



Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America **Reading List**

This resource list was assembled to help you research and develop exhibitions and programming around the themes of the HOMETOWN TEAMS exhibition. Work with your local library or bookstore to host book clubs, discussion programs or other learning opportunities in conjunction with the exhibition, or develop a display with books on the subject. This list is not meant to be exhaustive or even all-encompassing – it will simply get you started. A quick search of the library card catalogue or internet will reveal numerous lists compiled by experts and fans alike. All titles should be readily available unless otherwise specified. (* denotes a book mentioned in the exhibition).

Adult Fiction

Dawloff, Nicholas, Editor. *Baseball, A Literary Anthology*. The Library of America. 2002. 719 pages.

Drawing from the work of novelists from Ring Lardner to Don DeLillo, sportswriters from Damon Runyan to Red Smith, poets such as William Carlos Williams and essays and player profiles from John Updike and Roger Angell, this anthology is a varied display of what baseball meant to a variety of writers. It is a mix of stories, memoirs, poems, news reports, and insider accounts about all aspects of the great American past-time.

Grisham, John. *Calico Joe*. Doubleday. 2012. 208 pages.

Long before popular novelist John Grisham became known for his legal thrillers, and before he became a lawyer himself, he dreamed of becoming a professional baseball player. Consequently, sports also figure predominately in his writing so add a contemporary popular writer to your list. *Calico Joe* is one of Grisham's latest. There might be more current sports books by Grisham during the tour of the show but for now this one seems like a keeper. After a series of injuries to club starters, the Cubs AAA affiliate in Wichita suddenly needed someone to play first, so they reached down to their AA club in Midland, Texas, and called up a twenty-one-year-old named Joe Castle. He was the hottest player in AA and creating a buzz. "Calico Joe" quickly became the idol of every baseball fan in America, including Paul, the young son of Warren Tracey, a hard-partying and hard-throwing Mets pitcher. On the day that Warren finally faced Calico Joe, Paul was in the stands, rooting for his idol but also for his Dad. Then Warren threw a fastball that would change their lives forever.

***Malamud, Bernard. *The Natural*.** Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1952. 231 pages.

The book follows Roy Hobbs, a baseball prodigy – a natural - whose career is sidetracked when he is shot by a woman whose motivation remains mysterious. Most of the story concerns itself with his



attempts to return to baseball later in life, when he plays for the fictional New York Knights with his legendary bat "Wonderboy". The book served as the inspiration to the 1984 film by the same name – the book and movie both routinely wind up on all-time top ten sports' lists.

Adult Non-fiction

Buford, Kate. *Native American Son: The Life and Sporting Life of Legend Jim Thorpe*. University of Nebraska 2010. 528 pages.

The first comprehensive biography of the legendary figure who defined excellence in American sports: Jim Thorpe, arguably the greatest all-around athlete the United States has ever seen behind a team. Thorpe excelled in baseball, football, and basketball and was an Olympic Gold medal winner in 1912.

Drape, Joe. *Our Boys: A Perfect Season on the Plains with the Smith Center Redmen*. Times Books 2009. 288 pages.

A loving look at a small-town high school's march to winning a state football championship, *Our Boys* focuses on how a love for a local team spans generations and a small town rallies around its teams.

Feinstein, John. *A Good Walk Spoiled: Days and Nights on the PGA Tour*. Brown and Company. 1996. 498 pages.

A candid look at the lives of some of the PGA Tour's greatest golfers from the early 90's, the book not only looks at what happens on the course but off the course as well. Even those who find golf to be a bore will be engaged in the stories and lives of the men Feinstein profiles. In the highly acclaimed bestseller *A Good Walk Spoiled*, John Feinstein captures the world of professional golf as it has never been captured before. Traveling with the golfers on the PGA Tour, Feinstein gets inside the heads of the game's greatest players as well as its struggling wannabes.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *Wait Till Next Year*. Simon & Schuster. 1998. 272 pages.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Goodwin turns her gaze inward, looking back on a childhood enlivened by books and baseball. Set in the suburbs of New York in the 1950s, *Wait Till Next Year* is Goodwin's touching memoir of growing up in love with her family and baseball. She recreates the postwar era, when New York neighborhoods were equally divided between Dodger, Giant, and Yankee fans. Most important, Goodwin describes with eloquence how the Dodgers' move from Brooklyn in 1957 to LA, and the death of her mother soon after, marked both the end of an era and, for her, the end of childhood.

Green, Harvey . *Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport and American Society*. The John Hopkins University Press. 1986. 323 pages.



Smithsonian Institution

MUSEUM on Main Street

This is an intriguing account of how Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth century have studied, shaped, healed and preserved their bodies in a quest for perfect health. Green looks at the attempts by visionaries, reformers, and entrepreneurs to get America in shape for the twentieth century. He explores how consumerism and marketing techniques developed, how notions about gender, race, sex and beauty evolved and why we remain so obsessed by the pursuit of the perfect body today. Fitness, gymnastics, calisthenics, physical education and the resurgence of athletic competition figure strongly in the pursuit of health and well-being.

Halberstam, David, Editor; Stout, Glenn, Series Editor. *The Best American Sport Writing of the Century.* Houghton Mifflin Company. 1999. 776 pages.

The Best Sports Writing is a yearly anthology of magazine articles on the subject of sports in the United States. It was started in 1991 as part the *Best of American Series* published by Houghton Mifflin. Traditionally loaded with long-form feature writing, and occasionally, columns, the annual book is considered a must-read by many sports writers and fans. Noted sports writers such as Roger Angell, Gary Smith and others appear regularly. The series culminated in 2000's *The Best American Sports Writing of the Century* and was edited by guest editor David Halberstam. The book not only offers a glimpse of sports and sports writing for an entire century but lends context to all facets of the best and worst of sports in American life.

Hillenbrand, Laura. *Seabiscuit: An American Legend.* Ballentine Books. 2002. 399 pages.

Based on a inspiring true story of three men – a jockey, a trainer, and businessman - and the undersized racehorse who took the entire nation on the ride of a lifetime. Hillenbrand details the ups and downs of "team Seabiscuit," from early training sessions to record-breaking victories, and from serious injury to "Horse of the Year"--as well as the Seabiscuit's fabled rivalry with War Admiral. She also describes the world of horse racing in the 1930's. This best selling book inspired the popular film, *Seabiscuit*.

Kahn, Roger. *Boys of Summer.* Harper Perennial Modern Classics. 1972, Reissue 2006. 512 pages.

This book routinely pops up as the *best* sports book among writers, fans and editors...and is the ultimate book for old school baseball fans. Rather than a historical account, this is described as a love story with the team the author grew up with. It is a book by and about a sportswriter who grew up near Ebbets Field, and who had the good fortune in the 1950s to cover the Dodgers for the Herald Tribune. This is a book about what happened to Jackie Robinson, Carl Erskine, Pee Wee Reese, and the others when their glory days were behind them. It is a book about our American pastime.

Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air: Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster.* Anchor. 1999. 332 pages.

Mountain climbing is an extreme sport to be sure. Journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing in the summit of of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He



was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more - including Krakauer - in guilt-ridden disarray, would provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, his epic account of the May 1996 disaster. Krakauer tries to construct a balanced picture of the people and the events in his book and the illustrated edition includes 250 black and white photographs taken by expedition members.

Liebling, A.J. *The Sweet Science*. North Point Press. 2004. 288 pages.

A.J. Liebling's classic *New Yorker* piece on the "sweet science of bruising" vividly brings the boxing world as it once was to life. It depicts the great events of boxing's American heyday: Sugar Ray Robinson's dramatic comeback, Rocky Marciano's rise to prominence, and Joe Louis's unfortunate decline. Liebling finds the human story behind the fight, and he evokes the atmosphere in the arena as distinctly as he does the goings-on in the ring.

Michener, James A. *Sports in America*. Random House. 1976. 451 pages.

One of America's best-selling authors turns to America's popular pastime in a big, spectacular book covering almost the entire spectrum of sports. Out of his love for sports comes his examination of the ways we use and abuse sports in America. He draws on memorable portraits of both spectators and participants and argues that we don't place enough emphasis upon "lifetime" sports - those that promote health and give pleasure - than merely provide entertainment for the spectator.

Stowers, Carlton. *Where Dreams Die Hard: A Small American Town and Its Six-Man Football Team*.

Stowers looks at the dedication of the small town of Penelope, Texas to its six-man football team, win or lose. Many rural communities do not have high schools large enough to support full-sized football programs. Since the early 1900s, many have turned to six- or eight-player teams to keep their athletic programs going. The teams may be smaller, but the community involvement is just as strong.

***Telander, Rick. *Heaven is a Playground*.** Bison Books. Second Edition 2004. 236 pages.

In 1974, Rick Telander intended to spend a few days doing a magazine piece on the Court Wizards of Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant area. He ended up staying the entire summer, became part of the players' lives and eventually the coach of a loose aggregation known as the Subway Stars. The book chronicles both the legends of the famous basketball playground, but also the players' real life struggles off court.