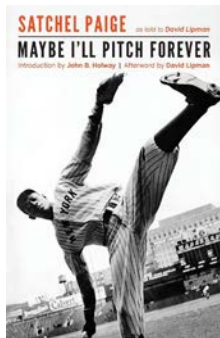


Sports on the page

Five all-time sports books with Alabama connections

By Allen Barra



Maybe I'll Pitch Forever

by Satchel Paige with David Lipman

First published in 1962 when he might have been, we don't know, 56 — Leroy “Satchel” Paige had a way of curving the truth at a sharper angle than he curved a baseball — *Maybe I'll Pitch Forever* is the best chronicle of life in (and the subsequent death of) the old

Negro Leagues, told by the greatest American humorist since Mark Twain. Born in Mobile, Paige was probably the greatest pitcher of all time — certainly, no pitcher ever faced more great hitters or opposed more great pitchers than Satch, from the 1920s to the 1960s. It's all here, from barnstorming with Dizzy Dean to bearing down on the great Ted Williams and the legendary Josh Gibson. And if Satchel's accounts can't always be taken as gospel, then, as he so famously phrased it: “You pays your money and you takes your choice.”

Willie's Time

by Charles Einstein

Willie Mays, born in Westfield/Fairfield, was the first and only player to have starred in the Negro Leagues (with the Birmingham Black Barons), the integrated minor leagues, and in the major leagues on both coasts with the New York and (later) San Francisco Giants. Einstein, the half-brother of comedian Albert Brooks, was a great writer largely forgotten today. But he may have been the best writer of all American sportswriters, and *Willie's Time* is the best book ever written about the most complete player baseball has ever seen — and his cultural impact. Many old-time sportswriters told me that *Willie's Time* is the one sports book that should have won the Pulitzer Prize.

I Had a Hammer

by Hank Aaron with Lonnie Wheeler

There was a lot of criticism of Henry Aaron in his 23-year Major League career that he wouldn't speak more to the media. Well, in 2002 he made up for it in his candid and heartfelt memoir. Aaron recounts everything from playing semi-pro ball with his hometown Mobile Black Bears while in high school to the nearly soul-

crushing pressure (including death threats) he endured with the Atlanta Braves in pursuit of Babe Ruth's career home run record in 1973 and 1974.

Bear: The Hard Life & Good Times of Alabama's Coach Bryant

by Paul W. Bryant and John Underwood

The greatest of all memoirs of a college football coach covers Paul Bryant's childhood — in a backwoods Arkansas town so small it's no longer on the map — up through his first 16 or so years leading the Crimson Tide. For those who grew up not knowing what Bear Bryant's voice sounded like, this book will give you an idea, and the Bear's recollections are artfully framed by Underwood. The only thing wrong with this book is that it was written when Bryant had nine seasons and two national championships to go. (If you find the 2007 edition on Amazon, you can hear the Coach's raspy voice on the accompanying CD.)

Triumph: The Untold Stories of Jesse Owens & Hitler's Olympics

by Jeremy Schaap

James Cleveland Owens, the grandson of a slave born in Oakville, Alabama, in 1914, set the world on its ear in 1936 when he dashed Adolf Hitler's showcase for the master race by winning four gold medals in track and field. Yet he went strangely unheralded in his own country; FDR didn't even invite him to the White House on his return from Berlin. It took 28 years after his death to get a definitive biography, but Schaap's incisive book cuts through the swirl of complex racial and political issues that permeated Owens' life and career while never losing the focus of the man who lived it all.

Honorable Mentions:

Charlie Finley: The Outrageous Story of Baseball's Super Showman

G. Michael Green and Roger D. Launius

Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling, and a World on the Brink

David Margolick

Snake: The Legendary Life of Ken Stabler

Mike Freeman

On the Screen

10 must-see Alabama-related sports documentaries



The undefeated Sewanee football team of 1899, subject of the film *Unrivaled: Sewanee 1899*.

Unrivaled: Sewanee 1899

Unrivaled tells the story of the legendary football team from the University of the South that went 12-0 that year — including a 2,500-mile train trip featuring five games in six days, all victories over Texas, Texas A&M, LSU, Tulane, and Ole Miss. The film highlights the team's two Alabama-born stars, Auburn coach John Heisman, and a soundtrack created by Bobby Horton — a musician, historian, and Alabama Humanities Fellow. The movie's writer/producer, artist, and designer all hail from Alabama.

—Michael McKenzie, director of programming,
Alabama Public Television

Hale County This Morning, This Evening

This is a beautiful film invested in the poetics of the everyday in Alabama. While not a typical sports-driven documentary, a few different sports moments inflect the film and show how integral they are to small-town life. RaMell Ross' Oscar-nominated 2018 film also opens up and challenges the conventions of narrative documentary.

—Andrea J. Kelley, Ph.D., associate professor of media studies, Auburn University

Murderball

Henry Alex Rubin and Dana Adam Shapiro's groundbreaking 2005 doc changed the way many Americans see and understand people with disabilities. Offering intimate and frank portraits of North America's top quadriplegic athletes, *Murderball* never drifts into cheap sentiment. It's an extra point of state pride to know the team trained at Birmingham's Lakeshore Foundation, a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site — and features two of Alabama's own, Bryan Kirkland and Bob Lujano.

—Michele Forman, filmmaker and director of media studies, UAB

Bo, Barkley and The Big Hurt

Three of the big 3 sports' biggest superstars — Bo Jackson, Charles Barkley, and Frank Thomas — all on the same college campus at the same time.

—Tim Stephens, former Birmingham sports talk show host

Three Days at Foster: How Integration Turned the Tide

Using the site of George Wallace's "schoolhouse stand," as a symbol of change across five decades, *Three Days at Foster* focuses on the pioneer athletes who shattered the color barrier at the University of Alabama.

—Roy S. Johnson, columnist, Alabama Media Group;
former editor, Sports Illustrated

30 for 30: Jordan Rides the Bus

Michael Jordan's summer in Hoover when he stepped away from the NBA to take a swing at baseball with the Birmingham Barons. —Stephens

Mama Called

The definitive in-state documentary on Bear Bryant, produced by Ken Gaddy and the Paul W. Bryant Museum. —McKenzie

Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream

The Home Run King's journey from Mobile to Cooperstown, and his impact along the way. —Stephens

Quiet Courage: The James Curtis Owens Story

A thoughtful profile of the SEC's first African American football player, who made history on the Plains in 1969. —McKenzie

30 for 30: Roll Tide/War Eagle

If you don't know what this title means, welcome to Alabama. Watch this and learn the mythos of college football's biggest rivalry. —Stephens