



The Golden Era of Major League Baseball: A Time of Transition and Integration

Bryan Soderholm-Difatte

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When Jackie Robinson made his debut at Ebbets Field on opening day in 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers became the first major league team with a black player anywhere in its organization. By the end of the Golden Era of baseball, a period in and around the 1950s, there would be an unprecedented number of notable black players in the major leagues, including Hall of Famers Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks, Roberto Clemente, Willie Mays, and Jackie Robinson. While this era is defined by integration, it was also the age of the “boys of summer” Brooklyn Dodgers, New York Yankee dominance, and the first major change in the geographic landscape of the big leagues in half a century.

In *The Golden Era of Major League Baseball: A Time of Transition and Integration*, Bryan Soderholm-Difatte explores the significant events and momentous changes that took place in baseball from 1947 to 1960. Beginning with Jackie Robinson’s rookie season in 1947, Soderholm-Difatte provides a careful and thorough examination of baseball’s integration, including the struggles of black players who were not elite to break into the starting lineups. In addition, the author looks at the dying practice of player-managers, the increasing use of relief pitchers and platooning, the iconic 1951 pennant race between the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers, and more. Soderholm-Difatte also tells the stories of three central characters to this era, whose innovations, strategies, and vision changed the game—Branch Rickey, who challenged the baseball establishment by integrating the Dodgers; Casey Stengel, whose 1949-1953 Yankees won five straight championships; and Leo Durocher, whose spy operations was a major factor in the Giants’ 1951 pennant surge.

In an age when baseball was at the forefront of American society, integration would come to be the foremost legacy of the Golden Era. But this was also a time of innovative strategy, from the use of pinch hitters to frequent defensive substitutions. Concluding with an overview of how baseball is still evolving today, *The Golden Era of Major League Baseball* will be of interest to baseball fans and historians as well as to scholars examining the history of integration in sports.

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