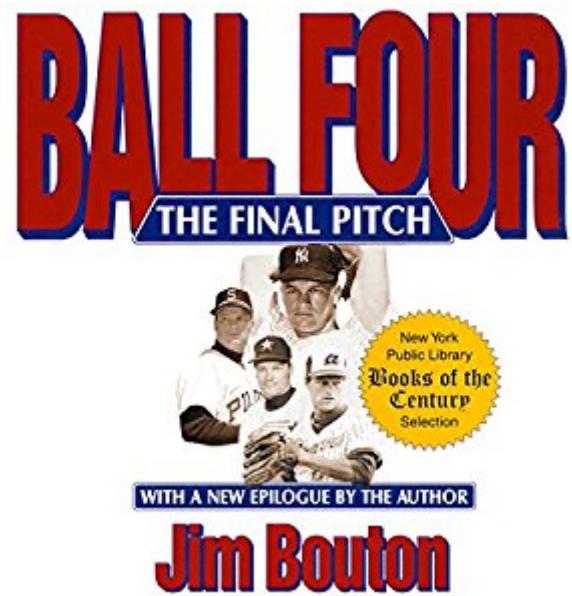


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Ball Four: The Final Pitch



Synopsis

Ball Four: The Final Pitch is the original book plus all the updates, unlike the 20th Anniversary Edition paperback. When Ball Four was published in 1970, it created a firestorm. Bouton was called a Judas, a Benedict Arnold and a "social leper" for having violated the "sanctity of the clubhouse." Baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn tried to force Bouton to sign a statement saying the book wasn't true. Ballplayers, most of whom hadn't read it, denounced the book. It was even banned by a few libraries. Almost everyone else, however, loved Ball Four. Fans liked discovering that athletes were real people--often wildly funny people. Many readers said it gave them strength to get through a difficult period in their lives. Serious critics called it an important document. David Halberstam, who won a Pulitzer for his reporting on Vietnam, wrote a piece in Harper's that said of Bouton: "He has written... a book deep in the American vein, so deep in fact that it is by no means a sports book." In 1999 Ball Four was selected by the New York Public Library as one of the "Books of the Century." And Time magazine chose it as one of the "100 Greatest Non-Fiction" books. Besides changing the image of athletes, the book played a role in the economic revolution in pro sports. In 1975, Ball Four was accepted as legal evidence against the owners at the arbitration hearing, which lead to free agency in baseball and, by extension, to other sports. Today Ball Four has taken on another role--as a time capsule of life in the 60s. "It is not just a diary of Bouton's 1969 season with the Seattle Pilots and Houston Astros," says sportswriter Jim Caple. "It's a vibrant, funny, telling history of an era that seems even further away than four decades. To call it simply a "tell all book" is like describing The Grapes of Wrath as a book about harvesting peaches in California."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I first read this book back in the mid 70's when I wanted to learn a little bit about baseball because I wanted to be able to talk with co-workers about the game. I was not a baseball or sports fan at the time. To tell the truth, I'm still not. But I just got a retirement job as an usher at a minor league ballpark and decided that I needed to refresh some info. So, when this book popped up as a Kindle special daily deal, I got it again. It was even better after almost 40 years. What I loved about the book was that it made baseball players human beings and that made me curious about the game. Reading it again made me appreciate what the players went through back then, the difficulty of their lives (in spite of all of the so-called glamour) and how tenuous the baseball career can be. This edition also included updates from many years after it was published and it thrilled me and yes, I cried along with him. It is one of the best books that I have ever read.

I read this book in my high school years in the 70s and again now. I think my rating would be 4/5 stars both times. I enjoyed the humor, baseball stories, and the updates provided in today's version. As a baseball fan, I enjoyed an "insider's view" to coaching, player behavior and attitudes, what happens in non-game time with a team, and relationships between players. It was interesting to see how baseball has changed in some ways (the author "fought" hard for \$1000 raise and many players earned less than \$20,000) and stayed the same in many ways. In trying to describe why I didn't rate this book a 5, I think I didn't care for the fact he wrote without letting the people he was writing about know. His attitude seemed a little cynical at times in his view of management and players he didn't care for. I think if I were his teammate, I wouldn't have liked to discover his publishing a book about "what happens in the locker room stays in the locker room" type of things either as some baseball people then took offense to. Ball Four was controversial when it was released but seems "tame" now after reading Jose Canseco's revelations and others. All in all, a good read for a baseball person.

Jim Bouton was truly a man ahead of his time, or was baseball just behind the times? I think both. It wasn't really about the game as played but about the men that played it when they played it. This book would be pretty mild for today but for 1970 it was wild. Jim didn't write it to pat himself on the back, just to tell how he felt and what he saw. The followup chapters are wonderful, touching and fitting. I'll read more by Jim Bouton.

In its day, Seattle Pilots pitcher Jim Bouton's baseball-tell-all book was genre changing. Before him,

baseball stars didn't talk about what happens in the clubhouse. He was a smart guy and offered an interesting look at the 1969 season, the one and only season (as it later turned out) in the history of the Seattle Pilots who then became the Milwaukee Brewers. During the season, he was temporarily demoted to the minor league Vancouver Mounties, and later traded to a team in pennant contention, the Houston Astros. I read this in the early 1970's and so this is a re-read for me, nearly 40 years later. The book holds up pretty well even though, of course, it's somewhat dated. The players are different and so is the game of baseball. Athletes were paid relatively minuscule amounts compared to their later counterparts and they negotiated their own contracts and so money issues take a front seat. To me, this book is a time capsule of players and the game I remember from my youth. The odd thing is that, these days, this book seems pretty tame but back then, it was earthshaking. Absolutely loved what is widely seen as an icon in baseball literature.

I don't know why it took me so many years to read this book which I knew created an up roar when published. By today's standards, it is hard to imagine what was so controversial about the book that it was banned from many libraries and schools to prevent kids from reading it. It seems the baseball owners and commissioner were very intent on maintaining a pristine image of baseball as America's greatest sport. I suppose I have forgotten, or, never realized, how puritanical the country was during my youth and the at time this book was published.

and I've read it for the 5th time at 67. It's still as funny and insightful now as it was the first time. If you've never read Ball Four read it; you're in for a real treat

Ball Four is a classic baseball book that continues to have significance all these years later. It continues to be an indictment of baseball owners who gave so little to players. Few of the players are generally remembered, and few of them were flattered when the book was published. Every modern world player should read it to see how far they have come. It's a funny account of a man and men who loved the game.

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