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Book Review: Early Exits: The Premature Endings of Baseball Careers

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Reviewed by: David Gargone

Early Exits: The Premature Endings of Baseball Careers examines the many obstacles that have confronted men and women in the world of professional baseball. The book highlights several career-ending incidents and supplies excerpts from those individuals affected by them. These incidents range from gambling and drug abuse to pursuit of careers in politics or other professional leagues. The range of discussion is vast, including criminals, presidents, music artists, and NBA and NFL hall-of-famers.

The author, Brian McKenna, set out to document the premature exits of those working in professional baseball. His exhaustive research provides entries from the 19th century through the new millennium. McKenna's research covers several professional leagues, some domestic and some from abroad, including the major leagues, Negro leagues, women's leagues and those from Asia and Latin America. His research includes events that even the most knowledgeable baseball historian may have overlooked.

Players from every generation are discussed, as well as the events surrounding their early departures. Baseball greats such as Kirby Puckett and his career-ending eye injury, Pete Rose and his lifetime ban from Major League Baseball for gambling, Josh Gibson and his battles with alcohol, and Roberto Clemente and Thurman Munson and their untimely deaths from airplane accidents are examined. These are just a few examples of the hundreds of individuals in the book. Historical events such as the Chicago Black Sox scandal and World Wars I and II are also discussed in terms of their effects on many players.

Although the range of information in this book is unmatched, the depth of each entry is lacking. The title of the book may lead one to infer that the entries are about those whose careers were shortened without

choice. However, many of the entries do not align with this title. Many players who chose other sports or career opportunities are given the same consideration as those who have fallen victim to injury or accidental death. Thus, many of the names mentioned in the book seem out of place. However, it does provide information on an array of people connected to professional baseball.

Early Exits: The Premature Endings of Baseball Careers

Author: Brian McKenna

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