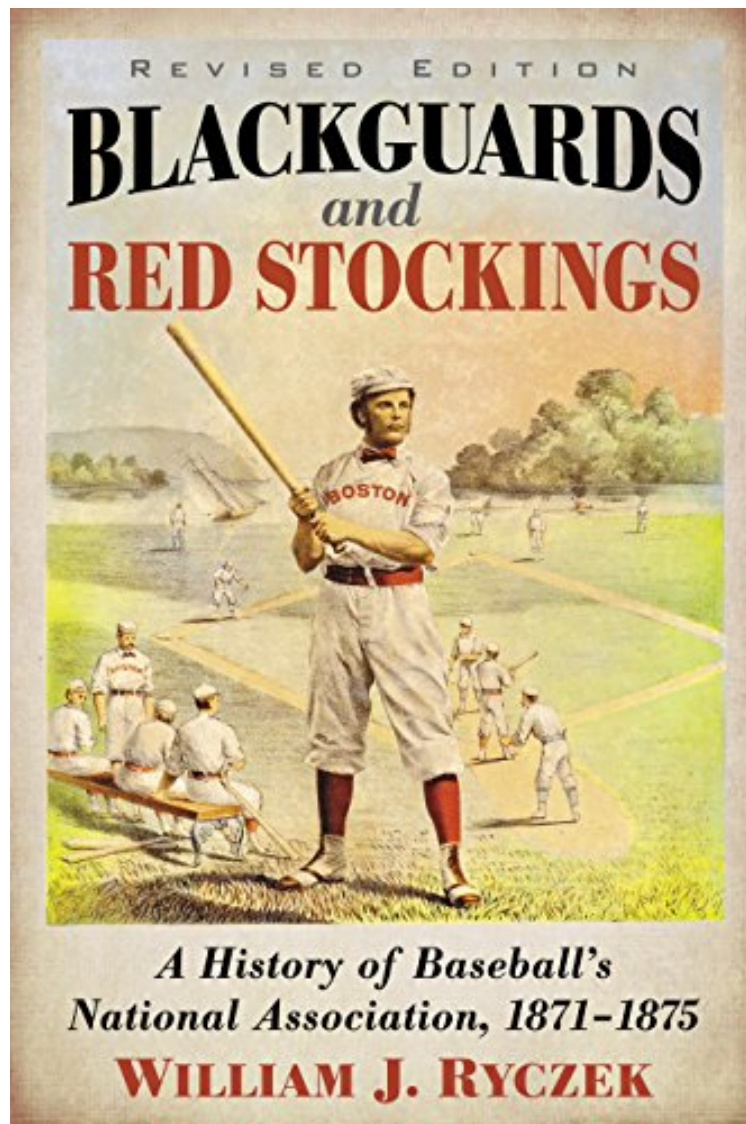


(Free) Blackguards and Red Stockings: A History of Baseball's National Association, 1871-1875, Revised Edition

## **Blackguards and Red Stockings: A History of Baseball's National Association, 1871-1875, Revised Edition**

*William J. Ryczek*

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**William J. Ryczek : Blackguards and Red Stockings: A History of Baseball's National Association, 1871-1875, Revised Edition** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blackguards and Red Stockings: A History of Baseball's National Association, 1871-1875, Revised Edition:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy Gary SwieterWell written, informative.0 of 0 people

found the following review helpful. A very good place to start

By Marc Ranger

Few baseball fans know that "Major League Baseball" began before the National League in 1876. First, there was the National Association, a loose circuit without discipline, enforced rules or fixed schedule. Although I knew beforehand much about the NA, I learned many facts from the book. For instance the difference between "co-opt" and "stock" teams. It's a real fun ride to read about "Major League" franchises such as the Elizabeth Resolutes, the Keokuk Westerns (who played in a field called "Walter's Pasture" featuring a lake in center field) or the Fort Wayne Kekiongas! Also very interesting to read about Bobby Mathews (who belongs in the HOF), Harry Wright (the masterful and innovative Boston player-manager) and the debut of Adrian "Cap" Anson. If you consider yourself a baseball fan, you should know about the roots of this great game, and William J. Ryczek's work is a very good place to start.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The First Major League

By John Santosuosso

Baseball fans owe a lot to Major League Baseball. Over the years it has done much to improve the game and uphold its integrity. However, even Major League Baseball does not always get it correct. One example is its refusal to recognize Pittsburgh Pirates Pitcher Harvey Haddix's 12 perfect innings against the 1959 Milwaukee Braves as a no-hitter. Another is its failure to extend major league status to the first professional sports association in the United States, the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players, which operated from 1871 through 1875. It has been rumored that the poor and sometimes nonexistent record keeping of the National Association was too much for the statisticians, and they encouraged Major League Baseball to adopt the position it has taken. After all, if it is not a major league, you do not have to pay much attention to its statistics. William Ryczek has far more courage than the statisticians. He chronicles in considerable detail the entire history of this first professional league, from its birth to its death, or perhaps we might say until it gives birth to the National League. This is a masterful job of research, one that would seem almost impossible to accomplish, and not likely to be attempted again. Ryczek tells the complete story, and often with a bit of delightful humor. A reading of this book might convince some that Major League Baseball actually got it right. The story Ryczek relates often is not pretty. The National Association was an organization where contracts meant very little, teams raided each other's players, players sometimes threw games, clubs failed to make road trips, umpiring was often atrocious, clubs in smaller cities tended to fold with great regularity, drunkenness was too often rampant, and cranks (fans) sometimes got away with interfering with the game. The organization's committees seldom met, usually failed to make a definitive ruling, and then were unable to enforce it on the rare occasions when they did. However, despite all these shortcomings Ryczek makes a convincing case for the National Association's major league status. It was, after all, first. Like everyone else, it had to learn by trial and error, and it laid the foundation for the major leagues that followed. If it had players with less than major league qualities, it also had other players and managers who were sober, responsible, highly talented, and went on to have very successful baseball careers long after the National Association had closed its doors. Down through the years professional baseball has seen considerable evolution. The National Association was simply the first step on this journey. It was in some ways an awkward one, but the game moved forward on its way to what we know it to be today. For this accomplishment the National Association deserves the right to be declared a major league. Ryczek deserves five stars for making its fascinating history available to everyone.

It was a novel experiment as baseball's leading men formed the National Association, bringing order to the hodgepodge of professional and amateur clubs that made up the sport from the end of the Civil War through 1870. It was an imperfect beginning to organized professional sports in America—the league was plagued by gambling, contract jumping and rumors of dishonest play—but it laid the groundwork for the multi-billion-dollar enterprises of the 21st century. Like most sporting endeavors, it was entertaining, with the best players in the world displaying their talents throughout the northeastern and mid-western United States and, in 1874, during a ground-breaking journey to England. The present volume covers all the action—both on and off the field—of the NA's five years, providing the definitive history of the first professional sports league in the U.S.

"An extensive amount of research...very informative...excellent." --Nine

"Engaging...a good discussion of strategy." --Choice

"An excellent guide to a murky period in baseball's past...strongly recommend[ed]" --Nineteenth Century Notes

About the Author

William J. Ryczek is a finance professional in Wallingford, Connecticut, who writes about early baseball, football, the Yankees, and the Mets.