



Moneyball by Michael Lewis: Ten Years Later

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When a friend of mine watched the movie, he wanted to change the name of his long established company to Moneyball Management. Not a bad idea, but he would have a hard time owning any space on the Google 1st page. A decade after the book has come out and there are still many lessons to be learnt from this book and many people who refuse to learn it.

For instance in hockey 1 20 goal scorer and 2 10 goal scorers will be valued very different from a 30 goal scorer – all other things being equal. But baseball, for all the talk of team it being a team sport, is perhaps the most individualistic of team sports – especially when it comes to hitting and pitching. Sure the game gets caught up in fielding – but only part of the time. Four balls get you a base. Three strikes get you the bench. Foul balls do not count after the 2nd strike....so that is anywhere from one to five plus pitches that occur...and only one ball gets into play. Pitching and hitting.

Moneyball is the story of Billy Beane, the general manager and his overachieving Oakland Athletics.

The book examines how certain traits were undervalued. How looking good received a huge premium over doing well. How potential four to five years down the line was given more value (drafting high school players) and potential in a year or two (college players).

It talks of gaming theory; statistics; myths and desire. It talks about how a small group of individuals looked beyond the myths to get to a set of facts that helped them. As it helped them, it hurt (and angered) the clubs around them. It talks about how desire can triumph over talent – sometimes. It talks about how a system can help you in the long run (the 162 baseball season) but not necessarily in a short playoffs (luck – you need some luck). It talks about drafting and developing to win, as opposed to look good or not rock the boat. Moneyball also shows how necessity and desire can be the mothers of invention.

The book, with it's afterward, also talks about how hard it is for people to change their beliefs. How Bill James and his writings were like a crier in the wilderness for many, many years.

Is it the best baseball book that I have ever read? Yes – truth be told it is the only one.

It is however the best sports book that I have ever read. Even though it brought back some of the pain and frustration of losing the Montreal Expos – because of the collective stupidity of the baseball

community. Perhaps the Montreal business community was smart enough to know the game was broken, but did not have the need to find out how to fix it.

Is it the best business book I have ever read? No, but it is fun, light, informative and about baseball. In short a great summer read, even if it took me ten years to get to it!

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From the desk of Andre M.

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