Words That Make the Man: Major League Baseball, the Media, and American Manhood, 1945-1962

O'Connell Gennari, Elizabeth

Abstract:
Baseball and the media have been linked throughout the American national pastime’s history. Its rise as a professional game coincided with the Circulation Wars between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, who used sports as one means of selling newspapers. The expansion of radio programming linked listeners across the nation, and made Babe Ruth one of the first national celebrities. Baseball likewise helped fill airspace in the early days of television, and allowed viewers unable (or unwilling) to attend a ballpark the opportunity to see players like Mickey Mantle and Willie Mays perform. This dissertation examines the role of the media in promoting baseball and baseball players during the early years of the Cold War, 1945-1962. Print and broadcast media were essential to establishing and maintaining Major League Baseball’s reputation as the “American national pastime,” and in the process, established standards for evaluating players’ skills and behavior. These standards aligned with the dominant values of white, middle-class America, and gendered expectations of athletes. I analyze the different ways in which journalists and broadcasters approached baseball reporting and the ways in which the construction of the game story helped to build ballplayers’ reputations. Although these reputations fell into a series of archetypes, they revealed cultural arbiters’ criteria for “proper masculine behavior” in an era in which “American character” was scrutinized, debated, and defined.

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Become the first African-American in Major League Baseball in the 20th century, Robinson faced harsh criticism from fans, other players, and even his own teammates. As the season waned, however, the criticism diminished, and the praise grew. Discussion of allowing blacks into Major League Baseball began after commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who was a strict segregationist, died in 1944. However, some tryouts had been given to players from the Negro Leagues earlier in the 1940s. Once Robinson was pinned as the man for the experiment, he was signed to a minor league contract with the Montreal Royals, the AAA affiliate of the Dodgers, in November of 1945, a time of a great shift in American society. Negro Leagues Baseball Page Learn about the leagues where African American ballplayers competed before tumbling the color barrier. Major League Baseball The official site of major league baseball. Extensive news and information on all of baseball; check out the Jackie Robinson section. The Los Angeles Dodgers See the Blue Crew’s tribute to one of their own. Teachers should see the educational Jackie Robinson timeline. BallParks.com Learn about the old ballparks where the first African American major leaguers played. The Baseball Hall of Fame The Mecca of baseball information and history. The following are the baseball events of the year 1962 throughout the world. World Series: New York Yankees over San Francisco Giants (4–3); Ralph Terry, MVP. All-Star Game (#1), July 10 at D.C. Stadium: National League, 3–1; Maury Wills, MVP. All-Star Game (#2), July 30 at Wrigley Field: American League, 9–4; Leon Wagner, MVP. College World Series: Michigan. Cuban National Series: Industriales. Japan Series: Toei Flyers over Hanshin Tigers (4–2–1).