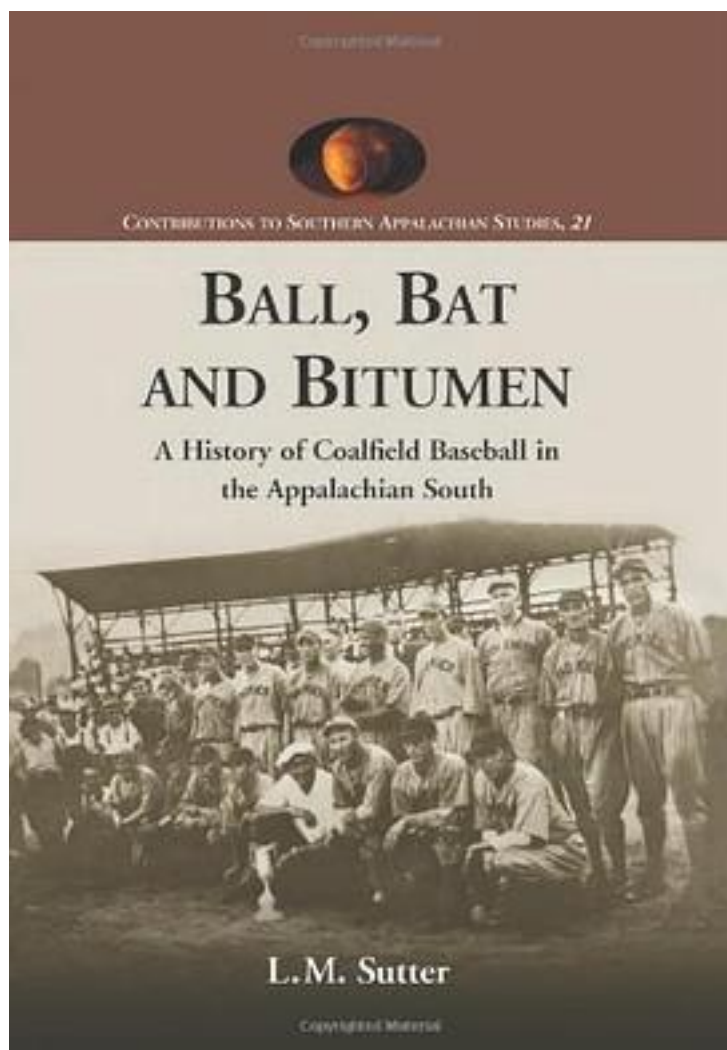


Ball, Bat and Bitumen



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They emerged from the mines, shook off the coal dust, and stepped onto the diamond. From the early 1900s to the 1950s, baseball games between mine workers were a small-town phenomenon, each team attracting avid and intensely loyal fans. Talented part-time athletes competed at the amateur, semi-pro and professional levels. Equally competitive were the coal company officials, who often brought in ringers, or players of exceptional ability, giving them easier jobs above ground or a padded pay packet. Based on interviews with surviving players, families of deceased players, and contemporary sources, this thoroughgoing history covers not only teams and leagues but their function within the mining communities of Virginia, Kentucky and West Virginia. The book features a special section on African-American mining teams, a coalfield map and many photographs.

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