



SATCHEL: The Life and Times of an American Legend

Larry Tye

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He is that rare American icon who has never been captured in a biography worthy of him. Now, at last, here is the superbly researched, spellbindingly told story of athlete, showman, philosopher, and boundary breaker Leroy “Satchel” Paige.

Few reliable records or news reports survive about players in the Negro Leagues. Through dogged detective work, award-winning author and journalist Larry Tye has tracked down the truth about this majestic and enigmatic pitcher, interviewing more than two hundred Negro Leaguers and Major Leaguers, talking to family and friends who had never told their stories before, and retracing Paige’s steps across the continent. Here is the stirring account of the child born to an Alabama washerwoman with twelve young mouths to feed, the boy who earned the nickname “Satchel” from his enterprising work as a railroad porter, the young man who took up baseball on the streets and in reform school, inventing his trademark hesitation pitch while throwing bricks at rival gang members.

Tye shows Paige barnstorming across America and growing into the superstar hurler of the Negro Leagues, a marvel who set records so eye-popping they seemed like misprints, spent as much money as he made, and left tickets for “Mrs. Paige” that were picked up by a different woman at each game. In unprecedented detail, Tye reveals how Paige, hurt and angry when Jackie Robinson beat him to the Majors, emerged at the age of forty-two to help propel the Cleveland Indians to the World Series. He threw his last pitch from a big-league mound at an improbable fifty-nine. (“Age is a case of mind over matter,” he said. “If you don’t mind, it don’t matter.”)

More than a fascinating account of a baseball odyssey, **Satchel** rewrites our history of the integration of the sport, with Satchel Paige in a starring role. This is a powerful portrait of an American hero who employed a shuffling stereotype to disarm critics and racists, floated comical legends about himself—including about his own age—to deflect inquiry and remain elusive, and in the process methodically built his own myth. “Don’t look back,” he famously said. “Something might be gaining on you.” Separating the truth from the legend, **Satchel** is a remarkable accomplishment, as large as this larger-than-life man.

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