



Smithsonian Institution

# MUSEUM on Main Street

## ***Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America*** **Children's Reading List**

### **Children's Fiction**

**Bagnold, Edith. *National Velvet*.** Originally published in 1935. Buccaneer. 1981. 306 pages.

*National Velvet* is the story of a 14-year-old girl named Velvet Brown, who rides her horse to victory in the Grand National Steeplechase. The classic novel focuses on the ability of ordinary persons, particularly women, to accomplish great things. Velvet and her horse become instant celebrities, with Velvet and her family nearly drowning in notoriety. Velvet strongly objects to the publicity, saying the horse is a creature of glory who shouldn't be cheapened in tabloid trash and newsreels. She insists that she did not win the race, the horse did. The book inspires the film by the same name (starring Elizabeth Taylor), a TV series and TV movie version and a lesser known sequel, *International Velvet*.

**Christopher, Matt. *The Great Quarterback Switch (Matt Christopher Sports Classics)*.** Little Brown Books. 1991. 97 pages.

Can Michael and Tom read each other's minds? Michael and Tom Curtis are identical twins who share a love of football. Unfortunately, because of a tragic accident, Michael must watch from the sidelines as his brother calls the plays on the football field. During one game Michael concentrates very hard on a play he thinks could help the team, and Tom calls the exact play a split second later! Is it coincidence, or can the boys communicate through ESP? The boys try a daring experiment in which they push their telepathic powers to the limit ... and suddenly, impossibly, Michael is running the ball for a spectacular touchdown! Matt Christopher has a number of sports-related books to his credit.

**Gultman, Dan. *Roberto & Me ; Babe & Me (A Baseball Card Adventure series)*.** Harper Collins. Reprint 2012 and 2002.

Here are just two from Dan Gultman's *Baseball Card Adventures* series of ten (books/stories?) where Joe Stoshack time travels and meets baseball greats of the past. In *Roberto & Me*, a Clemente baseball card as a time machine unexpectedly lands at Woodstock in 1969. With the free-spirited Sunshine, he makes his way to Crosley Field in Cincinnati, befriends Clemente, delivers his warning, and returns home...but the book takes a turn that will surprise devoted fans of the series. In *Babe & Me*, Stoshack takes his father along, as they attempt to discover whether Babe Ruth really "called his shot" in the 1932 World Series. His dad's main interest in going back in time is to make a killing in the sports-memorabilia market. A bag full of baseballs autographed by Babe Ruth would be worth a fortune in today's market, and Joe and his dad try to cash in. The adventure begins, and as so frequently happens in baseball novels, the adventure proves to be the catalyst for a new understanding between father



and son. Dan Gultman is a prolific children's book writer with many titles involving sports.

**Hicks, Betty. *Swimming with the Sharks*.** Roaring Books Press. 2008.

Rita tries to improve her times and flip turns as she struggles to decide whether to remain the best swimmer on the Dolphins team or the worst on the Sharks team, where she could be with her friends.

**Lupica, Mike. *Shoot-Out : Comeback Kids series*.** Penguin. 2010.

In *Shoot-Out* Jake is accustomed to being a soccer star on winning teams, so when he ends up on the losing side, he is perplexed. His teammates think he is arrogant. Jake's ability to read the flow of a soccer match makes him a good player. He must gradually learn to develop a similar ability with his teammates' personalities, helping him earn their respect and bringing the story to a victorious close. This is just one in his *Comeback Kids* series – great for boys ages eight to twelve.

**Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us*.** Lee and Low. 1993. 30 pages.

A Japanese-American boy learns to play baseball when he and his family are forced to live in an internment camp during World War II. His ability to play helps him to deal with people after the war is over.

**\*Thayer, Ernest L. *Casey at the Bat***

This classic poem first appeared in the San Francisco Examiner in 1888. The story is of a baseball team from the fictional town of *Mudville*, which is losing by two runs with two outs in their last inning. Both the team and its fans believe they can win "if only" they could somehow get "Mighty Casey" (Mudville's star player) up to bat. We all know what happens when the overconfident Casey comes to the plate. There are numerous editions of this classic tale including a beautifully illustrated one by sports artist LeRoy Neiman (Ecco, 2002) and a *Visions of Poetry* edition with drawings of gritty urban streets and a multicultural cast of characters illustrated by Joe Morse (Kids Can Press, 2006).<sup>1</sup>s

## Children's Non-Fiction

**Burleigh, Robert. *Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against All Odds*.** Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers. 2007.

This book presents the life and accomplishments Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to play in the major leagues and who led the Brooklyn Dodgers to six National League pennants and one World Series championship.

**Hamm, Mia. *Winners Never Quit*.** Harper Collins. Reprint 2006. 32 pages. (4 and up)



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Mia Hamm, American soccer champion and Olympic gold medal winner grew up in a large family and knows something about teamwork.

**Washburn, Kim. *Heart of a Champion: The Dominique Dawes Story*. Zonderlankidz. 2012. 128 pages.**

Her determination, dedication, and desire brought home the gold. Dominique Dawes focused on her dream, and nothing would stop her from reaching it. By the time she was nineteen years old, she stood on the podium to receive the Olympic gold medal in gymnastics. Discover how her faith in God and hard work led her to become one of the top gymnasts in the world. Let her story and her motto of “determination, dedication, and desire” encourage you to become all you can be, in competition and in life.