



The 34-Ton Bat: The Story of Baseball as Told Through Bobbleheads, Cracker Jacks, Jockstraps, Eye Black, and 375 Other Strange and Unforgettable Objects

By Steve Rushin

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An unorthodox history of baseball told through the enthralling stories of the game's objects, equipment, and characters.

No sport embraces its wild history quite like baseball, especially in memorabilia and objects. Sure, there are baseball cards and team pennants. But there are also huge balls, giant bats, peanuts, cracker jacks, eyeblack, and more, each with a backstory you have to read to believe. In *THE 34-TON BAT*, *Sports Illustrated* writer Steve Rushin tells the real, unvarnished story of baseball through the lens of all the things that make it the game that it is.

Rushin weaves these rich stories--from ballpark pipe organs played by malevolent organists to backed up toilets at Ebbets Field--together in their order of importance (from most to least) for an entertaining and compulsive read, glowing with a deep passion for America's Pastime. The perfect holiday gift for casual fans and serious collectors alike, *THE 34-TON BAT* is a true heavy hitter.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Rushin, a longtime acclaimed writer for Sports Illustrated, chronicles the history of baseball through the items used by players (baseball bats, sanitary socks), enjoyed by fans (beer and hot dogs), and sported by both (baseball caps). A lot of the fun in Rushin's exhaustively researched, very readable history comes from learning about the people behind the innovations. The Dodgers' advertising v-p Danny Goodman, who made popular souvenirs such as the bobblehead to baseball, saw the stadium crowd as a captive audience willing to buy anything, from underpants to aprons. Foolproof Taylor spent years unsuccessfully promoting his protective cups and helmets. His sales method? Skeptics would kick Taylor, who thankfully was wearing his fortified handiwork, in the groin or smash him in the head with a bat. Baseball merchandise, which has long been an important part of the game, was until recently generally dismissed by players and sports writers alike. Players once scoffed at sunglasses and baseball gloves, which makes sense considering how many of them endured day games in broiling flannel uniforms. Rushin's exuberant prose describes the continuous evolution of baseball paraphernalia. 40 b&w photos. Agent: Esther Newberg, ICM. (Oct.)

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Jimmy and Ralph "Buzz" Boyle are author Rushin's grandfather and great uncle, respectively. Buzz played three seasons with the Brooklyn Dodgers, while Jimmy got into one game for one inning for the New York Giants. When Rushin, the 2005 National Sportswriter of the Year, inherited Jimmy's glove, a passionate and eclectic exploration of baseball ephemera was launched. Rushin approaches his passion with a mischievous gleam in his eye, a point of view captured perfectly in this anecdote-filled account of the sport's odd corners. He covers the evolution of the baseball glove, from a less-than-manly novelty in the game's earliest days to its current status as standard equipment. We also learn that the first protective baseball headgear was inflatable. The prototype was dismissed more on the basis of vanity than utility: it looked stupid. Male readers will grimace their way through the development of the "cup." Lots of painful injuries, especially to catchers, preceded the initial research by a catcher known as Foulproof Taylor. There's a chapter on the rowdy reintroduction of beer to ballparks after Prohibition, and organ music to serenade patrons on their way out of the park after games. Of course, the organ music has given way to prerecorded rock music; reliever Trevor Hoffman began the tradition by having AC/DC's "Hells Bells" played when he entered a game. In an era of sports literature when societal significance and statistical algorithms aren't always as fun as we'd hoped, Rushin has reintroduced readers to silliness. Read it with a smile. --Wes Lukowsky

Review

One of ESPN's Best in Baseball Books of 2013

"THE 34-TON BAT tells a history of baseball through its equipment, as only Rushin could. That is to say... creatively and amusingly....THE 34-TON BAT will be a tremendous comfort to fans by the fireside while waiting for the snow to melt and pitchers and catchers to report."?ESPN

One of The Tampa Tribune's Top 10 Baseball Books of 2013

"A refreshing look at the game.... *The 34-Ton Bat* is Rushin at his best: crisp and snappy writing, and a wide-angle view of baseball that will make you stop and think - and in some cases, laugh out loud."?The Tampa

Tribune

"Rushin approaches his passion with a mischievous gleam in his eye, a point of view captured perfectly in this anecdote-filled account of the sport's odd corners.... In an era of sports literature when societal significance and statistical algorithms aren't always as fun as we'd hoped, Rushin has reintroduced readers to silliness. Read it with a smile."? ***Booklist (starred review)***

"*The 34-Ton Bat* is full of bits of information that will give even the most knowledgeable fan a new understanding of the game and those who have played it.... Certain elements of the game will never seem quite the same after reading Mr. Rushin's book."? ***Wall Street Journal***

"A lot of the fun in Rushin's exhaustively researched, very readable history comes from learning about the people behind the innovations.... Rushin's exuberant prose describes the continuous evolution of baseball paraphernalia."? ***Publishers Weekly***

"Few objects escape the notice of Rushin, who invests each not only with the skill of a career sportswriter, but also with the passion of a fan... Not just sportswriting, but also graceful and gripping cultural history."? ***Kirkus***

"Rushin delights trivia buffs with little-known knowledge and a wicked sense of humor.... THE 34-TON BAT is a perfect hit for fall."? ***The Daily Herald***

"[Rushin] expertly shows baseball's omnipresence at every turn of modern American history with an eye for the eccentric and flowing anecdotal prose. *The 34-Ton Bat* is a sheer delight, tailored to the sports fan but sure to enthrall any reader with a taste for the weird, wacky and wonderful."? ***Shelf Awareness***

"I got so addicted to *The 34-Ton Bat*, I wished the book weighed 34 tons. I'd have happily finished that, too."? ***Rick Reilly***

"That subtitle is like some strange, enticing tin toy gleaming in a tinker's window, Rushin being the ultimate tinkerer with language. And the book indeed proves to be the ultimate toy shop for baseball fans.... Rushin throws ideas at you like Gaylord Perry spitballs: unpredictable and mesmerizing but alarmingly accurate. He turns phrases as if they were double plays. (Like that, for example. Only better.)"? ***David Vecsey, New York Times' The 6th Floor***

"The perfect vehicle to speed you along toward pitchers and catchers...the kind of baseball book that makes baseball fans grateful to be baseball fans."? ***The New York Post***

"Rushin started his love of baseball at 13 by cooking hot dogs for the Minnesota Twins. And he can turn a phrase as deftly as he turned a dog."? ***The Louisville Courier-Journal***

"Die-hard baseball fans will want to pore through every page...This unorthodox history of the game delves into memorabilia - some quite famous and others lesser known - to give a unique perspective on the national pastime."? ***Good Housekeeping***

"Do not drink liquids as you read this book, because you will spew them in hilarity. I kid you not. This is a dangerously funny book, made brilliant by the fact it is also the genuine history of baseball, true as ash. Above all, it is Steve Rushin's love letter to the Great American Game--perfumed with the odor of hot dogs (the ones he cooked as a kid employee at the 'Met' in Minneapolis), glove oil, Frosty Malts, and exotic things

like splattered grapefruits dropped from the Washington Monument. This is Rushin throwing from the outfield to the plate, at his wordsmith best. I'm serious about the laughter. My stomach feels like it's been hit by that 68,000-pound bat."? ***Rick Telander, Sports Columnist, Chicago Sun-Times***

"An amusing history of baseball told through the game's objects, equipment, and characters."? ***The Hartford Courant***

"A humorous and hyperbolic collection of essays.... Without this book you would have never known about these stories that are so incredibly interesting and rich."? ***ChatSports***

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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