

**Wins, losses, and empty seats: how baseball outlasted the Great Depression by David George Surdam. Nebraska, 2011. 417p bibl index afp ISBN 9780803234826, \$45.00**

In a careful, comprehensive, methodical manner that would make Hercule Poirot or Sherlock Holmes proud, Surdam (economics, Univ. of Northern Iowa) investigates how the national pastime fared in the Depression decade of the 1930s and how Major League Baseball, then a 16-team league, adjusted to dire circumstances in the overall economy. The book's major sections examine the level and nature of the industry's profits in terms of attendance and revenues versus players' salaries and other expenses; the on-field realities of competitive balance and player movement among teams; and innovations and tinkering to cope with the downturn in employment and income, such as revenue-sharing schemes, the manipulation of schedules to get more attractive matchups at key junctures, night games, ladies' days, and radio broadcasts. A 50-page appendix of data tables, 50 pages of annotated notes and references, and a bibliography complement the narrative. These are the major "wins." The prose style is the "loss," detracting from a solid piece of scholarship and reducing the book's likely audience to scholars and those who adore this narrow slice of American history. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago