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Diamonds In The Rough



Synopsis

After winning Statehood in 1959, Alaska attracted thousands of collegiate stars who played for colorful teams such as the Fairbanks Goldpanners, Alaska Glacier Pilots, Peninsula Oilers, North Pole Nicks, and Anchorage Bucs. Hundreds went on to major leagues, including Hall of Famer Tom Seaver, home-run king Mark McGwire, and fireball pitcher Randy Johnson. And nowhere else is there an event like the annual Midnight Sun Game. Played in Fairbanks on June 21, the longest day of the year, it starts at 10:30 p.m. and continues until the next day, with no stadium lights.

Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Epicenter Press (April 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0945397828

ISBN-13: 978-0945397823

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,333,113 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #72 in [Books > Travel > United States > Alaska > General](#) #5204 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Baseball](#) #51711 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local](#)

Customer Reviews

Just when one believes that all possible subjects for a baseball book have been exhausted along comes a book like DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH... --Richard Miller, Sports Collectors Digest

Freedman shares his best baseball stories from a state whose season is short but there's no shortage of future major leaguers passing through-some 300 in the past thirty summers. Read about: The annual Midnight Sun Game that starts without lights at 10:30pm. An Alaska League team so eager to get in a game on a soggy day that it sets the playing field on fire. The legendary radio announcer who exits mid-game, inviting a bystander to continue the play by play. The bullpen that sneaks off to a local tavern for a few beers - during the game! But, hey! This is no joke. Mark McGwire, Dave Kingman, and Dave Winfield (all pitching then) donned uniforms of teams such as the Fairbanks Goldpanners, Alaska Glacier Pilots, Peninsula Oilers, Valley Green Giants, Mat-Su Miners, North Pole Nicks, and Anchorage Bucs. Other Alaska League alumni: Hall-of-Fame pitcher

Tom Seaver and fireball hurler Randy Johnson. And don't overlook H.A. "Red" Boucher, "the George Washington of Alaska baseball," and others who shaped baseball history in the north.

Lots of pictures and stories

Before the Cape Cod League came to fame, the place for college baseball players to hone their skills in the summer was the Alaska Baseball League. Over 300 Major League Baseball players spent a season or more in the ABL, including guys like Tom Seaver, Dave Winfield and Mark McGwire. The ABL was the place to play, and the teams and the games were terrific. Lew Freedman's book captures part of that glory, from the start of the Fairbanks Goldpanners under Red Boucher in 1960 through the 2000 season. The ups, downs, stars, feuds, heroes and villains; Freedman does a good job and brings an informed perspective to a great story. The ABL was more or less "discovered" on the 100th anniversary of the Midnight Sun Game back in 2006, when Sports Illustrated, ESPN and others came up to cover the game. The great story wasn't 100 years of games played from 10:30 PM to 1:00 AM without artificial lights; the big story was the amazing success across the decades of the ABL. But Freedman was there first. Barry Bonds, Randy Johnson, three generations of Boones, Jason Giambi, John Olerud, Rich Aurilia; the list of former ABL players is long and distinguished. Kudos to Lew Freedman and Epicenter Press for telling the story well.

Lew Freedman wrote one of the better books in baseball history as he traces the history of Alaskan baseball (bush league in its finest form) from the territorial days to the turn of the century. What make this book so interesting is that it also spotlights on many of the players who used to played in Alaska during its short summer seasons who later on became big time Major League players like Mark McGwire, Dave Kingman and Randy Johnson. But overall, the main focus of the book remains on baseball in Alaska, the history of the teams, players and coaches along with some of it more eccentric fans. It may be that some of the players we see in Anchorage today during the summer season, may be a future Hall of Famer. The book comes highly recommended for anyone interested in baseball history or enjoyed baseball in general.

This is a very good book about different teams in the Alaska Baseball League. In talks about each team and their players and also talks of the history of the league.

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