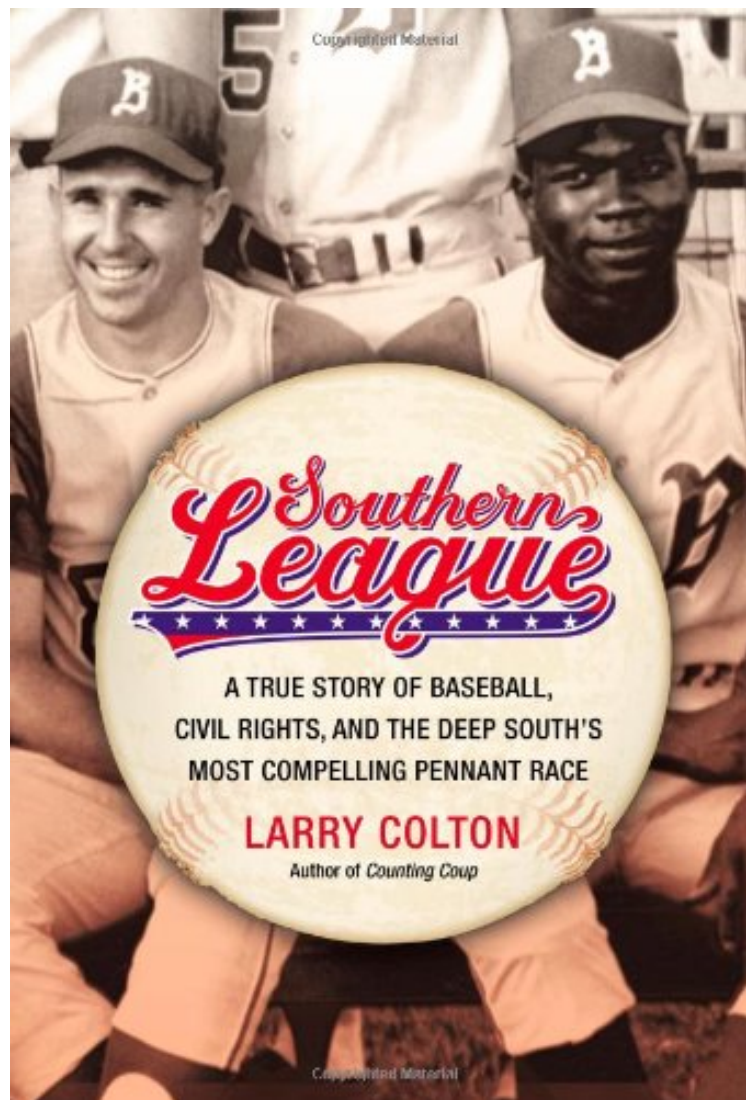


[Mobile pdf] Southern League: A True Story of Baseball, Civil Rights, and the Deep South's Most Compelling Pennant Race

## Southern League: A True Story of Baseball, Civil Rights, and the Deep South's Most Compelling Pennant Race

Larry Colton

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Larry Colton : Southern League: A True Story of Baseball, Civil Rights, and the Deep South's Most Compelling Pennant Race before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Southern League: A True Story of Baseball, Civil Rights, and the Deep South's Most Compelling Pennant Race:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Birmingham, Alabama enters the 20th century - reluctantlyBy TJPHas anyone who played in a grand total of one MLB game achieved the notoriety of Larry Colton? Well, there's Walter Alston, who became one of the game's great managers. And you could make a case for Moonlight Graham, introduced to America in the movie, Bull Durham. But that's about it.Colton is the author of Southern League, a look back at the 1964 Birmingham Barons, the AA farm team of the Kansas City Athletics. Southern League also chronicles the civil rights movement as it played out in Birmingham, Alabama and in Washington, D.C. during the summer of 1964.Birmingham, Alabama, in 1964, was an American disgrace. African-Americans – as well as whites in possession of a working conscience – were still dealing with the aftermath of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing on September 15, 1963, when white robed domestic terrorists, aided by 15 sticks of dynamite, killed four girls and injured 22 others.Readers will encounter familiar and unfamiliar heroes and villains. George Wallace, Governor of Alabama, joins the narrative, as does Bull Connor, the racist Birmingham police commissioner. Charlie Finley, who built a thriving insurance business, purchased a perpetually struggling MLB franchise – the Athletics – and would soon lead the league in proposing hare-brained ideas. Haywood Sullivan, the Southern-born and -bred rookie manager of the Barons, who would achieve much greater fame and fortune in baseball..Colton's strength as a writer, his go-to pitch, as it were, is his ability to create believable and interesting portraits of the not-famous – his fraternity housemates in Goat Brothers, for example. In Southern League, his background stories of some of the 22 members of the Barons are the highlight of the book for this reader.Unfortunately, material for the other half of the book appears to have been solely gleaned from the microfilm library of the Birmingham Post-Herald. As amply demonstrated in Goat Brothers, Larry Colton is not encumbered with an abundance of profound or original socio-political insights. Thus, he is well suited to the task of writing about professional baseball and the stultifying anti-intellectualism that has pervaded the sport since the dead ball era; less so to the task of chronicling the arrival of Birmingham, Alabama into the 20th century.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. a tale needed to be toldBy Brian MaitlandBeing an A's fan from the '70s this was right in my wheelhouse as far as baseball books go. It's a season-in-the-making look at return of minor league baseball to Birmingham, Alabama, in 1964. The Barons (the Kansas City A's AAA farm club) were also significantly a team composed of Caucasian, African-American and Latino ballplayers in a deeply divided South and in a city that came to represent all that was reprehensible about Jim Crow laws and the de facto Ground Zero really for those in the South who did not want desegregation.The author does not mince text in describing the horrid events that preceded the Barons' return to the Birmingham sports scene from the church bombings, lynchings, torture right down to the daily indignities done to the black populace. Some of this stuff is truly stomach churning to read especially given this occurred just a little over 50 years ago.Still the main focus of the book is on the personalities associated with the ballclub including players who made significant contributions to the Oakland A's World Series titles in the '70s--Blue Moon Odom, Bert Campaneris and Paul Lindblad. Probably, though, as compelling as those three players' stories are the most interesting characters on the Barons were their manager Haywood Sullivan (who would go on to eventually become an owner of the Boston Red Sox during the Yaz/Tiant years), Barons' owner Albert Belcher and two players who showed incredible guts and determination that season--Tommie Reynolds and Hoss Bowlin. Of course, there still is enough on the MLB parent club owner, the colorful and controversial Charlie O. Finley, to whet any A's fan's appetite as well.It's truly a story that needed to be told and one that shows how sports in its small, but significant, way actually helped break down a lot of barriers and heal rifts in an extremely violent city that was so divided over the issue of race. It's also amazing that so many published studies of the Civil Rights movement missed this. Thankfully, author Larry Colton stepped up to the plate and told this story.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. First rate time travelBy emachineAn amazing book, funny, intimate and smart, about baseball and race in the deep South in 1964, before mankind had yet to drink Tang on the moon, Vietnam was still a nightmare waiting in the wings and if you were black, especially in Birmingham, you remained very much a negro. Colton traces a season of a minor league baseball team, the Barons, that had seen its ranks rather suddenly supercharged by the presence of black ball players during a time in which many if not most Alabamans considered integration, to put it kindly, an oil and water proposition. Southern League is graced by lots of vivid baseball action, both on and off the field and star turns by the likes of Bull Conner, Bear Bryant and Charlie Finley. But what makes the book so exceptional is the way Colton collapses time. The decades disappear. making 1964 seem in its revived details like some new kind of lost American day before yesterday.

"Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings in Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation." Martin Luther King, Jr. Letter from a Birmingham Jail 1963Anybody who is familiar with the Civil Rights movement knows that 1964 was a pivotal year. And in Birmingham, Alabama - perhaps the epicenter of racial conflict - the Barons amazingly started their season with an integrated team. Johnny "Blue Moon" Odom, a talented pitcher and Tommie Reynolds, an outfielder - both young black ballplayers with dreams of playing someday in the big leagues, along with Bert Campaneris, a dark-skinned shortstop from Cuba, all found themselves in this simmering cauldron of a minor league

town, all playing for Heywood Sullivan, a white former major leaguer who grew up just down the road in Dothan, Alabama. Colton traces the entire season, writing about the extraordinary relationships among these players with Sullivan, and Colton tells their story by capturing the essence of Birmingham and its citizens during this tumultuous year. (The infamous Bull Connor, for example, when not ordering blacks to be blasted by powerful water hoses, is a fervent follower of the Barons and served as a long-time broadcaster of their games.) By all accounts, the racial jeers and taunts that rained down upon these Birmingham players were much worse than anything that Jackie Robinson ever endured. More than a story about baseball, this is a true accounting of life in a different time and clearly a different place. Seventeen years after Jackie Robinson had broken the color line in the major leagues, Birmingham was exploding in race riots....and now, they were going to have their very first integrated sports team. This is a story that has never been told.

From Booklist This could be the perfect storm of a baseball book. Colton, author of *Counting Coup* (2000), is a former professional pitcher who debuted in 1966 with the Birmingham Barons of the Southern League, this book's subject. Two years earlier, another pitcher, eventual major-league star John "Blue Moon" Odom, received the largest bonus ever paid a black athlete when he was signed to the Barons by legendary Oakland owner Charles Finley. The 1964 Barons and, later, the young and naive Colton were caught up in the racial turmoil of the South, regional baseball only very recently integrated, and the notorious "Bombingham" of the 1960s, whose history, including the tragic church bombing that killed four children in September 1963, is chillingly summarized. He focuses on four prospects—two white, two black, including Odom—as well as the manager and the team's owner, capably recounting their life stories and ambitions. Though his prose can be flat, and the book's subtitle is a stretch, his story is so good it overwhelms the book's shortcomings. One wonders why he waited so long, but Colton has now delivered the book he seemed destined to write. --Mark Levine "When I read "Counting Coup," I was staggered by Larry Colton's ability to persuade a group of high school girls to share their heart's secrets, so I am not surprised that for "Southern League" he could get a bunch of aging baseball players to remember the hopes and fears of their minor league days. The breadth of Colton's reporting here, placing the Birmingham Barons' 1964 season squarely into the context of the civil rights era, is a narrative tour de force.-- Richard Ben Cramer Those who say that sports do not, or should not, make us think about anything beyond the field itself have always been wrong. The summer of '64 and the stories found in *Southern League* demonstrate that once again. -- Bob Costas Larry Colton has an extraordinary gift for capturing those times when everyday, glitz and glamor-free American sports, is not merely a metaphor for our culture but becomes a mechanism for cultural change. His highest expression of that gift comes now in *SOUTHERN LEAGUE* in which he introduces you to players nobody has yet built statues of, but who forced sea-changes in the America in which you live. --Keith Olbermann Larry Colton's interweaving of the 1964 Southern League baseball season with the Civil Rights movement revisits a period in American history that many of us will not - and should not - forget. With Colton's retelling of players enduring racial insults on the field and threats and other indignities off the field, *SOUTHERN LEAGUE* makes for riveting, and revealing, reading.-- Bill White "I can't say this loud enough...this is a great book! I'd throw in an f-bomb for emphasis but that sort of thing is frowned upon in high literary circles. The explosive racial cauldron of Birmingham in the sixties, unforgettable characters, and baseball all come together in Larry Colton's memorable narrative, *SOUTHERN LEAGUE*. Baseball is the tie that binds, barely, but that's enough."-- Ron Shelton This terrific rendering is highly recommended both to baseball fans and to students of civil rights history and African-American studies. -- Library Journal Entertaining and painstakingly crafted, Colton's account of the Birmingham Barons is a tribute to determination and courage in the face of overwhelming adversity.-- Publisher's Weekly The narrative of future major leaguers Johnny "Blue Moon" Odom, Tommie Reynolds, and Bert Campaneris playing on a minor-league team run by future and former Red Sox owner Haywood Sullivan in racially segregated and explosive Birmingham, Alabama, during the 1960s is as good a snapshot of social history as a sports book in recent years.-- The Daily Beast An accomplished storyteller ... a tale well told.-- Baseball Nation *SOUTHERN LEAGUE* deserves to be considered one of the eye-opening books of its type and will serve as a teaching tool for those who believe that sports --- and life --- in America was always as it is today.-- Bookreporter.com Another excellent recounting of race relations in baseball.-- The Charlotte Observer Thorough research and a wonderful weave of personalities are parts of what make "Southern League" the best baseball book of the new season.-- Gene Sapakoff, The Post and Courier About the Author Larry Colton is the author of several notable works, including *COUNTING COUP*, *GOAT BROTHERS*, and *NO ORDINARY JOES*. He has written for *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. A former pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies, Colton himself played in the Southern League in 1966 for a farm team in Macon, GA.