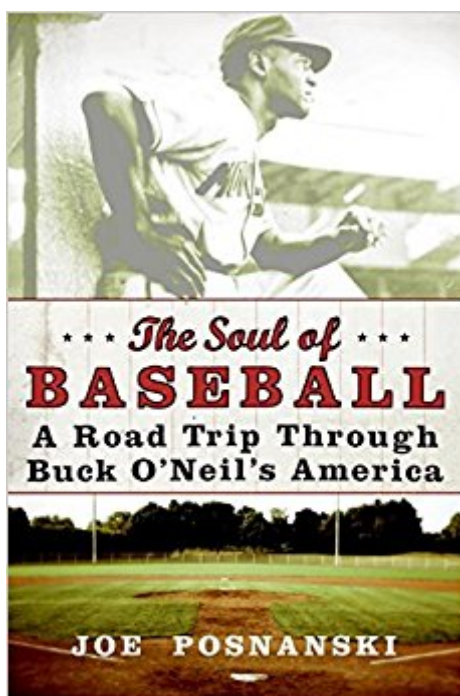


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# The Soul Of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O'Neil's America



## Synopsis

When Legendary Negro League player Buck O'Neil asked sports columnist Joe Posnanski how he fell in love with baseball, Posnanski had to think about it. From that question was born the idea behind *BASEBALL AND JAZZ*. Posnanski and the 94 year old O'Neil decided to spend the 2005 baseball season touring the country in hopes of stirring up the love that first drew them to the game. This book is just as much the story of Buck O'Neil as it is the story of baseball. In a time when disillusioned, steroid-fueled, money hungry athletes define the sport, Buck O'Neil stands out as a man that truly played for the love of the game. Posnanski writes about that love and the one thing that O'Neil loved almost as much as baseball: jazz. *BASEBALL AND JAZZ* is an endearing step back in time to the days when the crack of a bat and the smoky notes of a midnight jam session were the sounds that brought the most joy to a man's heart.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: William Morrow; 1st Edition edition (February 27, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060854030

ISBN-13: 978-0060854034

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 120 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #566,788 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #351 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Sports & Outdoors > Baseball](#) #1423 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > African-American & Black](#) #3173 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Travelers & Explorers](#)

## Customer Reviews

Posnanski, sports columnist for the Kansas City Star, spent a year on the road with the iconic Negro Leagues player and manager Buck O'Neil (1911-2006), recording the magnanimous 94-year-old's encounters with scores of fans and his vast repertoire of entertaining stories. O'Neil, the first African-American to coach in the Major Leagues, was a tireless spokesman for the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City. Posnanski is at his best when recounting O'Neil's baseball memories of the likes of legends Satchel Paige, Willie Mays and Josh Gibson. The author captures O'Neil's rhythmic voice and often relays it in italicized verse, while painting an uplifting

portrait of a man who was without bitterness despite long experience with racial discrimination. Too often, however, Posnanski bogs down in mundane details that read like a travelogue of airports and tardy drivers. Many of the chapters have the feel of lengthy newspaper articles stitched together, lacking segues and narrative. Nevertheless, the final scenes are moving tales of the funeral of 103-year-old Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe and O'Neil's dignity when he was infamously passed over by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**\*Starred Review\*** After spending a few years trying to write a baseball book, sportswriter Posnanski lucked into a story that positively cried out to be told. Buck O'Neil, a Hall of Fame member and Negro League veteran who died last October, was a man who loved the game with a burning passion that never lessened in intensity. During the last year of his life, O'Neil joined Posnanski on a road trip to Kansas City (where Buck played for the Kansas City Monarchs), to New York, and to Minneapolis (for Buck O'Neil Day at the Metronome). Along the way, as O'Neil remembers names and faces from his life on and off the field, we are transported back to a time when baseball was, if not more innocent, at least more like a game and less like a business. There's also an important question lurking behind the anecdotes O'Neil tells and the joie de vivre he embodies: Does baseball today, with its drug abusers and profiteers and self-absorbed celebrities, still have the soul that it did when O'Neil fell in love with the game? For baseball fans, the book is a treasure trove of history, full of names that remind us of an older time--Jackie Robinson, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks--and stories that make us laugh, even as we wonder if baseball has changed too much ever to feel like it once did. Stirring, moving, and more than a little sad. David Pitt Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This book is not just about baseball or just about Buck O'Neil. This is a story of people and their flaws and quirks, of what it means to be an American, of hope. It is not heartwarming in the schmaltzy sense of the word. It uses baseball and the story of Buck O'Neil to take an unflinching look at many hard things of life and yet still find joy in the midst of it. Beautiful prose and even occasional poetry are constant through the book, much like the game of baseball itself. If you are a baseball fan or simply want a poignant story, read this. You won't regret it.

I could belabor an in-depth review, but I urge you to immerse yourself in this amazing work of love. Posnanski accomplished the miraculous: he was with this book but not of it. Unlike so many sports

bios that worship the subject (or the writer), Posnanski puts all ego aside and takes us on a journey through Buck's eyes - eyes that have seen much, seen the breadth and depth of the U.S. I went shopping for a book on the history of the Negro Leagues, but all were dry histories. Then Joe P. introduced me to Buck, and I found riches that transcended baseball. This book digs deep into so many subjects; I would use it in a sports management class, a history class, a journalism class (not just sports journalism), a literature class, a sociology class... However, I just happen to be a professor, so please indulge me that list. Most of all, if you want to read because you love baseball, African-American U.S. history, events current and 50 years past, grab & eat this book. It doesn't matter if you dislike baseball or sports or biographies because this book uses these aspects as part of the overall vision of a life well-lived. Most of all, if you want to know how to live a virtuous, positive, genuine life that touches all you meet, then meet Buck O'Neill. There are angels all around us, and Buck (and Joe P.) is blessed to be a blessing.

"The Soul of Baseball" is a passionate, perceptive, playful, pleasant, poetic, poignant and provocative book based on a year in the life of 93-year-old Buck O'Neil. It is a wonderful wedding of author and subject. Buck O'Neil was a good baseball player, but his "superpower" seemed to be his ability to make people feel good. Joe Posnanski is up to the task of writing about so worthy a subject. He is observant without being cynical. He is lyrical without being sentimental. I loved Buck's scouting report: "His heart was willing, but his rump was gone." The book is full of humor, oral history and folksy philosophy. The only time I thought the author was trying too hard to be cute was when he tried to make a joke about Arlen Specter. The joke would have been funny if it was about some other senators, but it didn't really apply to Specter and fell flat. Almost all the rest of the book was smooth baseball jazz.

All you can say is what a kind man. This book is the best book on baseball I've ever read. It's the best because it doesn't have numbers and stats. It indeed captures not only the Soul of Baseball but the Soul of a Great Person. If you are ever in KC be sure to go to 16th and Vine and tour the Negro League Museum. Hopefully you'll get to meet Mr. Bob Kendrick. Tell him hello.

Awesome book, not just about baseball but about life. Highly recommended. Probably my favorite baseball book, if not then it's gotta be in the top 3. As a Royals fan, I'm used to hearing about Buck O'Neil and have visited the Negro Leagues Museum in KC a couple times so that probably makes it even better for me.

A beautiful book about a beautiful man. Joe Posnanski captures the essence of Buck O'Neil's positive attitude and inner strength which overcame life's difficult and challenging circumstances. Buck did not allow bitterness to enter his heart. He overcame injustice by counting his blessings and persevering. The book is very well written. Hard to put down. Familiar stories about Buck's life in baseball are brought new life through Posnanski's writing. The author does this great man justice by showing us Buck in intimate detail. Buck loved life. He loved people. He loved baseball. One cannot read this and not love Buck. The best of the books about Buck O'Neil.

Posnanski has a great story telling talent in his writing and he uses it here to give you a view into the life of another great storyteller, listener and kind man. You come away wishing Buck O'Neil was still alive just so he could come up shake your hand, say "Hi. I'm Buck O'Neil, what's your name?" and then open his arms for a hug and tell you "to give it up." The book gives you a fabulous insight into a history of baseball and black culture in America through the eyes of a man who is someone we wish we could be like.

Prediction: You will read this book, and it will immediately go on your top ten list. It's that good. Buck O'Neil was that good.

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