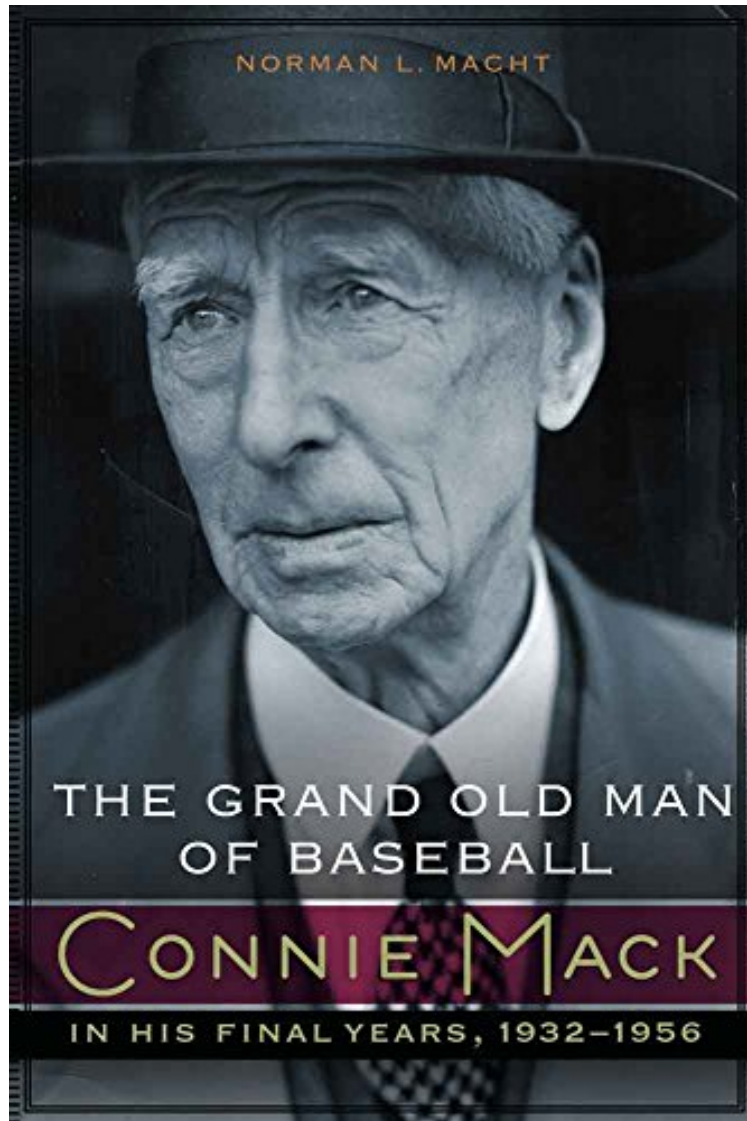


[Download pdf ebook] The Grand Old Man of Baseball: Connie Mack in His Final Years, 1932-1956

The Grand Old Man of Baseball: Connie Mack in His Final Years, 1932-1956

Norman L. Macht

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Norman L. Macht : The Grand Old Man of Baseball: Connie Mack in His Final Years, 1932-1956 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Grand Old Man of Baseball: Connie Mack in His Final Years, 1932-1956:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Monumental work enriches baseball history and baseball fansBy Barry SparksThis volume, which covers 1932 through 1954, concludes Norman Macht's monumental three-volume biography of Connie Mack. These were definitely lean years for the Athletics, who posted 13 consecutive

losing seasons between 1934 and 1947. There was little to cheer about, except for a brief case of pennant fever, an 84-70 won-loss record and a fourth-place finish in 1948, 12.5 games behind the Cleveland Indians. Ted Williams said, "The Athletics should have won it." Mack, who failed to exhibit his normal patience in 1948, may have been his own worst enemy. Despite the lack of winning, Macht keeps everything interesting as he delivers nuggets of information about little-known Athletics; explains what kept the Athletics perennially out of contention (the absence of a farm system and Mack's insistence on being a one-man operation; at age 80, Mack was still doing the equivalent of four full-time jobs); dispels myths about Mack's frugality; examines the business operation of the Athletics; discusses the impact of night baseball and radio; and details the family feud about the operation and sale of the Athletics. Macht makes the point that Mack had no choice financially but to sell Jimmy Foxx, Mickey Cochran, Lefty Grove and George Earnshaw after the great 1929-1931 run. "I sell these players to reduce my overhead and pay off debts I had accumulated since 1930," said Mack. The Depression and declining attendance (the Athletics only drew 233,173 in 1935) made the sale of players a necessity. Although many clubs resisted wholeheartedly supporting night baseball, its impact was undeniable. In 1939, the Athletics drew 395,000—30 percent of them attended seven night games, while 40 percent attended 11 Sunday dates. The remaining 45 dates averaged less than 2,500 fans per game. As the Athletics approached the 1940s and Mack neared age 80, he was understandably no longer as sharp as he used to be. He became forgetful, and soon players were listening to coach Al Simmons instead of Mack. Athletics pitcher Phil Marchildon said Mack cost the Athletics 20 wins in 1947, the year they finished fifth, 19 games behind the New York Yankees. The last few years of the Philadelphia Athletics were marked by infighting of brothers Earl, Roy and Connie Jr., which produced constant turmoil and bitterness. Macht delivers a blow-by-blow description of the eventual sale of the Athletics. Roy and Earl Mack, neither of whom were respected, ran the Athletics from 1950 to 1954, accumulating a \$250,000 (equivalent to \$2 million today) deficit. Red Smith quipped, "Roy and Earl Mack went broke in baseball and they did it on merit." Using financial records, correspondences and unearthed American League minutes, Macht gives a complete account of the events that led to the demise of the Athletics. Mack, who was 87 when he stopped managing the Athletics in 1950, had clearly stayed too long, but he made it clear that he never considered life without baseball, and although he would not always admit it, he was forever in quest of one more pennant. He enjoyed being on the field and running the club. In conclusion, Macht writes that "no one enjoyed his life more than Mack." After 30 years of meticulous research, interviews and writing, Macht's work on the definitive biography of Mack is complete. And, the annals of baseball history and serious baseball fans are the winners.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Baseball's Lean Leader--Part 3 By Bill Emblom Author Norman Macht has completed his monumental work in his three-part trilogy on Connie Mack. Part three on the Lean Leader lives up to the previous works and they belong in anyone's baseball library. What I like about these three books is the ample use of anecdotes about the individuals involved in Mr. Mack's life as opposed to a year-by-year account of games played during the baseball season. The author uses humor effectively throughout the book which makes for lively reading. Examples are when Earle Mack would go to the mound to remove a pitcher from the game and say, "Daddy wants you to come out of the game." The pitcher may reply by saying, "Tell Daddy to go to hell." Another example is of pitcher Bobo Newsom who was being given a hard time regarding his age by pitcher Ray Scarborough, he of the big nose, and six foot four string bean Sid Hudson in the dugout. Newsom told them he reminded them of a firetruck--hook and ladder. The story may or may not be true but I found it to be funny, nonetheless. Mr. Mack had his share of pennant and World Series winners but also had to divest himself of star players when he was unable to pay them what they were worth. An example would be George Kell who he knew would become a great player but dealt him to Detroit for Barney McCosky. Mr. Mack was also known to say, although not mentioned in the book, that he dealt off players because "the fans got tired of watching us win." This I have on a phonograph record entitled "Baseball--An Action History." Part three of this trilogy contains many of the lean years of the Philadelphia Athletics involving a number of supernumeraries who passed through the roster of the team. His players, for the most part, realized he was paying them what he was able to based on the team's finances. One of his young players was the diminutive Jacob Nelson Fox who eventually went on to stardom with the Chicago White Sox in which the Athletics received catcher Joe Tipton. The author describes Fox "buzzing around second base like a hungry mosquito in a bedroom at midnight." I thought this was a beautiful simile. The chapter on the eventual sale of the team to Kansas City interests led by Arnold Johnson I found to be very complicated and I admit to having skimmed through it. I remember when it took place but the conflict between Earle and Roy Mack made it extremely difficult to follow and get interested in. I'm quite sure other readers will find it to be as well. Mr. Mack lists his favorite player as Al Simmons and his finest moment to be when he sent his surprise starter Howard Ehmke to pitch the first game of the 1929 World Series in which Ehmke struck out a record thirteen Chicago Cubs. The book contains numerous photos which I have not seen in other baseball books. I also enjoyed reading about players I knew only from 1950s baseball cards such as Joe Astroth, Eddie Joost, Carl Scheib, and Gus Zernial. Author Norman Macht is to be both thanked and congratulated for this three part work which greatly contributes to any individual's baseball library.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The Decline and Fall of Connie Mack By Michael Martin The third and final volume of Macht's trilogy on the life Connie Mack was outstanding. However, it was not an easy read. After the

tremendous first two books in this series, the third book detailed the slow erosion of Mack's abilities and the downfall of the Philadelphia Athletics due to his dependence on the questionable leadership abilities of his two older sons. The deterioration of Mack's abilities was especially hard to read because of his central place in the history of baseball from the 1890's through the 1930's. It really becomes the story of a person who stayed too long at the table and the problems caused by his inability to turn over the reigns to younger and more aggressive heirs. This disinclination or inability to retire hurt Mack, his family, his players, the Athletics franchise, and the fans in Philadelphia. That is the core of what made the book difficult. It was disheartening to read the downfall of the man and his franchise. That said, I highly recommend the Mack trilogy to any fan of baseball. Macht went into great detail on his subject as well as the people Mack touched throughout his long life. If you are a student of the game this trilogy is a must-read. Take the time and the effort to learn about this baseball icon and his franchise, the Philadelphia Athletics.

In *The Grand Old Man of Baseball*, Norman L. Macht chronicles Connie Mack's tumultuous final two decades in baseball. After Mack had built one of baseball's greatest teams, the 1929–31 Philadelphia Athletics, the Depression that followed the stock market crash fundamentally reshaped Mack's legacy as his team struggled on the field and at the gate. Among the challenges Mack faced: a sharp drop in attendance that forced him to sell his star players; the rise of the farm system, which he was slow to adopt; the opposition of other owners to night games, which he favored; the postwar integration of baseball, which he initially opposed; a split between the team's heirs (Mack's sons Roy and Earle on one side, their half brother Connie Jr. on the other) that tore apart the family and forced Mack to choose unwisely between them; and, finally, the disastrous 1951–54 seasons in which Roy and Earle ran the club to the brink of bankruptcy.

"If ever a baseball book could be called a definitive biography, this examination of Connie Mack can." —Ross Atkin, *Christian Science Monitor*