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Collect Tallahassee writer's latest Major League effort

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"The Integration of Major League Baseball," by Rick Swaine. (McFarland&Company, www.mcfarlandpub.com or 800-253-2187); 273 pages. \$49.95.

The Rick Swaine catalog keeps expanding — to the benefit of baseball history fans.

Swaine, a Tallahassee author and longtime member of the Society for American Baseball Research, is back with his third book to shine light on the dim corners of baseball history: "The Integration of Major League Baseball."

It follows his unique debut: "Major League Baseball Players Who Overcame Disabilities" (2004). And it expands on his enlightening second book, "The Black Stars Who Made Baseball Whole: The Jackie Robinson Generation in the Major Leagues, 1947-1959" (2006).

At a somewhat pricey \$49.95, "The Integration of Major League Baseball" is aimed at libraries, where it will be an invaluable research tool. But it is a highly entertaining book that deserves a place on any baseball fan's bookshelf.

The book is a team-by-team history of the first black players on all 16 original major league teams and the 1960s expansion teams. Swaine's focus is as much on the owners, general managers and field managers — many of whom actively hindered baseball integration — as the players. Swaine's book may scuff up the amiable reputations of such anti-integration baseball leaders as Connie Mack, Tom Yawkey and Al Lopez while adding a new sheen to unheralded pro-integration leaders such as Hank Greenberg, John Quinn and Lou Boudreau.

"I think there are a lot of guys who didn't get their due (for helping baseball integration)," Swain said. "The only way to bring attention to them was to talk about the obstructionists."

Swaine arranges the team histories in chronological order of when the teams integrated, from the Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers (1947) to Boston Red Sox (1960) and the expansion teams of the 1960s. He details each team's efforts to sign — or avoid signing — its first black players and discusses the careers of each team's pioneers. He carries the histories beyond the pioneers to discuss the teams' black stars of the 1970s/1980s.

The book includes a timeline of baseball integration from 1845 to the 1993 selection of Bob Watson as baseball's first black general manager. It includes five helpful lists of black players (blacks in the minor leagues, black All-Stars, etc.).

One of the book's interesting side stories is charting the great number of Hispanic players who played for teams before the teams officially signed a black player. Many Hispanics who might be considered black today played for teams years before Jackie Robinson officially broke baseball's "color line" in 1947.

"There's always been a lot of questions on some teams who was the first black," Swaine said. "It was all very subjective."

One of the great appeals of the book is its illustrations: Dozens of black players and white managers are pictured through classic baseball cards from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. All the cards are drawn from the voluminous collection of Swaine, who laughingly notes, "I had an unusual mother; she didn't throw away my baseball cards."

Which helps make a book baseball fans will want to keep.