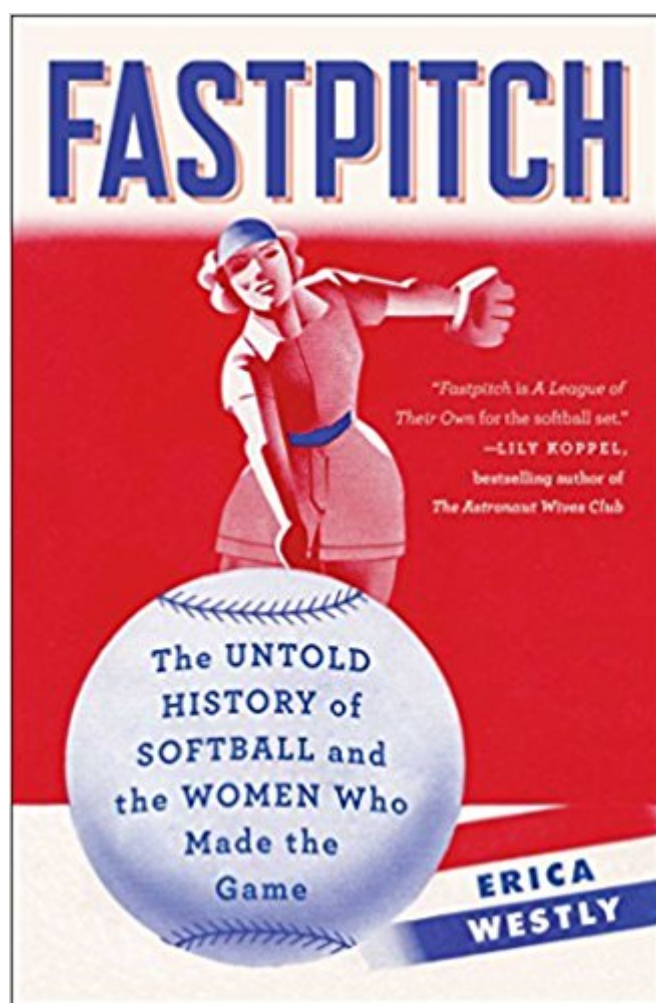


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Fastpitch: The Untold History Of Softball And The Women Who Made The Game



Synopsis

“A League of Their Own for the softball set” (Lily Koppel, bestselling author of *The Astronaut Wives Club*), *Fastpitch* is hidden history at its most intriguing—the tale of the forgotten beginnings of one of the most popular and widely played sports today. Softball is played by tens of millions in various age groups all around the world, but the origins of this beloved sport (and the charismatic athletes who helped it achieve prominence in the mid-twentieth century) have been shrouded in mystery until now. *Fastpitch* brings to vivid life the eclectic mix of characters that make up softball’s vibrant 129-year history. From its humble beginnings in 1887, when it was invented in a Chicago boat club and played with a broomstick, to the rise in the 1940s and 1950s of professional-caliber, company-sponsored teams that toured the country in style, softball’s history is as varied as it is fascinating. Though it’s thought of today as a female sport, fastpitch softball’s early history is full of male stars, such as the vaudeville-esque Eddie Feigner, whose signature move was striking out batters while blindfolded. But because softball was one of the only team sports that also allowed women to play competitively, it took on added importance for female athletes. Women like Bertha Ragan Tickey, who set strikeout records and taught Lana Turner to pitch, and her teammate Joan Joyce, who struck out baseball star Ted Williams, made a name and a life for themselves in an era when female athletes had almost no prospects. Softball allowed them to flourish, and they in turn inspired a whole new generation of athletes. Featuring eight pages of captivating, vintage photos and compelling, well-researched historical commentary, this “fun and entertaining read” (Billie Jean King) chronicles softball’s unique history as well as its uncertain future (as evidenced by its controversial elimination from the 2012 Olympics, and the mounting efforts to have it reinstated). A celebration of this distinctively American game and the role it plays in our culture today, Westly has written “a must-read for anyone who loves the sport” (Jonathan Fader, author of *Life as Sport*).

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Customer Reviews

Taking readers to a time when women had few choices to play competitive team sports, this title provides great insight into the history of this fast-paced game that evolved from a sport with two basic constants (large ball and underhand pitch) to a game with all the complexity of its parent sport, baseball. We meet a cast of players spanning decades in the pastime. Women such as Nina Korgan and Bertha Ragan Tickey and the nation as a whole found the game to be a much-needed distraction during World War II. Westly also details a shutout at a charity event when a legendary Boston Red Sox player could not get a hit off pitcher Joan Joyce. The evolution of the sport has been influenced by the important legislation of the Title IX amendment, which made schools provide the same opportunities to women as men, and as a result, softball programs began to grow owing to more funding. The author explores interesting details such as how the uniforms changed from the shiny satin short shorts to more modern and useful designs. Women athletes have always had to make difficult decisions regarding their sport and personal life, and decisions regarding marriage, children, and work outside of softball are all discussed with honesty and clarity. VERDICT A fascinating exploration of a sport that has helped women work through issues of sexism while playing the game they love. Nonfiction shelves of libraries in middle and high schools will benefit from including this book. —April Sanders, Spring Hill College, Mobile, AL --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"A fascinating look at the little-known story of fastpitch softball, and the women who dedicated themselves to it for the love of the game. From the old industrial leagues to today's international competitions, here is the rollicking, unlikely, and totally absorbing story of an original American sport." (Kevin Baker, author of *The Big Crowd*) "Every baseball player knows about Babe Ruth and Ted Williams, and every softball player should know about Bertha Tickey and Joan Joyce. I love reading about the history of our sport and about the legends of our game. The opportunities that I had playing this great sport are because of athletes like Bertha, Joan, Jeanne Contel, and others. Every softball player should read this book and learn about their sport. — (Laura Berg,

Olympic gold medalist in softball and head softball coach at Oregon State

University)“Fastpitch is hidden history at its most intriguing. Through the story of women’s softball, Erica Westly offers unexpected insights into business history, feminism, American social history, and the politics of sports. At the same time, she focuses on the competitive drive of women who wanted to excel on the playing field and the barriers that stood in their way. It’s a classic American tale.” (Jack El-Hai, author of *The Nazi and the Psychiatrist* and past president of the American Society of Journalists and Authors)“Erica Westly’s Fastpitch is a fun and entertaining read for people of all ages. Team sports were my first love, and Fastpitch immediately brought back wonderful memories of playing softball at Houghton Park in Long Beach, California, winning the 15& Under championships on my softball team, and then later working with legends of the sport to start a professional softball league. The history is well documented and the storytelling is completely enjoyable!” (Billie Jean King)“Fastpitch is A League of Their Own for the softball set. Erica Westly takes on the power plays and girl power moments on and off the field.” (Lily Koppel, bestselling author of *The Astronaut Wives Club*)“Fastpitch whips through the surprising history of softball and the remarkable women who played it. From rival leagues to cringeworthy news coverage to incredible athletic feats to the shifting politics of playing the sport, Westly gives readers a thorough tour of decades of figure eight wind ups, rise balls, and fast pitches.” (Rachel Swaby, author of *Headstrong: 52 Women Who Changed Science and the World*)“Fastpitch tells you the untold story of softball in a stunning and creative way. A must read for anyone who loves the sport!” (Jonathan Fader, author of *Life as Sport*)“Fill[s] a yawning gap in the literature. It’s especially strong at conveying how popular, at times, the game has been as a spectator sport. . . . The author draws fine profiles of some of the sport’s legendary figures . . . its great teams . . . and, especially, a cultural climate that has often been unsupportive of, if not antagonistic toward, those gifted, dedicated athletes.” (Booklist) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Hooked from the very beginning. Great book for true softball enthusiasts. I have been following my granddaughters softball career from when she was a young girl to now being a grown women playing for a Division One college team. Reading this book enlightened me to the full history of the game. Reading how the popularity of women’s FastPitch grew over many decades was a fascinating read. The ability for women to play for many years through the companies they worked for and the fan base these teams had was terrific. Modern day women softball players have very limited opportunities to continue to play after college. That is a shame for the sport. Today’s sport

needs to remain as an Olympic event past 2020. Thank you Erica Westly for bringing the history of the game to all of us rabid fans.

It is well written and researched book about the history of softball and some truly amazing about the sports humbling beginnings.

Well written and a very interesting read!

This was a gift for someone in the know, and it was very well received with pictures of several of the greats.

Very interesting story, if you are interested in women's fast pitch softball. The writing is serviceable.

Well-written, enjoyable historical account of softball and the women who played the game.

Daughter liked the book.

Lots of info.

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