

Lewis, Robert F., II. Smart ball: marketing the myth and managing the reality of Major League Baseball. University Press of Mississippi, 2010. 165p bibl index afp ISBN 9781604732078, \$50.00

Being an Oakland A's fan with an academic background in American studies could make anyone hostile, and in that regard Lewis, a retired corporate executive who teaches part time at the University of New Mexico, does not disappoint. He builds on Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power"--basically, the ability to attract more flies with honey than with vinegar--in tracing baseball's organizational structure and practices over time. For Lewis, "soft power" equals "smart ball." Not surprisingly, the words "exploitation," "neocolonialism," "nationalism," "monopoly," "culture," "hegemony," "discrimination," and "abuse" dot this thin but dense volume. Lewis's chronological narrative includes most of baseball's familiar stopping points, from its pastoral roots as a sport and domestic cottage industry, to its larger iteration as economic entity with legal status, to meeting the challenges posed on the employee side of its ledgers (unionization, racial diversity, steroid use), to marketing, managing larger-scale enterprises, and coping internationally. Offering thinner coverage than previous books devoted to baseball's history, economics, and legal trappings and lacking popular accounts and stories of baseball's most recognizable figures, this book is, in baseball terminology, a 'tweener, and this limits its appeal on both ends of readership spectrum. Summing Up: Optional. Comprehensive collections only. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago