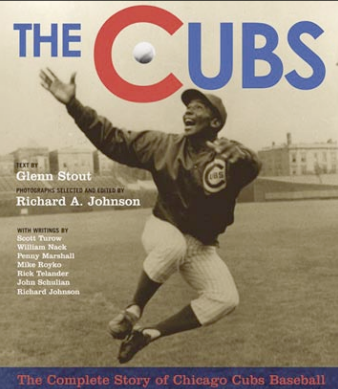


AROUND TOWN



Perhaps the greatest allegorical compliment that could be paid to Glenn Stout and Richard Johnson's book on the history of the Cubs is that the book was not authorized by the Cubs organization. Those who've struggled through the seemingly endless varieties of Cubs literary lore may appreciate that reality, seeing as reading some Cubs books feels like reading about the parties on the Titanic. This one, however, is different, and exceptional. Stout and Johnson do well to tell the tale of this franchise, and to discuss, dispel or fortify some myths or truths, and also invoke a certain treasured tenderness that a true Cubs fan should appreciate. Essays by the likes of Mike Royko, Rick Telander and Penny Marshall tell that other Cubs tale: the kind you only seem to treasure because at one time you too were inside the bricks. It's a massive volume, heavy as a brick, but worth its curb weight. — *Chris Sprow*

The authors will make a number of Chicago-area appearances:

October 3, 6:00 p.m.
Chicago Public Library
Harold Washington Library Center
Chicago, IL

October 4, 5:30 p.m.
DePaul University Bookstore
Chicago, IL

October 5-7
Midwest Literary Festival
Aurora, IL

October 8, 7:00 p.m.
Bookstall at Chestnut Court
Winnetka, IL

TENDER RIVALRY

The Cubs-Cardinals tilt is no longer a tempered affair

— MATT WOOD —

If you're a Cubs fan, you might feel like you were born hating the Cardinals, but it's really a learned sentiment. Somebody planted that seed in your head when you were a kid—maybe your dad, maybe an uncle, maybe your older brother.

And a good rivalry like that gains new layers of intensity through personal experience.

It comes from your cousin from downstate who never shut up about Ozzie Smith.

It comes from those throngs of ruddy-faced Midwesterners who descend upon Wrigleyville when the Cardinals come to town, wearing enough red to make Joe McCarthy turn over in his grave. But mostly it's because they can brag about what you want most: division crowns, pennants, and most painfully, a World Series title since the Progressive Era.

This past week seemed like it might provide the rare opportunity for these two rivals to play meaningful baseball in September, the first time since that epic five-game series at Wrigley in 2003, when the Cubs took four of five on their way to the division title. On Monday, the Redbirds came to town to make up the rainout from August 19. The two teams then played four more over the weekend in St. Louis, including a Saturday doubleheader.

Yet for all the meaning fans assign to these games beyond the standings, the players don't really care who they're playing, as long as they win. And this year at least, the Cardinals didn't put up much of a fight.

Cubs pitcher Jason Marquis, who after being left off the St. Louis postseason roster last year has every right to want to punch Tony La Russa in the neck, shrugged it off. During batting practice Monday, he chatted up his former teammates just like old times.

"I'm trying to win every ballgame, whether it's against the Cardinals or any other opponent," he said. "Obviously, to play meaningful games



at the end of the year is what you're looking for, whether it's against the Cardinals, or the Brewers, or the Pirates. It really doesn't make a difference."

Marquis said back when players spent entire careers playing for the same teams, competitive rivalries developed, but now it's mostly a matter for the fans.



"I think the way baseball has evolved over the years, it went from a fan and a player rivalry to more of a fan rivalry, just for the fact that guys change uniforms year after year," he said. "But it's still a great rivalry for the fans, for them to have something to look forward to."

That it's just-business mentality extends beyond the rosters. Cubs GM Jim Hendry joked around with his St. Louis counterpart, Walt Jocketty, the supposed evil genius behind the Cardinals last decade of success, like they were old fraternity buddies. Albert Pujols walked by, and Hendry, smiling, shouted to him, "Hey, I think you need a day off."

After the Cubs pummeled the Cardinals and their retreat pitching staff that afternoon 12-3, Lou Piniella even admitted to feeling a little sorry for his friend La Russa and the Cardinals, who have suffered season-ending injuries to seven different players, plus the death of reliever Josh Hancock.

"They've been through a lot over there, they really have. From that regard, I really do [feel sorry for them]," Piniella said. Then again ... "[La Russa] is a good friend, he's a Hall of Fame manager, he won a world championship last year," he said. "But let somebody else do it this year. If he wins it this year, that means we're out. We've got to beat them. We've got a job to do."

That job is to win the NL Central and become what many would consider one of the least dominant division champions ever, though the 80-some win champ is more common now with increased parity.

It might be a more impressive feat had the Brewers not gone 20-34 in July and August, or had the lurching, zombie-like corpse of the Cardinals finally not slumped back to the grave where it had been buried in May.

Then again, the 2006 Cardinals backed into the Central title, playing four games under .500 for the second half of the season on the way to 83 wins, and look what happened to them. ■