

For Hip Pocket Hopefuls - Paperbacks

reviewed by TOM WALTON

John F. Kennedy School, Ely

How to Star in Football, Herman L. Masin; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1966.

Photographs, offensive-play diagrams, defensive-play diagrams, and detailed written instructions are each a portion of this book. A knowledge of the game of football and its vocabulary is needed; the ability to join word to photograph is needed, also. A wealth of material lies on these pages - almost too much when it comes sentence after sentence.

Pro Football Heroes, Steve Gelman; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1968.

Covering the 1900's, the author has selected ten men to fill the muscular pages of this book. From a coach to players adept at several positions, from early days to refinement within the leagues, and from fairly standard playing formations to the more sophisticated plays of the late sixties, the author explores the makings of the great players. Selections are lengthy and interesting. A few photographs accompany them.

Gridiron Stories, edited by Josh Furman; A Lantern Press Book, 1968.

Mr. Furman has selected a group of stories that seem directed at pointing out qualities of teammanship, of leadership, and of determination. The vocabulary is difficult and requires a knowledge of football. Above average readers in the upper elementary or junior high might find little trouble with the vocabulary or with picking out the story beyond the unfamiliar words. If the readers are just seeking entertainment and not the facts about playing football, they might enjoy these stories.

Touchdown for Tommy, Matt Christopher; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., arranged with Little, Brown & Co., Inc., 1959.

This is a story of conflict. Tommy is in a foster home and fearful that he will be forced to leave. He is assailed with conflicting standards: the foster home in contrast to his earlier home and parents, the present peer group as opposed to the past, and the requirements of day to day living at home, school, neighborhood against the worry of leaving the home he would like to join on a permanent basis.

He does play football and does score a touchdown, but the conflict is present on the football field, too. This is a

story with a happy ending, but the theme underlying the title will need consideration for audience.

Quarterback's Aim, Beman Lord; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., by arrangements with Henry Z. Walck, Inc., 1960.

In a very humorous vein, Mr. Lord describes the plight of one young football aspirant, Alan. Alan's attempts to increase his fifty-two pounds are as unsuccessful as his attempts at getting a position on the team, until he suddenly hits upon a strategy that will show off his passing ability to the coach even though he is not on the football field. Eventually, becoming the SW of the football squad is ample compensation for limited playing time.

Easy vocabulary and limited pages put this in range of most middle graders.

(Fifth grader Danny says, "This book, Quarterback's Aim, is about football teams which Alan is trying to get on.

Finally nothing works not even malts and bananas after supper. Then the coach discovers something surprising and Alan is made the SW of the team and nobody knows what it means."

Mark, another fifth grader, says, "A good book to read is Quarterback's Aim, by Beman Lord, illustrated by Arnold Spilka.

When five guys land on you in a football game, you will be like a tube of toothpaste somebody stepped on.

Alan is skinny. He is determined to gain weight and make the team.

Then one day, coach discovers something. Alan becomes SW. What does it mean? No one can guess until one of the Big Games. SW stands for secret weapon.")

Mystery Player at Left End, Beman Lord; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., arrangements with Henry Z. Walck, Inc., 1964.

Entertaining, brief, easy vocabulary, and a girl starring on the football squad make this a surprisingly well received book. The girl, Faith, has just enough sophistication to be baffling, just enough guile to be beguiling, and just enough grace to gracefully exit from the squad and still be admired for her ability by the men in this small portion of her world.

How to Star in Basketball, Herman L. Masin; TAB Books, Inc., Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1958.

Beginning the book with a good sportsman's code and rules on "How to Shape Up," the author continues through chapters on shooting, passing, individual contributions on offense and defense, team offense and defense, and ends with several pages of diagrams of plays. There are numerous photos with the text, in series, showing positions and movements. Some knowledge of basketball terms is needed, but the photographs aid in getting over the few possible stumbling blocks in vocabulary.

Pro Basketball Champions, George Vecsey; Scholastic Book Services, Inc., 1970.

A few action photos are found in the 159 pages of this book that discusses Bill Russell, Jerry West, Joe Lapchick, Oscar Robertson, George Mikan, Bob Cousy, Wilt Chamberlain, Bob Pettit, Elgin Baylor, and Rick Barry. Since most of these men are players, and most of them are over six feet in height, it might eliminate some readers who could not aspire to their height or their position on a team.

Free Throw, Mike Neigoff; Albert Whitman and Co., published by Weekly Reader Paperback Book Club, 1968.

Doubling themes of racial integration and teamship, the plot of the story carries us through the making of a basketball team from tryouts to championship playing. The greatest struggle witnessed will be in the boy, J.D. Finding that the basis for his prejudices is feelings and not color, that he has much the same trouble adjusting to some Negroes as he has with his first close contact with white people, is not easy for this boy. There are adults in the story who are sympathetic, yet firm, with J.D.'s problems. Though the plot is complex enough to cause trouble in remembering what is going on for low or average readers, the vocabulary is moderately easy.

How to Star in Swimming and Diving, Charles Batterman (varsity swimming coach - Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1968.

Three major divisions covering conditioning, strokes, and diving are further divided into chapters covering specific techniques and styles, excellent sections of series photographs or time-lapse photographs, and drawn diagrams.

The book is constructed to encourage safe swimming; it suggests in its introduction that it will be a good help in demonstrating the proper approach to swimming. I found it interesting and a good investment for someone interested in improving his swimming for any reason.

Dive In, Mike Neigoff; Albert Whitman & Co., published by Weekly Reader Paperback Book Club, 1965.

Through a relatively easy reading story, Mr. Neigoff weaves a story of friendship, competition, and sportsmanship. Though there is team competition, the major confrontation exists between two best friends, Barney and Shorty. Through compromise and perseverance, the boys overcome their differences and eventually contribute to a team victory.

Batting and Bunting, Ethan Allen; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1968.

Allen, moving from the Cincinnati Reds to eventual president of the American Association of Baseball Coaches, has created this book in language within the grasp of intermediate graders, and in scope precise enough to be of use by those pursuing on much higher levels. For boys who are serious about baseball, I

would highly recommend this very important contribution aimed at getting potential greats off on the right foot.

Sports Illustrated Book of Baseball, Editors of "Sports Illustrated," Copyright 1966 by Time Incorporated and published by arrangements with J. B. Lippincott Co. through Weekly Reader Paperback Book Club.

Written in first person: Harmon Killebrew/hitting, Al Downing/pitching, Brooks Robinson/infielding, Tim McCarver/catching, and Tom Tresh/outfielding.

Theirs is a carefully considered approach to baseball. It is a compilation of good advice to potential players; it is not a tale of personal exploits. The book is accompanied with excellent drawings demonstrating portions of the text. It takes the reader in steps beyond the material found in Ethan Allen's Batting and Bunting.

How to Star in Baseball, Herman L. Masin; TAB Books, Inc., Scholastic Book Services, 1960.

Carrying the seal of approval from the Little League, this book goes quite thoroughly into the mechanics of baseball. Its easy-to-read text is accompanied by photographs, many in series, demonstrating the know-how of baseball. Each chapter covering a position on the field is followed by a list of "Tips" for a person seeking the mastery of that position. The last chapter has eight diagrams of common defensive moves.

The Greatest In Baseball, Mac Davis; Scholastic Book Services, 1962.

Mac Davis writes of first, second, third basemen, of outfielders, catchers, and pitchers; he writes of the diversified greats of baseball - the short, the tall, the products of many states and environments, the inspiring, and the disliked. Because these men have all reached outstanding stature in the world of baseball, theirs is a story of devotion to excellence - whether out of love for the game, or for a feeling of personal accomplishment. The stories about each man are brief, given to a mixture of statistics and comments about the man's ability and progress through his career, and are accompanied by photographs of each player. It is a favorite book with my young men for each of these reasons singly, or for all combined.

(In addition, Karen of the fifth grade writes, "In the book The Greatest in Baseball, the author writes about thirty-two baseball players in the Hall of Fame.

It seems strange that no women are playing in big league baseball.

In this book the author writes about the first Negro in history on a big league team, Jack Robinson.

Do you know who was the guy that cried himself into baseball? Stanley Musial.

The book really didn't interest me because baseball doesn't mean much to me because I can't understand it. There should be books with sports stories for girls.")

Stories of Champions, Sam and Beryl Epstein; Scholastic Book Services, Inc., with permission of Garrard Publishing Co., 1965.

The Epsteins have selected five players from the Baseball Hall of Fame for their book; Honus Wagner, Christy Mathewson, Ty Cobb, Walter Johnson, and Babe Ruth. Theirs is a sort of narrative of the highlights of the men's careers with statistical charts at the conclusion of each man's story. The book is interspersed with photographs of these men. The vocabulary is that encountered by average readers in the middle grades, the stories are factual without going into too much detail on the mechanics of baseball, and they are varied enough in personality to make them interesting.

The Baseball Life of Mickey Mantle, John Devaney; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1969.

This is more than a baseball story; it is the story of a man - a story of what life is all about - humility, perseverance, humor, tragedy, and realization of goals. For your gentlemen of average reading ability, or even less, and an interest in baseball, it is an exploration into involvement. The story within the pages covers many years; it takes the reader through Mr. Mantle's life from the age of five and upwards. Even without understanding much about baseball, any boy would find the book good exploration.

(And Katie of fifth grade adds, "The book The Baseball Life of Mickey Mantle I would recommend for boys or anyone interested in the life of Mickey Mantle.

The book was about Mickey and games he played, how many home runs he made a year, and then in about the middle of the book a sickness he got in the bones and the sickness could never in his whole life be cured by anyone. And the doctor suggested he should not play baseball again, but he was brave and kept on playing.")

The Baseball Life of Sandy Koufax, George Vecsey; Scholastic Book Services, Inc., 1968.

Remembering the World Series of 1965 brings Sandy Koufax into mind; it seemed to be a name that sounded out at every turn of the radio dial during the summer. Reading his baseball life is somewhat like turning a radio dial; you are not always sure of what you will find. The book's vocabulary is extensive enough to require a better than average reader in the middle grades; the thoughts behind the words are complex enough to require a better than average reader for total comprehension. There are 224 pages in the book. There are a few photographs to give a visual reminder of what the words are about.

I read the book and was impressed with the man for his determination and perseverance. I was made aware of the value of publicity to get a young man started in sports and then keep him there. I was somewhat saddened by the rigors of the training and touring that takes a man away from the very people/world that admire him; it must be a special sort of person who gives so much of self and time for love of a sport.

The Baseball Life of Willie Mays, Lee Greene; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1970.

One hundred and sixty pages of a man with guts, a love of the game, or both; Willie Mays put so much into playing that in his later years he has had to remain away from the game for periods of time to rest himself. The fact that he is still playing is a testimony to his interest and love of the sport. Mr. Mays, with his outstanding ability as an outfielder, hitter, and base stealer, is an interesting man to read about. He is a fine image for any young man.

Charlie Brown's All-Stars, Charles M. Schulz; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., permission with the World Publishing Co., 1966.

Captured in print and also appearing on television, Charlie Brown fights a gallant fight to hold his own with his peers. As part of the baseball team, Snoopy, Charlie's dog, also adds appeal. Who can resist a comic strip character? The fact that I am requested to purchase paperbacks of each of Charlie's encounters is evidence of his popularity.

Crooked Arm and Other Baseball Stories, Tony Simon - editor; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1968.

Portions of these stories moralize, some have a ring of truth brushed with nagging hints of hyperbole, and a few are downright funny. The vocabulary is a little rough for low readers; there are some stories they should grasp, however. Generally, the book is more entertaining than informative. A knowledge of baseball terminology is necessary.

Arrow Book of Short Stories, Tony Simon - editor; Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1969.

Basketball, swimming, football, soapbox racing, and track are all included in this general book of entertaining stories. The selections, eleven in number, vary to point out good and bad traits in athletes, team spirit, and thoughts about competition. They require fairly good readers. The selections are brief.