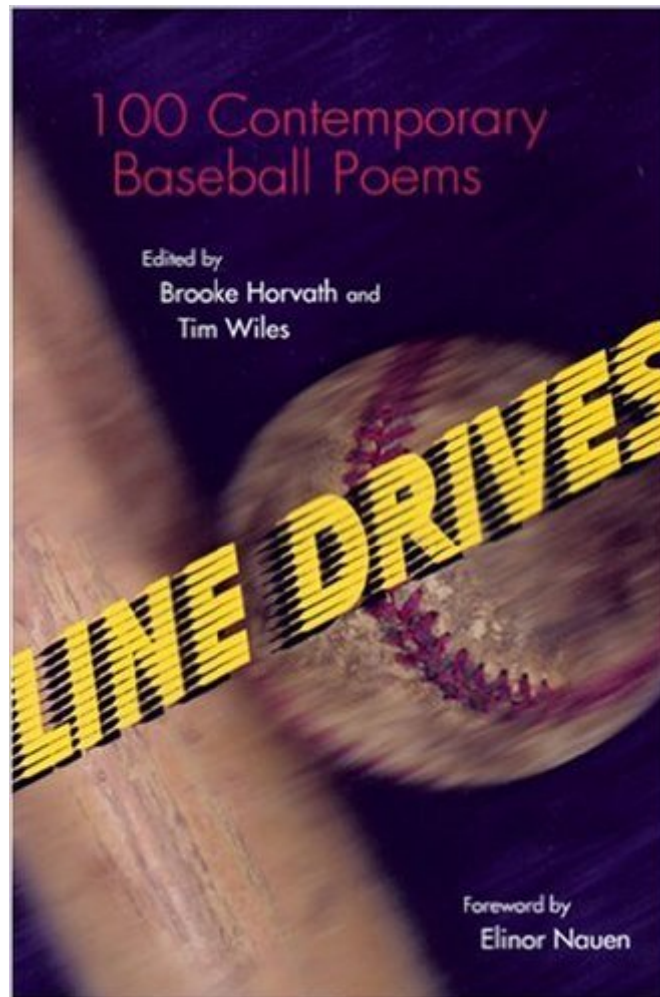


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Line Drives: 100 Contemporary Baseball Poems (Writing Baseball)



Synopsis

“We wait for baseball all winter long,” Bill Littlefield wrote in Boston Magazine a decade ago, “or rather, we remember it and anticipate it at the same time. We re-create what we have known and we imagine what we are going to do next. Maybe that’s what poets do, too.” Poetry and baseball are occasions for well-put passion and expressive pondering, and just as passionate attention transforms the prose of everyday life into poetry, it also transforms this game we write about, play, or watch. Editors Brooke Horvath and Tim Wiles unite their own passion for baseball and poetry in this collection, *Line Drives: 100 Contemporary Baseball Poems*, providing a forum for ninety-two poets. Line after line, like baseball itself game after game and season after season, these poems manage to make the old and the familiar new and surprising. The poems in these pages invite interrogation, and the reader, like the true baseball fan, must be willing to play the game, for these poems are fun, fresh, angry, nostalgic, meditative, and meant to be read aloud. They are keen on taking us deeply into baseball as sport and intent on offering countless metaphors for exploring history, religion, love, family, and self-identity. Each poem delivers images of pure beauty as the poets speak of murder and ghost runners and old ball gloves, of baseball as a tie that binds families and indeed the nation together, of the game as a stage upon which no-nonsense grit and skill are routinely displayed, and of the delight experienced in being one amid a mindlessly happy crowd. This book is true to the game’s long season and to the lives of those the game engages.

Book Information

Series: Writing Baseball

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Southern Illinois University Press; 1st edition (March 29, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0809324407

ISBN-13: 978-0809324408

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,167,462 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #66 in Books > Reference >

Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Poetry #1598 in Books > Literature & Fiction >

Poetry > Anthologies #2452 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Baseball

Customer Reviews

The anthology begins with a leadoff home run with Richard Behn's "The Origin and Purpose of Baseball." By relying on recognized talents, the collection maintains a winning record throughout its season. But in the minor leagues there are good hitters who may never make it to The Show. If there is to be a second edition, I would hope that the editor would pay more attention to the wealth of good poetry in Spitball Magazine.

When it comes to baseball poetry, nobody knows his stuff better than Tim Wiles, and that expertise is evident in the outstanding quality of this collection. Many of the expected poets are here, but so are many I'd never heard of before whose work I am glad to have been exposed to. The poems range in tone from somber and serious to playful and irreverent. One of my particular favorites is the entry by former pitcher Dan Quisenberry, who was a funny guy and had quite a way with words. I keep this book on my nightstand and try to read one poem each night before I go to sleep. Except I often have a hard time reading just one.

I'm not a fan of "free verse". Only 2 of the poems out of the 100 in this book, rhyme. I asked one of the authors why not more rhyming poems. He hasn't answered yet. Wish I'd known.

I thoroughly enjoyed this collection. Sometimes with anthologies of sports-related fiction/poetry, I've been disappointed because there seemed to be differing levels of quality. With Line Drives, I was satisfied because all of the poems were worth reading—they offered a consistently high level of quality and all had interesting insights or fun ideas. Then there were a number of them that were among the best baseball poems I have ever read. Katharine Harer's "The Cure" speaks with a tremendous depth of understanding of the game and the emotions that go into our continued obsession with it. Joseph Stanton's "Stealing Home" uses an engaging poetic technique to compare the difficult return to the place where we grew up with that difficult play in the game. Dan Quisenberry's "Baseball Cards" offers an important perspective on players' insecurities and the myriad aspects of their lives that fans never see. I also appreciated that the poems collected here do not revert to cliché comparisons or images when they connect baseball to life. In fact, some of them work against clichés. David C. Ward's "Isn't it pretty to think so?" challenges the idealization of fathers and sons playing catch and reminds us that individual experience is much more powerful and thought-provoking than any (false) perfect image. The poems felt fresh and that was in large part because many of the poets used personal experience as the starting point, reaching out to the

game to make connections between their lives and those of the reader. As a result, I think that even those who are not baseball fans would appreciate and enjoy many of these poems. As a baseball fan, I know I'll enjoy rereading this collection and I think most baseball fans would as well.

A+

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