



## Nice Guys Finish Last

*Leo Durocher*

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**Nice Guys Finish Last** Leo Durocher  
Autobiography of Baseball Manager Leo Durocher

## Nice Guys Finish Last Details

Date : Published June 9th 1975 by Simon & Schuster

ISBN : 9780671220570

Author : Leo Durocher

Format : Hardcover 448 pages

Genre : Sports, Baseball, Sports and Games, Biography, Nonfiction, Autobiography

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# From Reader Review Nice Guys Finish Last for online ebook

## Chris Witt says

I can see why it made Joe Posnanski's list of best baseball books.

Reviews of this book tend to be pretty positive and I'd tend to agree with them. "Nice Guys" is worth a read if you're into baseball from the 30s through 50s or if you were a fan of the late 60s/early 70s Cubs and wanted a little bit more insight into why they couldn't put it all together and bring a pennant to the north side of Chicago.

A colorful read to match a colorful character.

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## Tom Stamper says

This is as good as any baseball autobiography I can remember. Durocher played with Babe Ruth in the 1920s and managed Cesar Cedeno in the 1970s and did a lot of other interesting things in the 50 years in between. The book's conversational style makes it a very easy 400 pages to read. I can imagine Durocher told these stories to co-author, Ed Linn, and Linn kept the voice in tact. It doesn't at all have the feeling of Linn's book on Ted Williams. That is just a straight biography. This is a conversation that Durocher is having with you at the airport bar. It may not have the frankness of Ball Four, but you have to give credit when a baseball manager is willing to be honest about his own faults like Durocher is here. He doesn't spare others along the way. His description of Lee McPhail makes McPhail seem like a head case and yet Durocher never really loses affection for him. He both reveres Branch Rickey and also shows that Rickey had his own faults despite the general consensus. His favorite owner was Phillip Wrigley, a man of generosity and integrity.

What's great about the book is that I knew next to nothing about the 1940s Brooklyn Dodgers, the 1950s New York Giants, and 1960s Chicago Cubs, the 3 important clubs that Durocher managed during his career. That gave him the chance to manage a very young Willie Mays and very old Ernie Banks. There is also some good stuff here about Pete Reiser, a great player that injured himself out of a hall of fame career.

He also does his share of name dropping. He was an off-season house guest of Hollywood actor, George Raft, married to actress Laraine Day, and often hobnobbing with Sinatra, Danny Kaye, and Spencer Tracy. And yet he doesn't have much of anything to say about his television career except that he worked for NBC between baseball jobs.

There is a bit in the early 1970s about his run in with Marvin Miller, the head of the players union. Sportswriters have come to lionize Miller these days demanding his induction into the hall of fame. Durocher can't stand him. He sees Miller as a master manipulator and trouble maker. This is even before Miller led the 1981 baseball strike that ruined my summer vacation. Leo's description here seems dead on, like with most of his observations.

Leo came up during the time of player-managers, a rarity in this day and age. I remember Pete Rose did that in the 1980s. Has anyone done that since? He saw the changes coming in the 1970s where the players were going to make so much money they would become unmanageable. He felt this with the Houston Astros in 1973, especially with Jerry Reuss and Cesar Cedeno. I wish he had written just an article about baseball in

the 1980s to bring his thoughts up to date.

Baseball isn't the same business today that it was generations ago, but it's thankfully the same game. It's a game that Leo understood and he left his thoughts in a book that is every bit as good as *Boys of Summer* or *Bronx Zoo*. It's worth the time of any baseball fan.

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### **Anita says**

Well, this guy can certainly tell a story - gets the full five stars for that, really, but demoted a star for the self-pity and for saying "You have to believe me when I say I have no racial prejudice." (Because when someone says that, you know what's coming next - and you know it's going to be awkward.) But all the straight-up baseball-related stuff: 100% gold.

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### **Max says**

An entertaining piece of baseball history/memoir.

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### **Phillip Gonzales says**

A nostalgic look at the good old days of baseball.

Durocher was a character and consummate baseball man, whose convictions paralleled the times and the game he loved.

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### **Steve says**

Durocher, whose life seemed filled with anecdotes, told stories to Ed Linn, who shaped things into an autobiography that's thoroughly entertaining. Covering his early life learning to play shortstop at an elite level to cashing his World Series checks as a benchwarmer on the Yankees and a centerpiece of the Gas House Gang Cardinals to his managing the Dodgers, Giants, Cubs, and Astros, Durocher explains all his controversial experiences as evidence that some people just didn't like him. Maybe so, but even when he was a fool, his storytelling is so charming that I can't help but like the guy. It's sad that in the end with the Astros in 1973, he got so frustrated with Cesar Cedeno not taking his advice, especially since he gloried in his playing days with going against what management wanted him to do. And, of course, he gets all cranky about Marvin Miller and the players union, not realizing at all that his high salaries were still crumbs compared to what the owners were making all along. He sure did know the game well, and he played with or managed some magnificent players, all of whom he puts into well rounded characterizations that remind me baseball is played by human beings. I'm glad I found this book.

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## **Ronald says**

read some time in 1986

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## **Manray9 says**

Leo Durocher's *Nice Guys Finish Last* makes my short list of baseball's best memoirs. Major league baseball from the Twenties through the Fifties boasted a captivating array of distinctive personalities – and Leo knew them all. Baseball's characters included Babe Ruth, Frankie Frisch, Bill Klem, Fatty Fothergill, Branch Rickey, Dusty Rhodes and, of course, Leo Durocher himself. Leo's baseball life reads like a history of the sport in the 20th century. He played with Ruth and Gehrig on the legendary New York Yankees teams of the Twenties, fielded grounders alongside Dizzy Dean and Ducky Medwick with the world champion "Gas House Gang" in St. Louis in 1934, conducted the celebrated Mess Hall Meeting in Panama that squelched the incipient player protest against Jackie Robinson joining the Brooklyn Dodgers, mentored Willie Mays to a career of baseball fame – and guided two different teams to National League pennants and one World Championship. While sometimes clichéd and often self-serving, "Leo the Lip's" memoir has to be considered a model of the genre. Just the story of Van Lingle Mungo in Havana alone makes the whole book worthwhile.

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## **Chris Dean says**

I enjoyed Leo's autobiography even if stories are told from his side of the fence. It is definitely clear that Leo prefers the "good old days" of the 20s and 30s and he speaks of them fondly for the first half of the book. The tone changes when he becomes a manager and near the end he blasts his teams and players in Chicago and Houston. There is even some slight criticism towards Jackie Robinson, which you would never seem today. Interesting for the historical record and context.

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## **Jim Townsend says**

A great biography about a great manager, this has some wonderful, funny stories of Leo's 48 years in baseball.

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## **Harold Kasselmann says**

This is one of the most entertaining autobiographies of a celebrity I have ever read. It's no wonder. The man played all-star shortstop, was a teammate of Babe Ruth (undoubtedly stole his watch), learned his craft from Miller Huggins, was a player manager for one of the most exciting teams of all times; namely the St. Louis Cardinals Gas House Gang, hung out and lived with George Raft, married a movie star, was close friends with Frank Sinatra, and managed a World Series team as well as won three pennants. The chapter on the Gas House Gang is hilarious, but there are plenty of stories about Van Lingle Mungo, Boots Poffenberger, Hugh Casey, Joe Medwick, Pepper Martin, Milt Pappas, Ron Santo, Babe Ruth's stolen watch, and the modern day

ball player to entertain even a non baseball reader.

I was struck by Leo's ability to self criticize and admit certain personality traits-a hatred for losing(he'd have tripped his mother rounding second if need be). On the other hand I believe he down played his gambling problems and perhaps even his associations with known gamblers. I do, however, agree that he got a bum rap from Happy Chandler in 1947 for that one year suspension.

I found the 1941 pennant race and the club house rebellion of that same year to be fascinating, but so was the chapter on the 51 race. I had read quite a bit about Mays and Irvin but that's always good reading. Each chapter is special and it's written in a conversational tone so you think you are listening to an audio tape with Durocher. He was "The Lip" but you get to understand his motivational style. He would be an anachronism today-a dodo bird. In fact by 1969 he had already become extinct even by his own admission. He retired after the 75 season with the Astros because he couldn't grasp or contend with the modern day player and the gains made by the players' union. In fact, it's a wonder any manager can maintain control of a team when players make 25 times as much as the manager and there is little that Leo or today's manager can do to have leverage over them. Durocher was a real character, beloved by some of his players and owners, but reviled by many as well. Still, he is a Hall of Famer so he must have done something right even if it took him until 1996(well after his death) to be enshrined.

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## **Roland Millsaps says**

The funniest - and best - sports book I have ever read.

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## **B says**

This is probably the greatest non-fiction baseball book ever written. Durocher, was, as the back of the book indicates, a key component of several of baseball's most iconic moments: the 1927 Yankees, Babe Ruth's called shot, the Gashouse Gang, Jackie Robinson, The Shot Heard Round the World . . .

Every story he tells is told with character and verve. Durocher earns the reader's sympathy while holding himself out as an antihero. Linn does a fantastic job with style. There's a limit to how different anyone can seem while telling a story in English before there has to be a translation. Here, it really feels like Durocher has a very unique and consistent voice unlike most of those in literature.

The only possible downsides are (1) you probably need to know a little something about baseball in the era covered to follow it and (2) by the end, Durocher is kind of a broken and beaten man who no longer can command the respect he thinks he deserves, but he is unwilling and unable to admit it. So the last two or three chapters are a little discordant. Also, at the end of the day, the book may be whitewashing Durocher. But he wrote the book, he gets the sympathy.

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## **Susan says**

Durocher's account of his own life and times probably suffers from understandable bias, but he certainly knew all the characters of his time. You may want to take his evaluations of others, and of himself, with a grain of salt.

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**Michael Walker says**

Hilarious, entertaining!

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