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*Houston Cougars in the 1960s: Death Threats, the Veer
Offense, and the Game of the Century* by Robert D. Jacobus
(review)

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through sleuthing of newspapers and libraries and personal interviews. In each chapter, he presents at least two oral histories, the extended monologues of players, fans, and other first-hand observers, reminiscent of another great historical baseball book, *The Glory of Their Times*, by Lawrence S. Ritter (1966). But Ritter's book contains the voices of men who enjoyed significant big-league careers; the men portrayed in Smith's tidy 192-page narrative are the real-life examples of fictional legends such as Roy Hobbs and Crash Davis, talented guys who spent most, if not all, of their careers playing under dim lights in towns like Roswell, Carlsbad, and Pampa. It is poignant to read Smith's description of Bauman and Crues being buried in weed-infested unmarked graves (though this indignity has since been corrected).

Bush League Boys, while surely a baseball book, is also an insightful account of the post-World War II era, with topical chapters focusing on tornados and other extreme weather in New Mexico and West Texas, the fear of polio, and the experience of African American players, including the great Willie Stargell, coming to towns where many people had never seen a black person. A generous collection of evocative photos in *Bush League Boys* further brings the men and the times to life. The untold legions of readers who hold nostalgic feelings for baseball and the optimistic post-war era (whether they were alive in those days or not) will find Toby Smith's *Bush League Boys* engaging and enlightening reading.

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JOHN DEMPSEY

Houston Cougars in the 1960s: Death Threats, the Veer Offense, and the Game of the Century. By Robert D. Jacobus. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2015. Pp. 271. Photographs, bibliography, index.)

Racial integration of sports teams after World War II came very slowly, even outside the South. In 1947, when Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers, he became the first African American to participate in Major League Baseball since the 1880s. Not until 1959 did all sixteen teams field black players, even though no major franchises existed farther south than Washington, D.C. Integration of southern colleges was similarly lethargic after the *Sweatt v. Painter* decision in 1950. In many cases, desegregation occurred with minimal fanfare. Such was the case at the University of Houston (UH), according to Robert Jacobus's well-researched tome, *Houston Cougars in the 1960s*. There, winning football and basketball teams were more often the catalyst for breaking racial barriers than righting injustices.

Jacobus interviewed more than two hundred people from that era and generously uses quotations to tell the story. Unfortunately, the comments, although coherently connected, are often redundant. For example, when

interviewees address the importance of winning, numerous comments are similar to Donnie Schverak's: "[M]ost of the football and basketball players wouldn't see color out there; they wanted to win" (116). But despite numerous repetitions, Jacobus produces an enlightening look at intercollegiate athletics in the 1960s and the Cougars' rise to national acclaim, especially in basketball, which heretofore had been an inarguably second-rate sport in Texas.

After thoroughly depicting the extent of Jim Crow in Houston and throughout Texas in his first four chapters, Jacobus focuses on the effect of African Americans on the football and basketball programs at UH. He describes how the talents of Warren McVea, Don Chaney, and Elvin Hayes modified the strategies of football coach Bill Yeoman and basketball coach Guy Lewis. During these latter chapters, Jacobus addresses the athletic trends of this period and, of course, basketball's "Game of the Century" when the UCLA Bruins, led by Lew Alcindor, and UH played in the Astrodome on January 20, 1968. Here the book, which is "primarily intended for sports enthusiasts and people interested in the history of University of Houston athletics" (xx), will most appeal to its target audience.

Football fans can follow the success of Yeoman's veer offense as UH began to rival the dominance of the Southwest Conference with black athletes such as McVea. But fans wanting an in-depth analysis of the veer will be disappointed, as Jacobus remains focused on integration, even to the point of cheerleading, when he exclaims, "Yes, indeed, he truly showed he was 'Wondrous Warren'" (234).

Likewise, basketball fans will find no particular insights in the coverage of the Hayes-Alcindor matchup in the Astrodome. Readers will get a fascinating, if somewhat one-sided, report of how Chaney and Hayes led UH from mediocrity to the number one ranking by ending the Bruins' forty-seven-game winning streak.

Readers interested in intercollegiate athletics, the 1960s, or racial integration will find *Houston Cougars in the 1960s* worthwhile. Researchers will find valuable primary source material. And anyone trying to understand civil rights in the 1960s will find this a fascinating account of young men negotiating the obstacles of integration.

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Nut Country: Right-Wing Dallas and the Birth of the Southern Strategy. By Edward H. Miller. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. Pp. 230. Notes, bibliography.)

Nut Country: Right-Wing Dallas and the Birth of the Southern Strategy documents how conservative extremists of many varieties in the North Texas city managed to seek out strategic alliances and effectively remade the