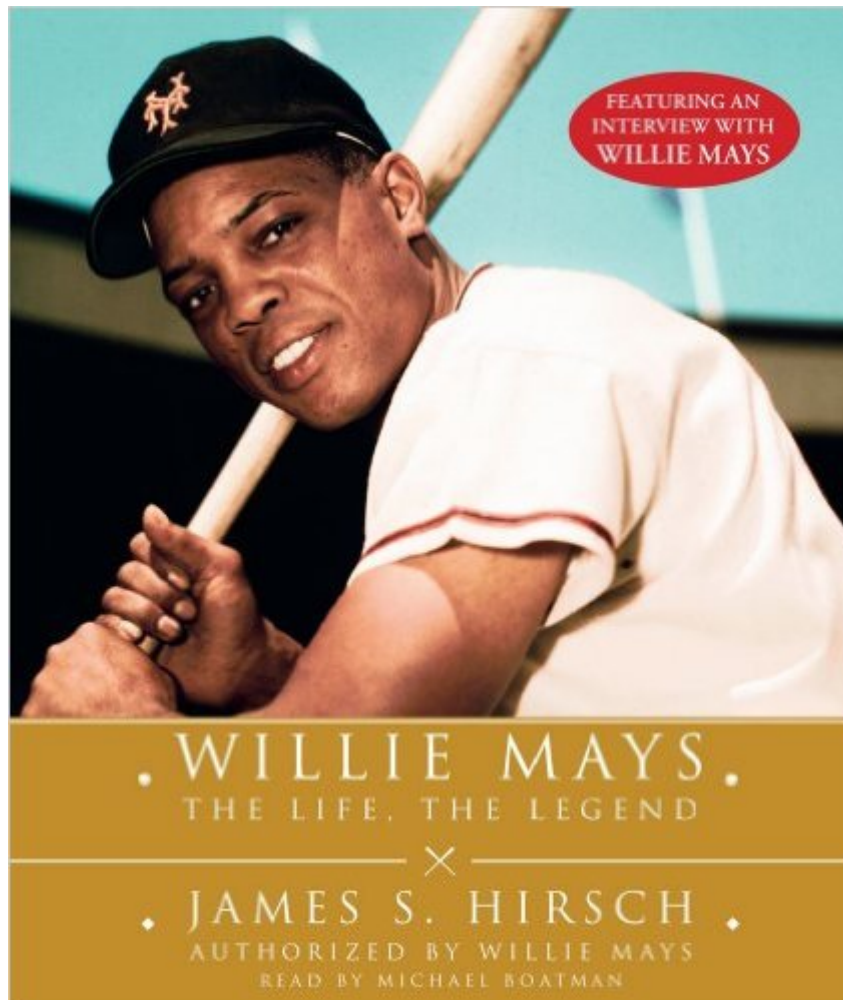


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Willie Mays: The Life, The Legend



Synopsis

Considered to be "one of the most monumental and enigmatic legends as American sport has ever seen" (Sports Illustrated), Willie Mays is arguably the greatest player in baseball history, still revered for the joy and passion he brought to the game. Mays began as a teenage phenom in the Negro Leagues, became a cult hero in New York, and was the headliner in Major League Baseball's bold expansion to California. With 3,383 hits, 660 home runs, and 338 stolen bases, he was a blend of power, speed and stylistic bravado that fans had never seen before. Now, in the first biography authorized by and written with the cooperation of Willie Mays, James Hirsch reveals the man behind the player. Willie is perhaps best known for "The Catch" his breathtaking over-the-shoulder grab in the 1954 World Series. It is a classic visual that represents a transcendent figure who ushered in a new era of baseball, received standing ovations around the globe, and "during the turbulent civil rights era" advocated understanding and reconciliation. However, the years of racial attacks, the stress of celebrity, and the mental and physical demands of the game also took a toll. Meticulously researched and drawing on lengthy interviews with Mays, as well as with close friends, family, and teammates, Hirsch presents a complex portrait of one of America's most significant cultural icons.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Take it from a baseball fan of over 50 years and a baseball historian of some note: This is a great book and one of the best baseball biographies I've ever read. The author has done an outstanding job of capturing the essence of the man, Willie Mays, and the magnificent yet tragically flawed era,

the 1950's and 60's, in which he played. Don't pay any attention to the any of the low rated reviews (I'm wondering if they actually read the same book I did!) If you love baseball and baseball history, you're going to love this one. Some reviewers say the author spends too much time on the Civil Rights era and not enough time on Mays himself. Huh?? Here's a quote from one: "...what the reader gets is a history of Civil Rights, Jim Crow Laws, and a period in American that most people would soon forget. Less than 25% of book is devoted to the story behind Willie Mays, his fellow ball players, and the game itself." To me, this is a totally unjustified criticism. How could one possibly write a definitive biography about an African-American superstar, arguably the greatest player of all time, who broke into the Major Leagues in 1951 just a few years after Jackie Robinson, and ignore this important topic, or fail to develop it fully. What credible author would produce a biography like that? Can you imagine the criticism? A major part of Willie Mays' career and personality was formed by the racial context of the America in which he lived and played, and how he reacted to that context. It's an important part of his story. My favorite part of the book is the description of the relationship between Mays and manager Leo Durocher, developed beautifully by the author. We learn that the affection was mutual and was most definitely real.

The first thing that I feel is beneficial to point out to all potential readers is that it doesn't matter who your favorite team is... if you're an old school baseball fan you will absolutely love this book! The author covers in excruciatingly tantalizing detail the world of baseball in the 1940's... 50's... 60's... and 70's. This is the time period that has lovingly been described as both the "GOLDEN-AGE-OF-BASEBALL"... and also been blessed with the poetic ribbon of admiration as the period when "BASEBALL-WAS-STILL-A-GAME!" And no one before or since played with such youthful uninhibited exuberance as Willie "THE-SAY-HEY-KID" Mays. The author leads you from Willie's childhood days in Birmingham Alabama and sheds an informative affectionate light on Willie's Father Cat Mays who was also a good ballplayer and also the young woman... actually just a young girl... his thirteen-year-old Aunt Sarah who was the main female/mother presence in his daily life. Young Willie was so talented that he played professional baseball when he was fifteen-years-old thus giving up his high school baseball eligibility. Willie played in the final years of the Negro League and of course he idolized Jackie Robinson. His favorite player was Joe DiMaggio and Joltin' Joe is who he patterned his batting stance after. He also enjoyed following Stan Musial and Ted Williams. When Willie was ten-years-old he even told people to call him "DiMag". When he signed with the New York Giants he had a meteoric rise through the minors and when the Giants promoted him from Minneapolis to New York the fans loved him so much in Minneapolis the Giants

owner placed an ad in the Minneapolis paper apologizing for taking Willie away from them.

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