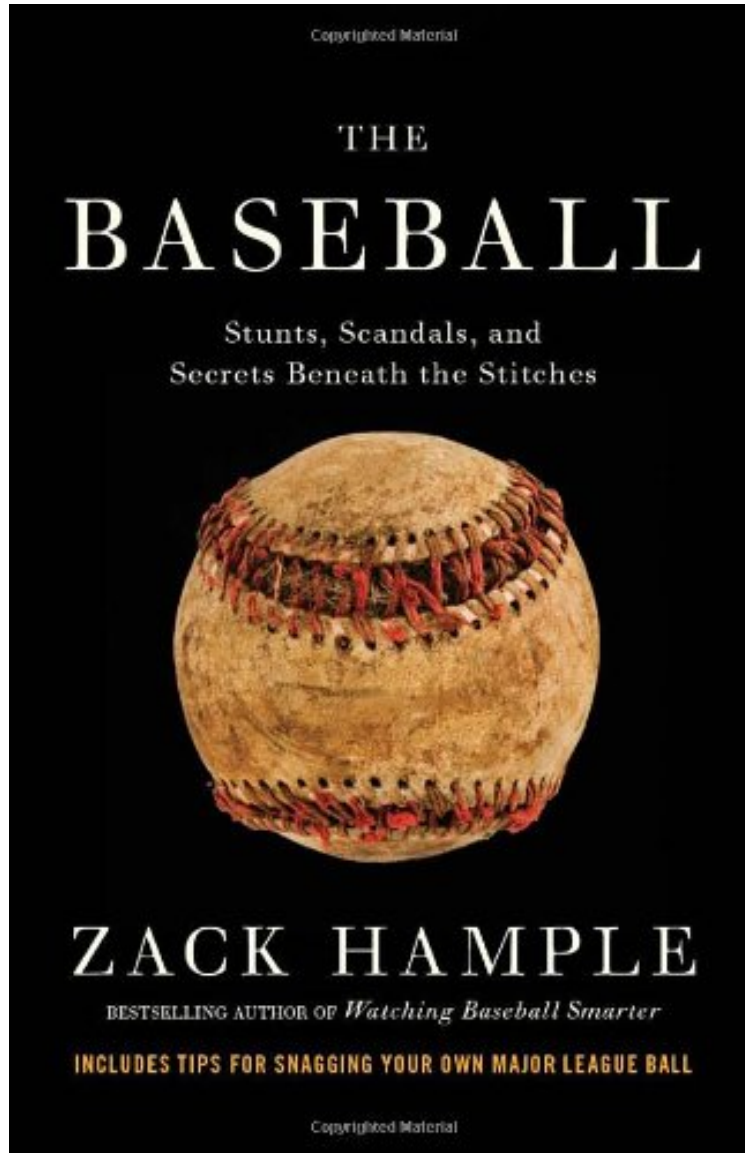


[Library ebook] The Baseball: Stunts, Scandals, and Secrets Beneath the Stitches

The Baseball: Stunts, Scandals, and Secrets Beneath the Stitches

Zack Hample

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#139883 in Books Hample Zack 2011-03-08 2011-03-08Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x .70 x 5.20l, .76 #File Name: 030747545X368 pagesThe Baseball Stunts Scandals and Secrets Beneath the Stitches | File size: 51.Mb

Zack Hample : The Baseball: Stunts, Scandals, and Secrets Beneath the Stitches before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Baseball: Stunts, Scandals, and Secrets Beneath the Stitches:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, witty, and fun!By Matt JacksonFor fans of the game of

baseball, be sure to check out *The Baseball*. Hample's third book on the subject of our national pastime goes beneath the stitches and looks at the history of the ball we all know and love. *Stunts, Scandals, and Secrets Beneath the Stitches* takes the reader on a trip through the history of the game, the players, coaches and managers, fans, and pop culture/trivia that center around this simple (or not so simple) sphere and turns "the baseball" into a sort of character that, like all great characters, goes through an impressive series of changes before becoming what we know it as today. A quick, solid read--pick up a copy if you're even the most casual fan of the game and I guarantee you'll learn something new and you'll be in for a few laughs, too. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent read. Should definitely be checked out by any ...By damightyzugExcellent read. Should definitely be checked out by any baseball fan. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great read!By Akopp1This is a great read, especially in the summer time as everyone is hyped for baseball season! Zack Hample provides the reader with an in depth view of the history of the baseball itself and great insight into some of the most infamous homerun balls hit. The most fascinating part of the book however discusses the rawlings factory and the rigorous process they go through just to make one game ready baseball. A great read for all ages.

The Baseball is a salute to the ball, filled with insider trivia, anecdotes, and generations of ball-induced insanity. Which Hall of Famer once caught a ball dropped from an airplane? Why do balls get stamped with invisible ink? What's the best ticket to buy for catching a foul ball? Which part of the ball once came from dog food companies? How could a 10,000-year-old glacier help a pitcher grip the ball? In this enlightening, entertaining, and often wildly funny book, Zack Hample shares ballpark legends and lore, explores the history of the baseball souvenir craze, and also details the evolution of the ball. Finally, Hample—who has snagged more than 4,600 balls from 48 different major league stadiums—offers up his secret methods for snagging your own ball from major league games. Features a ballhawk glossary, profiles of legendary ballhawks, top 10 lists, and black-and-white photos throughout.

"This is the stuff baseball fans eat up like snack food, only it's way more nourishing. . . . The stories are marvelous, and throughout Hample maintains jaunty good humor and even class; for instance, he thanks, by name, every one of the 1,167 Major League players and coaches who have given him baseballs over the years (an interesting list in itself). Lots of fascinating illustrations, too." —Booklist "Brings a whole new dimension to the term 'inside baseball.' . . . Hample . . . provides plenty of revelations to even the most passionate follower of the game." —Kirkus "Hample is not simply an articulate and accessible baseball writer, he's a zealous collector of game balls. . . . His advice on how to catch a ball at the stadium shows how meticulously he hones his hobby. Along the way there are lots of personalities and top-ten lists at the end for every active fan. All ball buffs should try to catch this one." —Library Journal Praise for Zack Hample's *Watching Baseball Smarter*: "Insightful, engaging and funny—a treat for anyone who loves the game." —Keith Hernandez "Hample calls himself an obsessed fan—obsessed in a good way—and the product of his torment is a funny and informative guide for all levels of fans." —Yankees Magazine "Engaging. . . . Hample's book is both deceptive in its simplicity . . . and surprising in its range." —Fortune "A browser's delight of a book. . . . Hample unloads a zany collection of baseball trivia, insights and 'random stuff'. . . in breezy guidebook style." —Seattle Post-Intelligencer "This isn't the first book to take on the challenge of explaining baseball intricacies, but I've never seen it done better." —Craig Smith, *The Seattle Times* "Armed at neophytes and know-it-alls alike, this baseball geekfest tells you which positions are never played by lefties, why it's easier to hit when bases are loaded, which rules are the weirdest, and other arcana." —Maxim About the Author Zack Hample has written three books about baseball and has appeared on dozens of TV and radio shows. He has snagged more than 4,600 baseballs from 48 different major league stadiums. Hample runs a business called "Watch With Zack" and has a popular blog, *The Baseball Collector*, chronicling his obsession. <http://www.zackhample.com> Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 The Souvenir Craze "BALL GRABBERS, READ THIS" Way back in 1915, a first-class stamp cost two cents, a gallon of gas went for a quarter, and a game-used baseball fetched three bucks. At least, that was the going rate at the Polo Grounds when a Yankee fan named Guy Clarke snagged one in the left-field bleachers, got arrested for refusing to return it, and had to pay a \$3 fine. That was a lot of money back then, but we're not talking about any old ball. It was a ninth-inning home run hit by Yankees shortstop Roger Peckinpaugh against the Boston Red Sox. Considering what that ball would sell for today, it was totally worth it. The editors at the *New York Times*, however, didn't see it that way, and on May 8, 1915—one day after the incident—the paper ran a short article called "Ball Grabbers, Read This." It was a warning, and the message was clear: if you steal a baseball, you're gonna get busted. This was old news. And it wasn't entirely true. Clarke was just one of the unlucky few who got prosecuted; fans had been snapping up baseballs for years, and by 1915 more than two dozen balls were disappearing at the Polo Grounds each week. Yeah, these balls were expensive—owners were paying \$15 per dozen—but beyond the financial burden, it didn't really matter. If a few balls were lost here and there, the home plate umpire simply replaced them. That's not how things worked when the National League formed in 1876. High-quality balls were so scarce that each one was expected to last an entire game, and if the ball went missing, the players went looking for it. As a result, fans policed themselves whenever a ball landed in the crowd and made sure that it was returned. It had to be. There

was no room for debate. But when foul balls flew completely over the grandstand and landed outside the ballpark, they were much harder to recover. These balls were often grabbed by little kids who didn't have enough money to buy tickets, so teams came up with a solution: anyone who returned a ball got to watch the game for free. This reward system was effective at first, but kids eventually began to value the ball more than the opportunity to watch grown men play with it. (Can you blame them?) On June 1, 1887, Toronto World reported that "fifteen balls were knocked over the left field fence at Buffalo Monday and were stolen by bad boys." In other words, teams weren't just losing balls during games; kids were taking them during batting practice as well. What began as a nuisance—a missing ball every once in a while—was turning into an epidemic. On May 1, 1897, The Sporting News declared that "the souvenir craze" was affecting games in the South. In 1899 the Washington Senators hired a group of boys to retrieve baseballs. By 1901 teams were spending so much money on balls that the National League Rules Committee suggested penalizing batters who fouled off good pitches. On May 2, 1902, the Detroit Free Press said, "Baseballs that go into the stands at St. Louis are hopelessly lost, the man who first gets his hands on the flying sphere clinging to it." Sometime around 1903, it was rumored that on one occasion when a fan at the Polo Grounds refused to return a ball, John McGraw, the Hall of Fame manager of the New York Giants, retaliated by stealing the guy's hat. Major League Baseball took action the following season by officially giving teams the right to retrieve balls that were hit into the stands. This new measure worked in some cases, but for the most part all it did was piss off the fans and make them more determined than ever not to cooperate. In 1905 a Cubs fan named Samuel Scott was arrested in Chicago after catching a foul ball and refusing to hand it over to an usher. Cubs president James Hart personally confronted him and signed a larceny complaint, but the charges were dropped the next day when Scott, a member of the Board of Trade, threatened to sue for assault and false arrest. Things got progressively worse from there. "Brooklynites seem to prize highly balls which go into the bleachers," reported the New York Tribune in 1908. "Women are as bad as men about stealing baseballs; they aren't so skillful in hiding them," said baseball manufacturer Tom Shibe in 1911. "The practice of concealing balls fouled into the grandstand or bleachers has reached disgusting proportions in New York," claimed Sporting Life magazine in 1915. Cubs owner Charles Weeghman felt otherwise. He recognized the foul ball frenzy as a business opportunity—a chance to bring more folks to the ballpark—and on April 29, 1916, he began letting fans keep the foul balls they caught. Two and a half months later, the Phillies' business manager billed Weeghman for eight baseballs that were hit into the stands during BP, but that was the price of good PR. The October 1916 issue of Baseball magazine praised Weeghman in a lengthy staff editorial. "The charm of novelty, of possible gain might lure far more spectators than enough to pay for the lost balls," it said. "At any rate, Mr. Weeghman evidently thinks so. For he has recently inaugurated this common-sense policy in his park at Chicago." Other owners just didn't get it. "Why should a man carry away an object worth \$2.50 just because he gets his hands on it?" asked Colonel "Cap" Huston, part-owner of the Yankees. "When people go to a restaurant, do they take the dishes or silverware home for souvenirs?" Most teams generously donated used balls to servicemen during World War I, but continued bullying the regular fans. Enter Reuben Berman. On May 16, 1921, Berman, a 31-year-old stockbroker from Connecticut, caught a foul ball during a Reds-Giants game at the Polo Grounds, and when the ushers demanded that he return it, he responded by tossing it deeper into the crowd. Berman was whisked away by security personnel, taken to the team offices, threatened with arrest, and ejected from the stadium. Giants management figured that was the end of it, but nearly three months later Berman's attorney served the team with legal papers, claiming that his client had been unlawfully detained and had suffered mental anguish and a loss of reputation. The case was tried in New York's Supreme Court, and Berman was awarded \$100—far less than the \$20,000 sum originally sought by his attorney, but the message was delivered. "Reuben's Rule" (as it came to be known) was the real turning point, although change didn't happen all at once. Several owners still refused to give in, and as a result, there were a few more high-profile clashes between fans and security personnel. The most outrageous incident took place in 1923, when an 11-year-old boy named Robert Cotter was arrested and thrown in jail for pocketing a ball at the Baker Bowl in Philadelphia. The following day he was released by a sympathetic judge who said, "Such an act on the part of a boy is merely proof that he is following his most natural impulses. It is a thing I would do myself." Seven years later in Chicago, with Weeghman long gone as Cubs owner, there was another ugly incident involving a young fan. Arthur Porto, age 17, caught a Hack Wilson foul ball and brawled with stadium security when they tried to take it from him. He and his two friends, who had joined the scuffle, were booked for disorderly conduct. The next day in court the judge dismissed the charges and ruled that a ball hit into the crowd belongs "to the boy who grabs it." There were still a few more altercations in the 1930s, and during World War II teams once again donated balls to the armed forces. During that time fans were asked to return whatever they snagged, but that was the end of it. Ballhawking bliss, along with a whole new set of controversies, was about to begin. **STEVE BARTMAN** Steve Bartman is responsible for the biggest ball-related controversy in history. Most sports fans know his name, but few are aware of the entire wacky aftermath. The original incident occurred on October 13, 2003—Game 6 of the National League Championship Series at Wrigley Field. It was the top of the eighth inning. One out. Runner on second base. The Cubs were beating the Marlins, 3-0, and needed just five more outs to advance to the World Series. They hadn't been there since 1945. They hadn't won it since 1908. Momentum was finally on their side—until Luis Castillo lofted a seemingly harmless fly ball down the left-field

line. Cubs left fielder Moises Alou ran into foul territory and probably would've made the catch had a certain fan not reached out of the stands and deflected it. That fan was Steve Bartman. Alou flung his glove in disgust, and the crowd direct edits wrath at Bartman, who had to be escorted out by stadium security for his own safety. When play resumed, the Marlins rallied for eight runs and put the game away. Poor Bartman. Not only did half a dozen police cars have to gather outside his home that night to protect him and his family, but things got worse the next day after the Cubs blew their lead in Game 7 and failed to reach the World Series. Bartman became an instant scapegoat for generations of disgruntled Cubs fans, received death threats, had to change his phone number, and was forced into hiding. Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich suggested that he enter the witness protection program, while Florida governor Jeb Bush offered him asylum. Bartman proceeded to turn down interview requests and endorsement deals, and he eventually rejected a \$25,000 offer to autograph a photo of himself at a sports memorabilia convention. Here's where it gets weird. Several months later, a successful restaurateur named Grant DePorter bought the infamous foul ball at an auction for \$113,824. DePorter, hoping to rid the Cubs of their curse, recruited Michael Lantieri, an Academy Award-winning special effects expert, to blow up the ball at Harry Caray's restaurant. The stunt was covered live on CNN, ESPN, and MSNBC and was written up by more than 4,000 newspapers. Then, a year later, at a much less publicized event, DePorter used the remnants of the ball to make a dish he named "Foul Ball Spaghetti." What remained of the ball was boiled; the steam was captured and distilled and added to the recipe.

JEFFREY MAIER Jeffrey Maier was the most infamous baseball fan before Bartman, and he attained his notoriety by doing the same thing: reaching out of the stands and interfering with a ball that was still in play. Luckily for Maier, who was just 12 years old at the time, he was treated as a hero because his interference happened to help the home team. And not just any team—the New York Yankees. It was October 9, 1996—Game 1 of the American League Championship Series. The Yankees were trailing the Baltimore Orioles, 4-3, with one out in the bottom of the eighth, when Derek Jeter spanked a deep drive toward the short porch in right field. Orioles right fielder Tony Tarasco reached the blue padded wall as the ball was descending and leaped to make the catch—but he never got the chance because Maier stuck out his glove and deflected the ball back into the stands. Right-field umpire Rich Garcia ruled it a home run, prompting Tarasco and Orioles manager Davey Johnson to argue like mad. And they were right—slow-motion replays indicated that the ball would not have cleared the wall if not for Maier—but the bad call stood, and the Yankees won the game (and eventually the World Series) in extra innings. The Orioles filed an official protest, and even though Garcia admitted that there was fan interference, the protest was denied by American League president Gene Budig. Maier appeared on national talk shows and was given the key to New York City by Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

RED SOX WORLD SERIES BALLS When Red Sox first baseman Doug Mientkiewicz caught the final out of the 2004 World Series, he found an extra way to get his name in the papers: by deciding to keep the ball for himself. Mientkiewicz, a former Gold Glove winner who had entered the game as a defensive replacement for David Ortiz in the bottom of the seventh, felt that he deserved to keep it since he caught it. Red Sox fans and management disagreed. Their team had finally overcome "the Curse of the Bambino" and won its first championship in 86 years. In their minds, this was one of the most important balls in the history of the sport, and it belonged in the team's museum. Mientkiewicz held out, and as the negative media attention intensified, he joked to a Boston Globe reporter that the ball was his "retirement fund." Or was he joking? On the same day he caught it, Barry Bonds's 700th career home run ball sold for \$804,129 through an online auction. How did the Mientkiewicz saga end? It was easy. First the Red Sox traded him to the Mets for a minor leaguer. Then they filed a lawsuit against him. Then they dropped the charges when he agreed to let an independent mediator settle the dispute. Finally he lent the ball to the Sox for a year and then donated it to the Hall of Fame. When Boston won the World Series again in 2007, a whole new controversy erupted over the final-out ball. This time it ended up in the hands of catcher Jason Varitek, who initially said he planned to return it to the team, but later admitted that he gave it to reliever Jonathan Papelbon. When the team asked Papelbon for the ball, he claimed that his dog ate it. "He plays with baseballs like they are his toys," said the pitcher of his bulldog, Boss. "He jumped up one day on the counter and snatched it. He likes rawhide. He tore that thing to pieces." Papelbon vowed to keep what was left of the ball, but later told the New England Sports Network that he'd thrown it out. "It's in the garbage in Florida somewhere," he said. Team officials took his word and did not file charges.