

achieved their goals of using the Olympics to forge a new international vision of Mexico; the rest of the world, it seems, did not thoroughly digest this message.

Elias's book is not perfect. There remain a few editorial glitches and a misspelling here and there. The prose is workmanlike, and the index fairly sparse. At times, content that might be attributed to other works is uncited, which seems to be an editorial preference for limiting references to secondary sources and emphasizing primary sources. With that in mind, this text will probably find limited appeal with a broad readership or those with only a casual interest in the Olympics. However, for students and scholars of Mexican history and Olympic history, it is an essential text shedding much new light on a topic that many of us thought we knew.

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KEVIN B. WITHERSPOON

## DOMINICAN BASEBALL AS AN INDUSTRY AND A DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION

*Pitching Baseball: Baseball and Politics in Dominican Republic.* By April Yoder. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2023. Pp. 215. \$45.00 cloth.  
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In 2023, on Jackie Robinson Day, Major League Baseball (MLB) announced its continued success in diversifying the game. Of note, 31 percent of MLB players were from Latin America, *about half of whom were from the Dominican Republic*. In addition to their presence throughout organized baseball, Dominicans have been well represented on All-Star teams, recipients of the MLB's most prestigious awards, and in the not-too-distant future, many will have their plaques in the hallowed Baseball Hall of Fame. Aside from these accomplishments, the Dominican Republic has had considerable success in the Caribbean World Series and the World Baseball Classic while organizing successful summer and winter leagues. In her book, April Yoder offers a unique and insightful understanding of what is behind the success of baseball as a game, as an industry, and as an institution on the island. The premise of her argument is that the current success of baseball is tied to its role as a platform for the Dominican people to fight for their vision of a democratic society, which was initially a just and equitable society that offered protection from the excesses of capitalism.

Baseball has been part of the Dominican landscape since the early twentieth century. With its accessibility to people from all walks of life, it quickly became a source of national unity and pride. Although Yoder cautions linking baseball to identity, there is a sense of ownership among the Dominican people. Thus, even as visions of democracy would change due to international events and political shifts in the country, the connection

between democracy and baseball would remain constant from the 1950s through the early twenty-first century, the period of her research and one of the most tumultuous eras in the history of the Dominican Republic.

Yoder's meticulous research documents how the Dominican people pushed for their visions of democracy as the nation experienced one regime change after another, and they did so by maintaining their focus on the national pastime. She examines each regime and illustrates how political actions toward baseball affected those in power and the nature of the game's growth. For example, even though the reasons differed significantly, the undoing of both Trujillo and Bosch was tied to the way they supported (or, in the case of Bosch, purportedly not supported) baseball. Balaguer, however, provides the best illustration. Despite his paternalistic leanings and resistance to holding elections, he understood that to remain in power he had to consider the people's demands regarding baseball. His support for industrialists at the expense of workers was wearing thin on the Dominican people, who vented their frustrations on professional baseball players for their sense of entitlement and selfishness. They wanted the game to benefit a broader reach of people by expanding amateur baseball and focusing on cultivating and developing homegrown talent.

To satisfy the people and the industrialists, he introduced a compromise labeled the third way. For baseball, it meant an increased emphasis on amateur ball by expanding government responsibility to address the needs and well-being of the people while de-emphasizing professional ball of individual success. By aligning the objectives of baseball with the people's democratic vision, an industry emerged designed to provide recruitment, training, and development of prospective baseball players, provide rehabilitative services for former players, and create employment for coaches, scouts, trainers, and other occupations tied to the game.

As we moved into the twenty-first century, baseball on the island move toward a collaboration between the public and private sectors, specifically MLB. Many believe that the success of baseball in the Dominican Republic is a product of MLB control; nevertheless, that is not the case. Baseball and MLB remain accountable to the people of the Dominican Republic. Yoder demonstrates persuasively that the successful baseball industry in the Dominican Republic is distinctively a product of the democratic ideals of the Dominican people.

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