

needed and prodigiously researched supplement to contemporary historiography that has tended to focus on social and intellectual history at the expense of the often gory history of war.

Barton College

Jeff Broadwater

**Charles Fountain. *The Betrayal: The 1919 World Series and the Birth of Modern Baseball*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 247. Cloth, \$21.69.**

Given the mountain of mythology, paired with the incomplete historical evidence and self-interested disinformation surrounding the Black Sox Scandal, Charles Fountain's attempt to divine the truth of the fixing of the 1919 World Series in *The Betrayal: The 1919 World Series and the Birth of Modern Baseball* is a daunting task. His insistence on historical context, his unwillingness to cling to comfortable myth, along with his exhaustive research have succeed in producing a well-written, accessible book that provides more clarity than has existed previously for understanding this seminal event in the history of baseball and American society.

Having shed much light on the event, Fountain cautions the reader that many of the occurrences in the scandal cannot be completely determined because they are clouded by fading memory, incomplete records, and in the self-interested lies of players, gamblers, owners, their lawyers, and other figures of baseball's establishment at the time. And that is most likely what the leaders of baseball wanted. What Fountain makes abundantly clear is that those in charge of the game in the two decades prior to the scandal simply looked the other way when confronted with fixes of baseball games. For example, he quotes Jack Taylor, Chicago Cubs' 21-game winner in 1903, with openly admitting to the press that he threw games in the profitable postseason intercity series with the White Sox: "Why should I have won? I got \$100 from Hart [owner of the Cubs] for winning, and I got \$500 for losing" (10). An investigation by the baseball commission cleared Taylor of fixing games. For Fountain, this lack of corrective action in 1903, and more, led directly to the Black Sox Scandal of 1919.

Complicating attempts to attain complete accuracy of this story is the mythology surrounding the scandal that has evolved over the many decades. Of particular note in generating dubious myths are the book and movie of the same title, *Eight Men Out*. Both Eliot Asinof's 1963 book and John Sayles' 1989 film, while compelling tales, take liberties with the facts. Both the book and the film maintain that star White Sox pitcher Ed Cicotte's motivation for throwing games in the 1919 World Series was allegedly because Sox owner Charles Comiskey deliberately held Cicotte out of games in 1917 to prevent him attaining his 30<sup>th</sup> victory and avoid paying him a promised \$10,000 bonus for his 30<sup>th</sup> win. This never happened. In fact, a quick consultation with *baseball-reference.com* reveals that Cicotte pitched eight games in September of 1917

improving from 22 wins to 28 wins by his last complete game win on September 29 with the pennant clinched a week earlier. Further, there is no evidence of this offer and Cicotte himself never mentioned this deal. Given the penurious reputation of Charles Comiskey, it is surprising that one should feel a need to construct such a situation. Comiskey's 1919 White Sox were considerably underpaid, that is verifiable, but to add the bonus to the story is fabrication.

Fountain's treatment of the shift from the Baseball Commission to the all-powerful Baseball Commissioner (Czar?) is revealing of the ineptitude and corruption of spirit of the owners of the game. The recap of the machinations by owners (and sometimes enemies) Comiskey and Ban Johnson (founder of the American League) give the reader an understanding that a few players fixing a few games was not the core problem of baseball. When news of the scandal became public, baseball owners, finally cornered with facts, appeared shocked despite ample evidence of a long tradition of gambling in professional baseball. This opened the door for grandstanding judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis, later perceived as a lifetime dictator of the national game. Landis, with the visage of an Old Testament Jeremiah, took every chance to spew his sanctimony regarding the Black Sox, banning the players from baseball for life despite their earlier acquittal by a sympathetic jury in Chicago. The self-righteousness of Landis and his canny realization that he had the owners divided, desperate, and over the barrel cemented his rule over the game. His legacy, at least to many, would include "cleaning up" the game, but also would feature maintenance of the color line, while denying there was one, until his death in 1944. Such complexities surrounding the Black Sox Scandal enable *The Betrayal* to serve a valuable window through which students in upper-division courses in social history, sports history, and journalism can explore the frequently messy relationship between baseball and American culture.