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*The Team That Forever Changed Baseball and America: The 1947
Brooklyn Dodgers* ed. by Lyle Spatz (review)

Robert A. Moss

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from other players and fans” (xiii). Robinson eventually admitted that Greenberg offered “the first real words of encouragement I received from a player on an opposing team,” while Greenberg observed that he “identified with Jackie Robinson . . . because they had threatened me the same way” (xiii).

When one reads these quotes, one is reminded of the antagonism that has often characterized African American–Jewish relations across the decades. In this regard, *Two Pioneers* is a sobering testament to the fact that African Americans and Jews have more in common than individual members of both groups are often willing to admit.

Lyle Spatz, ed. *The Team That Forever Changed Baseball and America: The 1947 Brooklyn Dodgers*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 380 pp. Paper, \$26.95.

Robert A. Moss

This lovely volume is an entry in SABR’s series *Memorable Teams in Baseball History*. Here are 380 double-column pages devoted to the 1947 Brooklyn Dodgers of Jackie Robinson’s rookie year, a multifaceted, multiauthor effort edited by Lyle Spatz.

Of course, other books deal with Robinson and the 1947 Dodgers: Red Barber’s 1947 *When All Hell Broke Loose in Baseball* (1982) provides a passionate and personal perspective from the Dodgers’ longtime play-by-play announcer; Jonathan Eig’s *Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinson’s First Season* (2007) affords an updated introduction to one of baseball’s most exciting seasons and a pivotal chapter in the evolution of civil rights in postwar America; and Jules Tygiel’s classic, *Baseball’s Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (1983), provides an even deeper and broader treatment of this topic.

However, *The Team That Forever Changed Baseball and America: The 1947 Brooklyn Dodgers* is unique: three intertwined threads combine “time-line” capsule summaries of the Dodgers’ 1947 games; multipage, fully sourced biographies of the players, coaches, managers, and owners; and freestanding essays devoted to various aspects of the season. This nonlinear, interspersed structure allows the book to be opened anywhere and browsed for pleasure and instruction, and a detailed table of contents is available for those who desire a more deliberate or selective approach.

To briefly unpack the tripartite structure of *The Team*, consider first the 1947 season. The Dodgers had finished the 1946 pennant race in a dead heat with St. Louis, but lost the ensuing playoff. The addition of Robinson in 1947 might lead to victory, but only if the racial tensions within the clubhouse and those emanating from opposition dugouts could be contained. Adding to the combustible situation, Dodgers manager Leo Durocher was abruptly suspended for the season by Commissioner Chandler “as a result of the accumulation of unpleasant incidents detrimental to baseball.” Branch Rickey installed Burt Shotton as Durocher’s replacement. Although Shotton was an experienced minor-league and major-league skipper, he was, in Red Barber’s words, “handed by Rickey and the fates the most upset, torn-apart ball club in history. The coming of Jackie Robinson brought a seething turbulence that was waiting to explode.”

Following the timeline game summaries in *The Team*, we see how Shotton melded his disparate cast of players into a championship club. The heart of the season was July 21–31, when the Dodgers fashioned a thirteen-game winning streak, including doubleheader victories against the Reds and Pirates and a three-game sweep of St. Louis, increasing their lead over the Cardinals from two and one-half to ten games. The key contributors included Dixie Walker, Bruce Edwards, Pee Wee Reese, Jackie Robinson, Carl Furillo, Pete Reiser, Eddie Stanky, and Gene Hermanski among the hitters and Joe Hatten, Ralph Branca, Vic Lombardi, and Hugh Casey among the pitchers. Although there would be ups and downs for the remainder of the season, the Dodgers coalesced under Shotton’s direction: rookies and veterans, southerners and Robinson, journeyman pitchers and Hugh Casey, the nonpareil reliever, all became one team. As Barber put it, “I have known two actual magicians—Blackstone and Shotton. Blackstone was on the stage. Shotton, with what passed for a pitching staff in 1947, was in the Brooklyn dugout.”

The Team’s fifty-three biographies, each accompanied by a photograph, comprise the largest portion of the book. Here are stars like Dixie Walker, Pete Reiser, Pee Wee Reese, and Hugh Casey; soon-to-be greats like Gil Hodges, Duke Snider, and Carl Furillo; and the cup-of-coffee drinkers. Who now remembers Dan Bankhead, the first African American pitcher in Major League Baseball? He pitched ten indifferent innings for the 1947 Dodgers, but homered in his first at bat. Who recalls Tommy Brown, the youngest position player to appear in a major-league game, at the age of sixteen years and seven months in 1944? Brown went on to play in fifteen games for the 1947 Dodgers, posting a .235 average. *The Team* provides a cavalcade of names to freshen our memories: Rex Barney, Clyde King, Bobby Bragan, Arkie Vaughan, Al Gionfriddo, and Cookie Lavagetto. Coaches are included: Clyde Sukeforth,

who scouted Robinson for Rickey, and Jake Pitler, the Jewish first base coach who did not appear on the High Holy Days. Sportscasters and owners receive equal coverage with the players. In addition to Rickey and Walter O'Malley, we encounter John L. Smith, president of the Pfizer pharmaceutical company, who loved the Dodgers and bought a one-quarter interest in the club. Pfizer's Brooklyn plant was a major supplier of penicillin, and Sir Alexander Fleming, who was the drug's Scottish discoverer as well as a Nobel Laureate, visited Smith in Brooklyn. Who knew that Fleming, through Smith, became a Dodger fan and acquired a collection of autographed memorabilia?

The essays in *The Team* focus on various aspects of the 1947 season, including spring training in Havana, Rickey's relationship with the press, the suspension of Durocher, ownership infighting, and Robinson's first game. Several essays are devoted to the memorable 1947 Dodgers-Yankees World Series, won by the Yankees in seven games. Highlighted are Al Gionfriddo's game-saving catch of Joe DiMaggio's 415-foot potential home run in Game 6, and Cookie Lavagetto's pinch-hit, walk-off double in Game 3, which knocked in two runs and spoiled Bill Beven's bid for the first World Series no-hitter.

The Team That Forever Changed Baseball and America: The 1947 Brooklyn Dodgers is a volume to be treasured, to be read in small, savory portions, but it is not a dissertation on how the 1947 Dodgers "changed baseball and America." Other books—Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment* and Chris Lamb's *Blackout: The Untold Story of Jackie Robinson's First Spring Training*—provide more synoptic treatments of this topic. Rather, *The Team* excels in recreating the era and its ethos, the players and their arena, the drama and the triumph of Robinson. Something wonderful happened in the Brooklyn of 1947; *The Team* is a portal to that time and place.

John G. Zinn and Paul G. Zinn, eds. *Ebbets Field: Essays and Memories of Brooklyn's Historic Ballpark, 1913–1960*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2013. 240 pp. Paper, \$39.95.

Steven P. Gietschier

This package of essays and related materials was compiled and edited by a father-son team, neither of whom ever had the good fortune to see a ball game played at Ebbets Field. John Zinn, the father, is chairman of the board of the New Jersey Historical Society. His son, Paul, is a former sportswriter now