

Bottom of the Ninth



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Fifty years ago, as baseball faced crises on and off the field, two larger-than-life figures took center stage, each on a quest to reinvent the national pastime. In the late 1950s, baseball was under siege. Up-and-coming cities that wanted teams of their own were being rebuffed by the owners, and in response Congress was threatening to revoke the sport's antitrust exemption. These problems were magnified by what was happening on the field, as the New York Yankees were winning so often that true competition was vanishing in the American League. In "Bottom of the Ninth," Michael Shapiro brings to life this watershed moment in baseball history. He shows how the legendary executive Branch Rickey saw the game's salvation in two radical ideas: the creation of a third major league--the Continental League--and the pooling of television revenues for the benefit of all. And Shapiro captures the audacity of Casey Stengel, the manager of the Yankees, who believed that he could bend the game to his wishes and remake how baseball was played. Their stories are interwoven with the on-field drama of pennant races and clutch performances, culminating in three classic World Series confrontations. As the tension built on and off the field, Rickey and Stengel would find themselves outsmarted and defeated by the team owners who held true backroom power--defeats that would diminish the game for decades to come. Shapiro's compelling narrative reaches its stunning climax in the seventh game of the 1960

World Series, when one swing of the bat heralds baseball's eclipse as America's number-one sport.

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