



The Quality of Home Runs: The Passion, Politics, and Language of Cuban Baseball

Thomas F. Carter

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In parks and cafes, homes and stadium stands, Cubans talk baseball. Thomas F. Carter contends that when they are analyzing and debating plays, games, teams, and athletes, Cubans are exchanging ideas not just about baseball but also about Cuba and *cubanidad*, or what it means to be Cuban. *The Quality of Home Runs* is Carter's lively ethnographic exploration of the interconnections between baseball and Cuban identity. Suggesting that baseball is in many ways an apt metaphor for cubanidad, Carter points out aspects of the sport that resonate with Cuban social and political life: the perpetual tension between risk and security, the interplay between individual style and collective regulation, and the risky journeys undertaken with the intention, but not the guarantee, of returning home.

As an avid baseball fan, Carter draws on his experiences listening to and participating in discussions of baseball in Cuba (particularly in Havana) and among Cubans living abroad to describe how baseball provides the ground for negotiations of national, masculine, and class identities wherever Cubans gather. He considers the elaborate spectacle of Cuban baseball as well as the relationship between the socialist state and the enormously popular sport. Carter provides a detailed history of baseball in Cuba, analyzing players, policies, rivalries, and fans, and he describes how the sport has forged connections (or reinforced divisions) between Cuba and other nations. Drawing on insights from cultural studies, political theory, and anthropology, he maintains that sport and other forms of play should be taken seriously as crucibles of social and cultural experience.

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