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## Sports Books for Christmas

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE  
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With but a week until Christmas the time seems right for some last minute gift suggestions for the sportsmen and sportswomen on your Christmas list. As usual baseball books dominate the list from this past year, as baseball remains the most written about sport in America.

But first let's look at what's available out there dealing with other sports. For the trout fisherman or woman on your list this year's hottest book is Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*, originally published over a decade ago but now on the best seller lists in two paperback versions. This is actually three stories of life and flyfishing in western Montana. Maclean, an English professor at the University of Chicago, wrote this fairly late in life, and it has been something of a cult book among those who fish, love the west, or are enamored with sport literature. The movie has been playing at theaters recently and for my money it was the better buy.

There have been an unusual number of golf books appearing this year, including *"Just Let Me Play": The Story of Charlie Sifford, the First Black PGA Golfer*, by Charlie Sifford. This is an excellent account of his struggle to gain access to tournament golf as a pioneer in the field, a story not unlike that of Jackie Robinson.

For those looking for instruction and wisdom in golf try Harvey Penick's *Little Red Book: Lessons and Teachings from a Lifetime of Golf*, by Harvey Penick with Bud Shrake. This little gem from the teaching pro at the Austin Country Club in Texas offers excellent advice from the man who taught the pros. On the history of golf Rhonda Glenn's *The Illustrated History of Women's Golf* covers the period from late Victorian England through the 20th century. The strong suit of the book are the character sketches of the players. And among coffee table books there is a new collection of the golf artworks of LeRoy Neiman titled *Big-Time Golf*.

Basketball has seen its share of books with two appearing early in the year. Sam Smith's *Jordan Rules* is an excellent look at the dynamics of the Bulls and Michael's dominating role. Charles Barkley's *Outrageous! The Fine Line and Flagrant Good Times of Basketball's Irresistible Force* came shortly thereafter, and is probably best remembered because Charles had the temerity to claim that he was misquoted in his own autobiography. The end of

the year brings two more basketball books, Magic Johnson's latest autobiography which tells probably more than you want to know about his sex life, and another Michael Jordan effort, this one by Bob Greene called Hang Time: Days and Dreams with Michael Jordan. For those out there who do not understand the price of fame, this book is for you. It is as good a look at fame, money, and sport to come along in a long while.

From the college scene comes Full Court Pressure: A Year in Kentucky Basketball by Rick Pitino with Dick Weiss. This book offers a few new insights to the nomadic coach who has followed the money wherever it has taken him, but is not particularly encouraging for those who think that college hoops has something to do with higher education. Also of note is Nelson George's Elevating the Game: Black Men and Basketball which examines the transformation of the aesthetics of the game between the 1950's and the present.

Moving from the hard courts to the football field there have been only a few good football volumes in the past year, but certainly one is Armen Keteyian's Ditka: Monster of the Midway. This portrait of Iron Mike is a full frontal view of the dark side of Ditka. Away from the field Keteyian reveals Ditka the businessman, husband (twice), and father. This book won't be under Iron Mike's tree come Christmas morning, but maybe someone should send a copy to Hillary Clinton.

It is baseball that dominates the scene once again. Phil Dixon with Patrick J. Hannigan offers The Negro Baseball League: A Photographic History. In the biographical area Robert Gregory's Diz: The Story of Dizzy Dean and the Great Depression is an excellent look at both the man and period. Pam Postema's You've Got to Have Balls to Make It in This League is also a revealing inside look at umpires, umpiring, and this very interesting person who wanted to be a major league umpire. If baseball fiction is your preference try Peter Lefcourt's Dreyfus Affair involving a love affair between a shortstop and second baseman on a pennant winning team, or David James Duncan's The Brother's K. It provides a mix of baseball, eastern mysticism, and Seventh Day Adventist religion within one rather interesting American family.

Andrew Zimbalist's Baseball and Billions is as thorough a look at the economics of the national pastime as has ever appeared in print. Zimbalist writes clearly and has acquired a fund of information on the debt-credit side of the business, and he defies the conventional wisdom.

Maybe the best book of the season is Peter Levine's Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience. Levine not only looks at the great Jewish athletes but examines the role sport played in the process of Americanization for second generation Jewish Americans. It is a story about community in America, and deals primarily with baseball, basketball, and boxing.

As a final recommendation I would suggest Allan Guttman's Women's Sports which was given the award as the best book in sport history by the North American Society for Sport History last year.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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