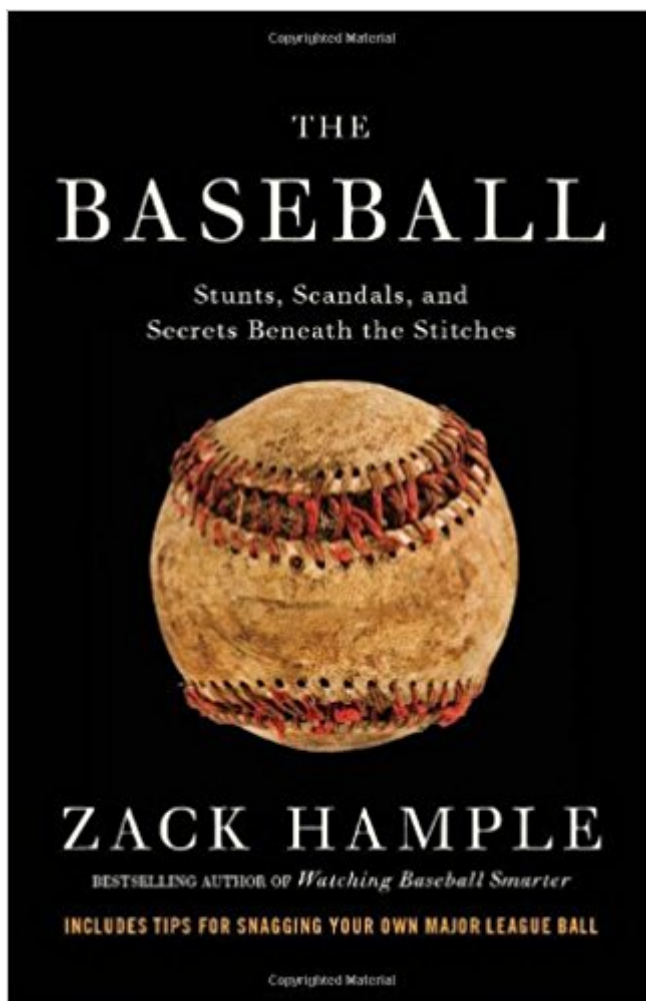


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# The Baseball: Stunts, Scandals, And Secrets Beneath The Stitches



## Synopsis

The Baseball is a salute to the ball, filled with insider trivia, anecdotes, and generations of ball-induced insanity. Which Hall of Famer once caught a ball dropped from an airplane? Why do balls get stamped with invisible ink? What's the best ticket to buy for catching a foul ball? Which part of the ball once came from dog food companies? How could a 10,000-year-old glacier help a pitcher grip the ball? In this enlightening, entertaining, and often wildly funny book, Zack Hample shares ballpark legends and lore, explores the history of the baseball souvenir craze, and also details the evolution of the ball. Finally, Hample—who has snagged more than 4,600 balls from 48 different major league stadiums—offers up his secret methods for snagging your own ball from major league games. Features a ballhawk glossary, profiles of legendary ballhawks, top 10 lists, and black-and-white photos throughout.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“This is the stuff baseball fans eat up like snack food, only it's way more nourishing. . . . The stories are marvelous, and throughout Hample maintains jaunty good humor and even class; for instance, he thanks, by name, every one of the 1,167 Major League players and coaches who have given him baseballs over the years (an interesting list in itself). Lots of fascinating illustrations, too.”  
—Booklist  
“Brings a whole new dimension to the term ‘inside baseball.’ . . . Hample . . . provides plenty of revelations to even the most passionate follower of the game.”  
—Kirkus Reviews

“Hample is not simply an articulate and accessible baseball writer, he’s a zealous collector of game balls. . . . His advice on how to catch a ball at the stadium shows how meticulously he hones his hobby. Along the way there are lots of personalities and top-ten lists at the end for every active fan. All ball buffs should try to catch this one.”

•Library Journal Praise for Zack Hample’s *Watching Baseball Smarter*: “Insightful, engaging and funny

•a treat for anyone who loves the game.”

•Keith Hernandez “Hample calls himself an obsessed fan

•obsessed in a good way

•and the product of his torment is a funny and informative guide for all levels of fans.”

•Yankees Magazine “Engaging. . . . Hample’s book is both deceptive in its simplicity . . . and surprising in its range.”

•Fortune “A browser’s delight of a book. . . . Hample unloads a zany collection of baseball trivia, insights and ‘random stuff’. . . in breezy guidebook style.”

•Seattle Post-Intelligencer “This isn’t the first book to take on the challenge of explaining baseball intricacies, but I’ve never seen it done better.”

•Craig Smith, *The Seattle Times* “Armed at neophytes and know-it-alls alike, this baseball geekfest tells you which positions are never played by lefties, why it’s easier to hit when bases are loaded, which rules are the weirdest, and other arcana.”

•Maxim

Zack Hample has written three books about baseball and has appeared on dozens of TV and radio shows. He has snagged more than 4,600 baseballs from 48 different major league stadiums.

Hample runs a business called “Watch With Zack” and has a popular blog, *The Baseball Collector*, chronicling his obsession. <http://www.zackhample.com>

Zack Hample tries to do two things in this book. First, he gives us a history of the baseball, not the game of baseball but the ball itself. Second, he tells us about the thousands of baseballs he’s managed to snag at major league games over the years, and offers us specific advice on how we too can catch or pick up or be handed big league baseballs. He does a pretty good job of the first part, although to make it entertaining he has to pad the history of the ball quite a bit. This is understandable, as even a devoted fan’s eyes will glaze over if all he’s reading is a year by year diary of how Spalding or Rawlings changed the quality of the wool yarn inside their baseballs or moved the stitching process from this country to that other country. So there are stories about famous baseballs snagged by fans, or weird incidents like big leaguers who hit baseballs into the stands which struck their wives or mothers, or serious injuries to players or spectators caused by baseballs, and so on. Some of these things seem to be a bit of a stretch in a book supposed to be about the ball itself, but without them this would have been a very skinny book. The second part,

about how fans can get their hands on balls at big league games, I found less interesting simply because I cannot picture myself being as fanatical as Hamble is in acquiring baseballs. Hamble says he's collected over 9,000 baseballs over the years, and while I don't doubt that the techniques he describes are effective, I have to think he misses a lot of the game by spending his time trying to elbow his way into the right spot to catch a foul ball. It turns out many of the balls in his collection were hit into the stands during batting practice, or were tossed to him by a groundskeeper or a coach rather than being caught, and I guess I just don't see the thrill of getting a ball that went into the stands in batting practice after being hit by an unknown player before an unimportant game. Of course Hamble has also snagged some famous balls like Barry Bonds' 724th home run, that sort of thing is impressive. Sure, I sometimes take my glove to the game depending on where I'll be sitting, but I just can't see myself running around the stands for several hours based on whether a left or right-handed power hitter is on deck--for one thing I'd spill my beer trying to emulate Hamble's gymnastics. The book is entertaining, although Hamble's book *Watching Baseball Smarter* is a far better read. A baseball nut will enjoy "The Baseball", but it's well down the list in my baseball library.

For fans of the game of baseball, be sure to check out *The Baseball*. Hamble's third book on the subject of our national pastime goes beneath the stitches and looks at the history of the ball we all know and love. *Stunts, Scandals, and Secrets Beneath the Stitches* takes the reader on a trip through the history of the game, the players, coaches and managers, fans, and pop culture/trivia that center around this simple (or not so simple) sphere and turns "the baseball" into a sort of character that, like all great characters, goes through an impressive series of changes before becoming what we know it as today. A quick, solid read--pick up a copy if you're even the most casual fan of the game and I guarantee you'll learn something new and you'll be in for a few laughs, too.

Excellent read. Should definitely be checked out by any baseball fan.

This is a great read, especially in the summer time as everyone is hyped for baseball season! Zack Hamble provides the reader with an in depth view of the history of the baseball itself and great insight into some of the most infamous homerun balls hit. The most fascinating part of the book however discusses the rawlings factory and the rigorous process they go through just to make one game ready baseball. A great read for all ages.

It was worth the purchase. Helped immensely in my paper.

got my 12 year old son to read a book, that is pretty impressive!

I bought this book for my eight-year-old son and he has declared it "My favorite book on baseball". We've enjoyed it together - the facts, figures and hints for enjoying the game. Zack Hample provides insights only a true student - and now professor - of the game can impart. It would be a great Father's Day gift for the dad who loves the game from the son, daughter or wife who enjoys it with him.

My husband loves baseball so much that he actually placed this book on a wish list. We gave it to him along with tickets to an MLB game. He is very happy and uses the tactics he has learned when he gets to the games.

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