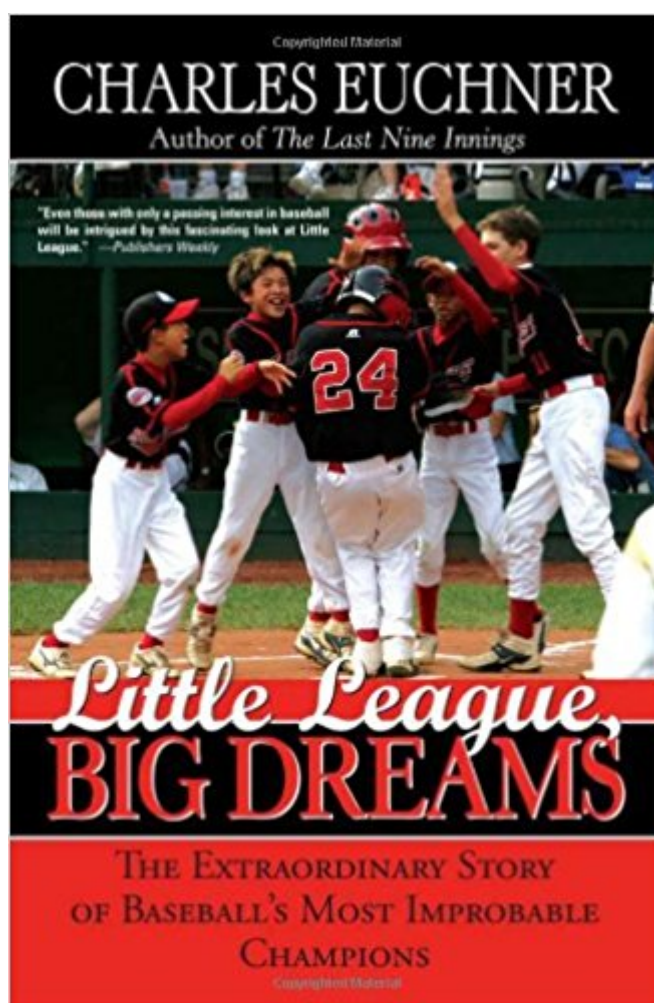


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Little League, Big Dreams: The Extraordinary Story Of Baseball's Most Improbable Champions



Synopsis

It's just like the pros: bright lights, screaming fans, squawking commentators and five million people watching you play your heart out on national television for the right to be called champions. But these are not pampered multimillion-dollar athletes; they are 11- to 13-year-old kids. The 2005 World Series was the most dramatic in the 58-year history of the Little League. With full access to the players, coaches and parents associated with both teams who played in that game, Charles Euchner delivers an astonishing and dramatic narrative that delves into every aspect of the little league game. "Even those with only a passing interest in baseball will be intrigued by this fascinating look at Little League, 'the largest amateur sports organization in the world.'" -Publishers Weekly "Readers can expect to learn a great deal about the history of Little League and the stories behind many teams. This well-written book will inform and entertain." -Library Journal

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Customer Reviews

Even those with only a passing interest in baseball will be intrigued by this fascinating look at Little League, "the largest amateur sports organization in the world." The book and its unsparing look at the harsh reality of youth sports just might pique the interest of parents whose kids play in the more than 8,000 officially sanctioned League teams. Utilizing extensive interviews with current and former players and coaches and a no-frills sports writing style that captures both the excitement and the nuances of the game, Euchner (Last Nine Innings) follows teams ranging from Hawaii to Florida who competed in the 10-day 2005 Little League World Series. Throughout his exhaustive coverage, he rarely loses sight of the League's main problem, "the professionalism of childhood, the

development of leagues and tournaments that turn sports into a fulltime job before a kid grows any facial hair." Euchner succeeds at presenting the impressive intensity of 12-year-old athletes while also showing the sad fact that young pitchers who could be Major League stars "never make it because they blow their arms out in Little League." (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

In *The Last Nine Innings* (2005), Euchner put major league baseball under an analytic microscope; here, he dissects Little League. The setting is the 2005 Little League World Series, which turned out to be a real nail-biter and one of the most exciting series the small town of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, has ever seen. Although Euchner admits that Little League has done good things for kids and baseball, his overarching argument here is that kids were better off with street pickup games than the overly organized, overly competitive world of formal Little League. Moreover, he contends that the sport has become too focused on adults: it's the adults who crave the championships, who push kids beyond their physical capabilities, who take the fun out of the game. He gives coaches (and parents) their due--the sacrifice of time and money, after all, is mighty--but he challenges us to consider what the world would be like if all that energy were put into more altruistic endeavors, such as rebuilding the Gulf coast. "Give the game back to the kids," Euchner pleads. Adults, take heed. Mary Frances Wilkens Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This is an excellent book on the inner happenings of Little League Baseball. I really enjoyed the candid assessments of how parents and managers go overboard. The book though is not a bashing of the little league faults - it gives inside looks at what happens at Williamsport and the teams...I really enjoyed the stories about the ugly rivalry between California and Florida and how Dante Bichette Sr. got out of control - also the stories about Curacao and Japan and how serious they take the game - the stories about the pitcher's not resting their arms and getting major injuries is a wake up...Finally, the story centers on Hawaii and how they built their team switching from Pony to Little League - and how they practiced so hard - 6 days a week! Great stories about Little league baseball and how Travel teams are so much better and talented (Cooperstown baseball)...if you enjoy youth baseball - you'll love this book

Purchased as a gift to a very good Little Leaguer.

When I was a kid I pushed myself to play baseball. When looking back on it, I see a different perspective of kids and coaches who are both pushing and being pushed. As someone who has played at Williamsport and competed in regular Little League I thought I had seen all that it had to offer until I earned some money umpiring it as a teen. For a large chunk of my life I played spring and fall baseball (fall was for the hard-cores, spring the middle ground and summer the lightweights[except all-stars at 11-12] in youth baseball), and occupying my off season with camps and practicing I understand that there are limits to what children should do. At the same time I have trouble with pitch counts when I probably threw an average of 200+ pitches a day for years with no problems whatsoever. The weird thing looking back on it is that no one pushed me but me. Reading about kids being pushed by coaches and coaches by parents doesn't ring as true with my experiences playing. Unfortunately it rings true with the experiences I saw umpiring. Parents were the worst. I almost had to call a forfeit once because of parent behavior in a championship game for eight year-olds when an ejected parent was hesitant to leave. The truly insightful sections of this book dealt not with the players, coaches, or parents but the other aspects. The commercial nature of the Series, the impact Little League has had on the way baseball is played and the competition Little League has from other organizations. The travel team system when discussed makes this book worth reading by itself. How competing leagues like the Cal Ripken League are threatening the dominance of Little League is interesting unto itself. The most interesting section would still have to be the aforementioned impact Little League has had on the way baseball is played. From metal bats, safety gear, youths throwing curveballs and the way the long time Head of Player Safety for Little League is the most influential person in baseball in the latter half, if not the whole, twentieth century. The changes made to the way baseball is played at a young age have a profound impact on not just the way it is perceived, but how it is played at all levels. I wholeheartedly recommend this to anyone with even a passing interest or experience playing baseball.

This will be a perfect book for my little brother, who loved baseball so much when we were kids that he decided to up and move to Cooperstown soon as he got himself mobile. Maybe if he had read it back then, he would have changed his mind and moved on down to Williamsport, PA, the city that by some freak chance became the site of the annual Little League World Series. Charles Euchner paints the area in lavish descriptive terms, nestled in the shadow of the Alleghenies and with a beautifully preserved old downtown area, though one that's sadly underpopulated due to increased globalism and outsourcing of manufacturing and sales. No wonder the populace are all so into their annual event which draws hundreds of thousands of spectators. Euchner describes the origins of

Little League and takes us to a meeting of the very first Little Leaguers at a local restaurant where the oldtimers gather every year to eat and swap stories about working with the original inventor, Carl Stotz. He's an interesting reporter, though sometimes annoyingly vague: "Newsreels produced by the maker of the classic film 'Lost Horizon' carried an account of the second tournament in 1948." Does this mean that Frank Capra filmed the newsreel? If not Capra, then who? There's nowhere to turn because the book hasn't been footnoted. Euchner makes an impassioned plea to dismantle the Little League by showing how it has turned a generation of kids into little monsters who live for the camera and don't care about moral issues like steroids. Based on the deep sampling of kids interviewed, they think steroid use is cool. Anabolic steroids helps players do better and get on TV more, that's the bottom line. There are no child stars, and yet Little League coaches and parents put such pressure on the kids that they wreck their arms before they reach puberty. It's a grim story of greed and ambition, and yet, by the end, you'll be waving your ball flag high.

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