



Beyond DiMaggio: Italian Americans in Baseball

Lawrence Baldassar

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Berra, Rizzuto, Lasorda, Torre, Conigliaro, Santo, Piazza. Casual baseball fans—in fact, even many nonfans—know these names, not as Italian Americans but as some of the most colorful figures in Major League Baseball. Ever since future Hall of Famer Tony Lazzeri became a key part of the Yankees' Murderers' Row lineup of 1926, Italian Americans have been among the most prominent and intriguing players in the game. The first comprehensive study of the topic, *Beyond DiMaggio* is also a social history of baseball, tracing the evolution of American perceptions toward those of Italian descent as it chronicles the baseball exploits that influenced those perceptions.

Lawrence Baldassaro tells the stories of Italian Americans' contributions to the game, from Joe DiMaggio, who transcended his ethnic identity to become an American icon, to A. Bartlett Giamatti, who served as commissioner of baseball, to Mike Piazza, considered the greatest hitting catcher ever. Baldassaro conducted more than fifty interviews with players, coaches, managers, and executives—some with careers dating back to the thirties—in order to put all these figures and their stories into the historical context of baseball, Italian Americans, and, finally, the culture of American sports.

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