

Legends Never Die
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I can already hear the crack of the bat as a baseball goes soaring over the outfield walls, the slap of a fastball hitting the catcher's mitt, and the roar of the crowd as the home team walks it off in the bottom of the 9th inning. This month on March 27th, America's most sacred game returns. For you Yankees fans, I am sure you're ready for your team's revenge tour after that harrowing Game 5 loss in the 2024 World Series. I'm sorry to have brought it up. This Atlanta Braves fan just wants his team to return healthy after a season of injury after injury. The beauty of baseball is that with each new season comes an infinite number of possibilities. Each team has 162 games to prove they are the best team in baseball. Will it be the Yankees, the Braves, an underdog team that gets hot late in the season, or will the Dodgers continue to dominate? No matter which team wins the World Series this year, it is always so much fun to watch some of the world's greatest athletes play ball.

As happens every year to many of the greats from baseball's past, we lost a few legends in 2024, including the "Say Hey Kid" Willie Mays, "Charlie Hustle" Pete Rose, and "Mr. Baseball" Bob Uecker. From Uecker's classic home run calls to Mays's famous catch, the impact these athletes had on the sport will be everlasting. To quote my favorite baseball movie, "Heroes get remembered, legends never die." These legends live on, not only in sports highlights and interviews, but also in words written on pages.

Keith O'Brien's *Charlie Hustle: The Rise and Fall of Pete Rose and the Last Glory Days of Baseball* (2024) is the perfect tribute for baseball's most notorious utility player. Through interviews with Rose, O'Brien details his life from childhood through the moment Rose's legendary career came crashing down. We all know the story and the many debates that have occurred since. O'Brien details everything in Rose's life from the comically absurd to the tragic. Unlike Mays and Uecker, Rose doesn't have a place in the Baseball Hall of Fame despite holding multiple hitting records that have yet to be surpassed.

James Hirsch's *Willie Mays: The Life, The Legend* (2011) details Mays' life from his days playing in the Negro Leagues to becoming a hero in New York to becoming a hero in San Francisco. Mays' life was truly legendary. This was a man who loved playing baseball and bringing joy to his fans. Serving as both a biography and a history lesson, Hirsch shows the "Say Hey Kid" navigating through the Civil Rights era as baseball's most prolific player. Critics have called it a must-read for any baseball fan.

Bob Uecker, despite not making it very far in the real Major Leagues, has a legacy that lives on through his illustrious career as the play-by-play announcer for the real life team Milwaukee Brewers' and for that fictional Cleveland ballclub of 90s cinema. His hilarious turn as Harry Doyle in the Major League films highlights his comedic chops that he brought so often to his day job with Milwaukee. I recommend looking up some of his career highlights including his final call in 2024's Wild Card Series.

This year to celebrate the baseball season and to remember the legacy of baseball's greatest players and announcers, we invite you to join us in our festivities by participating in the Spring Training Reading Challenge! You could win some really awesome prizes such as a baseball signed by Washington Nationals shortstop C.J. Abrams, bobbleheads, jerseys, a family pack of Syracuse Mets tickets, or, my favorite prize, a baseball signed by the entire Kirkland Town Library staff!