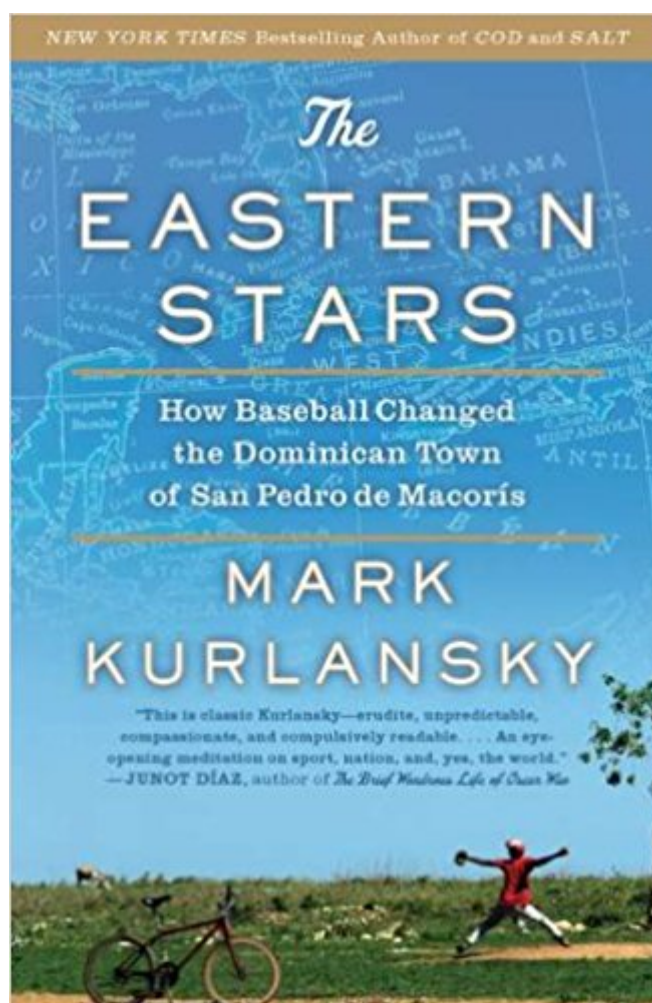


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The Eastern Stars: How Baseball Changed The Dominican Town Of San Pedro De Macoris



Synopsis

"A fantastic social history" from the author of *Salt and Cod* (USA Today) In the Dominican Republic town of San Pedro de Macorís, baseball is often seen as the only way to a better life. For those who make it, the million-dollar paychecks from Major League Baseball mean that not only they, but their entire families as well, have been saved from grinding poverty. The successful few set an example that dazzles the neighbors they left behind. But for the majority, this dream is illusory. In *The Eastern Stars*, New York Times bestselling author Mark Kurlansky reveals the connection between two countries' love affair with a sport, and the remarkable journey of impoverished San Pedro and its baseball players-including Rico Carty, Albert Pujols, Robinson Canó, Sammy Sosa, and Alfonso Soriano-who have sought freedom from poverty through playing ball.

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Customer Reviews

Kurlansky offers an intriguing look at the history of the Dominican Republic and the role American baseball has played in the impoverished and destitute sugar-growing town of San Pedro de Macoris. Kurlansky's approach and style make this story accessible even to nonsports fans. Ed Sala's deep and slightly throaty voice is enjoyable to listen to, though at times he can be a bit halting in his rhythm. Sentences end and begin with some abruptness, and there are mild inconsistencies with Spanish pronunciation. Despite this, Kurlansky's prose and Sala's overall performance combine to keep listeners tuned in till the end. A Riverhead hardcover (Reviews, Jan. 25). Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Named after San Pedro's home team, Estrellas Orientales, The Eastern Stars hit a home run with some critics and struck out with others. Kurlansky tackles his subject capably, explaining key baseball terms and concepts for readers unfamiliar with the game, but he doesn't write with the passion and determined focus of a sportswriter. Critics who panned The Eastern Stars cited Kurlansky's failure to humanize his story as well as a few holes in his own understanding of the game. However, as the study of a troubled, economically depressed community, Kurlansky's book fares better. Based on solid research and framed in simple, forthright prose, his reflections on history, culture, religion, and racial relations--oh, and baseball--charmed critics who didn't necessarily have their hearts set on a baseball book. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

This book is full of interesting facts. Through reading/listening to it, one acquires a basic history of the Dominican Republic, their views of themselves and their determination to improve their lives through playing the game we love to watch. It explains how players work their way up from poverty to the minor leagues and on to MLB. If you have ever wondered just how a baseball player is chosen and/or why players are chosen from other countries, this provides a lot of information.

Mark Kurlansky's best books take a subject to use it to open up history from one perspective. He tries to do this with baseball, a town in the Dominican Republic and the Dominican Republic itself with less success. He writes as if the reader is ignorant of baseball and his copy editor missed a few errors (e.g. The Brooklyn Dodgers won the World Series in 1955 but 1956 as his first reference would have it.) For someone interested in baseball, what might have produced so many ball players from one town, and the Dominican Republic this book does serve as an entrée or perhaps an appetiser spread somewhat thin.

I really love this book. However, there is some typos and some inexact informations such as how many championships Las Estrellas Orientales have and some others such as places. Other than that I loved the book.

I haven't finished the book, but I have found a number of mistakes and subjective statements that trouble me. Subjective statements just in Chapter 1: 1. On page 16, the author says that "Dominicans have developed distinctive and celebrated music forms, but they are not as influential

nor as recognized as the many forms of Cuban music or Jamaican reggae or Trinidadian Calypso". With all due respect, I think most Latin Americans would disagree about this comment, which is presented as fact. Mistakes just in Chapter 1: 1. On page 21, the author lists Balboa as one of the "butchers" who conquered for Spain. Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who found the Pacific Ocean here in my home country of Panama hardly qualifies as a butcher, and certainly is not in the same leagues, behavior wise, as Cortés and Pizarro; 2. On page 25, the author states that the invasion of the Dominican Republic "was part of a policy that went back to 1898 of securing the Caribbean for building the Panama Canal". This is a sloppy, wrong comment. In 1898, the U.S. had not made the decision of whether it was going to build a Canal through Panama or through Nicaragua (if the author had stated that it was all part of a policy pertaining to the building of a Canal through the Central American isthmus, then he would have been right). 3. On page 31, the author states that "In 1992, for the four-hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival...". 1992 was the FIFTH-hundredth anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas.

This book examines the extraordinary story of the Dominican town of San Pedro de Macoris. Any baseball fan immediately recognizes the place--the home of far more baseball players than one could imagine from such a place. The book begins with a sense of the hardscrabble life of those living in this community. A hard life in the sugar cane fields or the mills processing sugar cane. As the sugar industry contracted, life became even harder. There was also racism, given that people from many countries from across the Caribbean came here to work in the sugar industry when it was still booming. The Dominican Republic itself was the home for many major league players, such as Juan Marichal. Still, the number of players coming from this town is striking. The heart of this story, though, is one avenue that--by 2008--79 men had taken to escape the hardships. Major league baseball. Why did so many make it? As Jose Cano said (Page 222): "Because we don't have anything else here and we weren't tall enough to play basketball." One of the most remarkable things about this book is the delineation of those major league players coming from this town. In 1962, the first players hit the big leagues--Amado Samuel and Manny Jimenez. Who are some of the better known players? Rico Carty, Joaquin Andujar, Alfredo Griffon, Pedro Guerrero, George Bell, Julio Franco, Tony Fernandez, Sammy Sosa, Luis Castillo, Alfonso Soriano, and Robinson Cano, among others. There are many interesting vignettes about many of these players. For instance, George Bell's volatility is discussed. The book is functionally written and explores an interesting story. The discussion of the economic hard times provides context for baseball as a "way out."

I looked forward to reading this book after hearing about it on NPR. Unfortunately, the book didn't live up to the hype surrounding it. At one point, I thought the author must have had a good idea for a magazine article and decided to expand it into a book. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough on the baseball side to adequately fill the pages of a book, so he supplemented the baseball facts with asides about the history of the country, etc. It made the book seem schizophrenic at times. Yes, there are interesting tidbits about baseball, but I had been hoping it would be a book about the players from the Dominican Republic's San Pedro de Macoris. Instead of fleshing out his book with a history of the country and other unrelated subjects, the author would have been better served to add more fully developed biographies of the players he discusses (rather than the sketches he chose to include) in order to explore the players more deeply, since that's what he said he was writing about. If you aren't looking for a book on the relationship of the small town in the Dominican Republic and baseball, you may enjoy this book. But if you are a baseball fan, you might want to skip this book.

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