



The Best Team Money Can Buy

Molly Knight

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News-making, inside revelations about the tumultuous years when the Los Angeles Dodgers were remade from top to bottom—from the ownership of the team to management to the players on the field—becoming the most talked-about and most colorful team in baseball.

In 2012 the Los Angeles Dodgers were bought out of bankruptcy in the most expensive sale in sports history. Los Angeles icon Magic Johnson and his partners hoped to put together a team worthy of Hollywood: consistently entertaining. By most accounts they have succeeded, if not always in the way they might have imagined.

Now Molly Knight tells the story of the Dodgers' 2013 season with detailed, previously unreported revelations. She shares a behind-the-scenes account of the astonishing sale of the Dodgers, and why the team was not overpriced, as well as what the Dodgers actually knew in advance about rookie phenom and Cuban defector Yasiel Puig and how they and teammates handled him during his roller-coaster season. We learn how infighting on the team nearly derailed the 2013 season and nearly cost manager Don Mattingly his job—and how the team turned around the season in the most remarkable fifty-game stretch (42-8) of any team since World War II, before losing in the NLCS. Knight also reveals the facts behind the blockbuster trade with the Red Sox—and why that trade may yet turn out to be of greater benefit to the Dodgers. And, there's an intimate portrait of star pitcher Clayton Kershaw, probably the best pitcher in the game today, including details about the contract offer he turned down before accepting the richest contract any pitcher ever signed.

Exciting, surprising, and filled with juicy details, Molly Knight's account is a must-read for baseball fans and anyone who wants the inside story of today's Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Best Team Money Can Buy Details

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From Reader Review The Best Team Money Can Buy for online ebook

Jay says

I found this a wonderful audiobook revolving around the 2013 season for the LA Dodgers. I am used to reading books about teams and players of the more distant past, where the anecdotes have had a few decades to simmer and, likely, expand. I'm sure the anecdote aging process helps to weed out the weakest anecdotes and helps "leaven" the ones left. I was surprised to find this book covering just a few seasons back had the same kind of anecdotal feel of some recent books covering, say, seasons in the 60s. The anecdotes seemed to have that age and the dint of familiarity. That made it entertaining, similar to those other books covering more classic teams and times.

The book had extended stories about various players, coaches, and other baseball characters. As I listened to the section about Vin Scully, I noted the author was doing the same thing she says Scully does. It seems like the author took the Vin Scully approach, to always have a story about a player - all of them. I found that to be a good strategy here. I had never realized there were so many "characters" on the Dodgers. This is one of those books that make you kick yourself because it seems you missed something special when it was happening. How did I miss knowing about Kershaw and Greinke and Puig? (I have been a single-minded fan of the Cubs, which I always took as being a fan of history.)

Most of the recent baseball books I've read have been about the business guys and the owners. This book didn't specialize. I appreciated the author not focusing on players or the business side, but including both. There certainly are stories all over the place. My favorite business story was of the former Dodger owner desperately trying to hold onto the team through a messy divorce in order to capitalize on a new lucrative media contract.

And I enjoyed the female narration of this audiobook written by a woman author. I found it easy to listen to. I remember listening to Jane Leavy's "The Last Boy" where she narrated a few chapters and made the audiobook better with her voice. She writes herself into her books, and it can get awkward hearing a male narrator talking about the dress he is wearing. If I recall, something like that happened in the audiobook of Leavy's "Sandy Kofax". Here, the narrator felt like a reporter who understood both the game and the beyond-the-9-innings parts of the story, but who also wasn't buddies with the guys. In so many baseball books covering the recent past written in a journalistic voice the author is or is trying to become a buddy to the players. Not here. I appreciated the distinct voice in both narrator and author.

Pablo Romero says

The behind the curtain look at The Dodgers from the mid 2000's to 2017. A must read for any Dodger fan.

Matt Ely says

A serviceable and intermittently memorable entry in the "follow a team for a year" genre.

The bulk of the book follows the lead up to the 2013 Dodgers season and the season itself. There's a lot of interesting background on the players themselves. The author runs through the season itself at a brisk pace, occasionally dwelling on specific games but mostly dwelling in the injuries and personal challenges that define each player's experience.

And then the season ends. But look, there's still a quarter of the book left. Curiously, the author chooses to give an abbreviated overview of the team's almost equally successful 2014 season. It all just feels rushed though, like an overextended epilogue.

But then there **is** an epilogue, overviewing the maneuvers up to opening day of 2015. The information is fine, but it feels like a separate story. The book would've been stronger with more detail on 2013, then treating 2014-2015 as a true epilogue. It's fine and pleasant, but not too memorable.

victor harris says

Quite good timing as the baseball playoffs are ready to begin, and the Dodgers, who are featured in the book, are among the participants. This is a fun and informative read on the inner-workings of the baseball operations at the major league level. The Dodgers were reeling under the disastrous ownership of Frank McCourt and had to be rescued from bankruptcy by the Guggenheim group. Once the new ownership was installed, they spared no expense in restoring the Dodgers to a competitive level, in fact, they leapfrogged the Yankees as the biggest spenders in the game.

How they made the decisions on personnel and the perils of stockpiling free agents at the expense of developing the farm system is a central theme of the book. In some cases, players were rushed to the big league roster to fill holes, such as the controversial Yasiel Puig. Skill-wise he was ready to compete at the at level and paid dividends on the field but was grossly ill-prepared to conduct himself as a high profile professional. There is a great deal of commentary on the tribulations of manager Don Mattingly as he tries to get high salary players to commit to a team concept. It makes for a strong dose of tantrums and clashes in philosophy while also jeopardizing Mattingly's job.

There is plenty of good pitch-by-pitch action including extensive coverage of ace Clayton Kershaw and his salary negotiations and his game preparation. A good analysis and commentary on the modern game where a team may consist of twenty-five players who are essentially twenty-five mini-corporations.

Cindy McMahon says

I'm a die-hard Dodger fan and absolutely LOVE a window into the inner-workings and dynamics of my team, the coaches, and the front office. That being said, I thoroughly enjoyed this book about the Dodgers -- a deep look into their 2012-2015 seasons. It contained some locker-room surprises, some new insights about the front office, and confirmation about what I already suspected about several strained locker-room personal situations. If you're a fan of the Dodgers and MLB, and are the kind of person who reads almost every word written about your team, then you will enjoy this book. Unlike other baseball books, such as Money Ball, however, I don't think it will resonate with a wider, non-Dodger-fan audience.

And, for the record, I hope that EVENTUALLY Knight will need to add an epilogue that reports on the Dodgers' World Series Championship. Maybe 2017? #ThinkBlue

Kyle Magin says

"I've got something to say," he said. The room was quiet.

"Some of you guys have been doing the number two and not washing your hands. It's not good. I noticed it even happening earlier today. So if you guys could just be better about it, that would be great."

Greinke sat down. The team wasn't sure if he was serious. When they realized he was, they laughed.

--That's a quote from Zack Greinke in a team meeting before a big game against the Arizona Diamondbacks toward the end of the 2013 season. It appears in *The Best Team Money Can Buy*; is hilarious and representative of the depth of Molly Knight's work in this book. She plumbs the Dodgers between 2012-2014 for the best insights, anecdotes, gossip and inside baseball. She makes sometimes complex matters of gameplay and contracts understandable to the longtime baseball fan and newbie alike. This is the best book I've read so far this year and I can't give it high enough marks.

Jim says

The saving grace of *The Best Team Money Can Buy* is Molly Knight's ability to seamlessly weave from anecdote to anecdote within the context of a larger piece. This keeps the book moving at a quick, easy, and mostly enjoyable pace. There are a few interesting anecdotes in this book, such as Ned Coletti's "Burn the Ships" speech gaffe and the moment Kershaw received word that he finalized his mega contract extension. However, these are too few and far between.

Overall, this book doesn't really have a point. It reads more like a long recap of several seasons than a reporter really digging in to tell a larger story. There is no meat to this book, no big revelations or insights, but simply, yet skillfully, rehashing game logs and well known facts about the 2012-2014 seasons for the Dodgers. Knight doesn't really develop any real characters either. Kershaw is exactly what you expect him to be, and he is interesting to read about probably because Knight spent much time with him. Juan Uribe comes off as amusing. Kemp is painted as an overpaid diva. Puig is exactly how he has been portrayed in the media, but Knight softens him slightly with some sympathetic stories and reasons for his actions, probably because she needs to toe the line and not offend him knowing that she will have many more interactions with him in the future. And every other page it seems like she says something to the effect of, "And that day was the day Mattingly could have been fired, but it wasn't."

Knight is definitely a talented writer and story teller, but she clearly didn't have much to work with here at all. There was no story to tell other than the Dodgers were bought, they have a lot of money, and they want to win...but they haven't.

Harold Kasselmann says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book for several reasons-not the least of which was the easy style of her writing. It is smooth, clear, and without pretense. It is written so that even the most casual fan can understand and

appreciate the history of the Dodgers in recent years. The book follows the evolution of a large market Dodgers team with a relatively small budget to the biggest spender in all of MLB. You get to know the major figures in the transformation of ownership with the goal to end the 25 year drought of the team as a World Champion. That hasn't happened yet, and it's a shame that Ms. Knight didn't wait until the end of the 2015 season. I'd love to know the behind the scenes machinations that went on with the most recent Latos and Wood deals.

But you will enjoy the stories of what happened behind closed doors in the clubhouse and in management board rooms. I loved hearing about the various personalities and the immense difficulty a guy like Mattingly has with a team of several prima donnas and downright bling seekers. Still, it's refreshing to see that guys like Kershaw, Gonzo, and A.J. Ellis put the team first. Puig's behavior is outlandish and I don't care how young and relatively cheap he is, he is another Hanley Ramirez or Matt Kemp. If Andrew Friedman truly wants a team with chemistry, Puig must be dealt. But I digress. This is a wonderfully written insight into an MLB's locker room and the choices and risks that management can take in this day of ownership by the Guggenheim group. There are some funny anecdotes as well. In one team meeting during a the pennant chase in September Zach Greinke makes an hilarious statement (unintentional) that loosened up the club at a crucial time. I won't give it away because it's priceless. Very nice job Molly Knight. I enjoyed your book a great deal.

Fred Shaw says

"The Best Team Money Can Buy" by Molly Knight, is a revealing story of how big time money bought the best players available to rebuild the LA Dodgers. In 2011, the Dodgers were bankrupt due to mismanagement by the owner, and attendance was way down. Magic Johnson believed that LA deserved a baseball team that could draw fans like the Lakers and the Kings and began a search for investors. Magic found the right owner and backers under The Guggenheim group who bought the team and infused the franchise with cash. When the team was put together, their payroll was a mind boggling \$230M, give or take a million. The author is a long time writer for "ESPN the Magazine" and a lifetime LA Dodgers fan. It showed. She did a beautiful job telling the story by taking each player, front office personnel and owners and giving insightful backgrounds of each. She told where they came from, their strengths and weaknesses. Knight talked about team chemistry, who the hot dogs were and player attitudes. She seemed to be able to read the players like a book. No other team in baseball, except for the Yankees paid salaries like they did, and they filled the stands. The question she answered is can a team of millionaires, literally thrown together, be a team to win games, playoffs and championships. Read the book and get the answer. I loved this book and gave it 5 stars. Ms. Knight is awesome!

Karen Sindayen says

I am a Giants fan so naturally I hate the Dodgers, so it came as a surprise to me how much I liked this book. The story here is pretty compelling, the Dodgers went from bankruptcy to the most expensive sale in sports history. The cast of characters Molly Knight introduces us to, the glimpses of the culture of the team, and the sheer drama of rebuilding a team will keep anyone who enjoy sport for the narrative up nights tearing through this book. If you're a Dodgers fan (why?) you need to read this, if you love sport this is a really good read too.

Marcus Gilmer says

I think one of the best compliments one can pay to a writer is how much their writing inspires you to do the same thing and that's what Molly's book did: made me want to right now do my baseball book idea, no matter how hard it might be to accomplish.

It's a smart, deep look at a historic franchise at an absolutely remarkable time in the franchise's life. What helps is that Molly's tone walks a very fine line so well: an objective viewpoint on a franchise that only hints at an affection that gives the book resonance as opposed to undermining it. Knight's fandom of the team only makes her analysis seem that much more knowledgeable as opposed to reading like homerism (I doubt I could do the same for the Cubs because ANGER OVER THE HENDRY ERA).

Also manages to propel the reader forward despite having the knowledge of how the last two seasons finished.

It also made me care about the Dodgers, a team I have historically found fascinating but disliked greatly going back to 1988 World Series.

The only way this book could have been better is if they had Vin Scully do the audiobook format.

Brina says

The Best Team Money Can Buy by Molly Knight is the March 2017 group read in the baseball book club. Knight is a veteran writer of ESPN the Magazine for eight years and has covered her beloved Los Angeles teams during that time. In her dedication, Knight cites female reporters who preceded her in locker rooms, allowing this book to be possible. As a woman who has loved baseball for her entire life, I appreciate Knight's sentiments, making The Best Team Money Can Buy an appropriate selection for women's history month.

In 2009 two events occurred for the Los Angeles Dodgers to set up the events in this book. During the season, the team called up phenom teen prospect Clayton Kershaw, altering the course of their pitching staff. In the off season, the team was sold to billionaires Frank and Jamie McCourt, who then proceeded to run the Kershaw lead Dodgers into the ground. Knight centers her book on the 2013 post-McCourt, Kershaw- lead version of the team by chronicling their season in a series of player and game anecdotes. Detailing the ups and downs of the Dodgers drive to the playoffs, Knight provides an intimate look at what goes on in the lives of a contemporary baseball team both on and off of the field.

Owned by the Guggenheim Group and Los Angeles icon Magic Johnson, the 2013 Dodgers' payroll reached \$240 million and was billed as the Yankees' west. With aging superstars and veterans at every position, the Dodgers were more a collection of personalities in the clubhouse than a collective team striving for a championship. Knight focuses on their team leader Kershaw and his counterpart Zack Greinke, manager Don Mattingly, often vilified yet charismatic Yasiel Puig, and the other personalities in the locker room. She provides background information for each of the starting pitchers and position players and the circumstances that lead to the current management group to sign each of them. Knight allowed for me, a fan of a rival playoff team, to start caring for the Dodgers, and feeling sympathy toward their ace who has yet to get to the World Series.

Most current baseball books are either history or about the economical aspect of the game. Molly Knight follows a current team for an entire season and merges storytelling with the monetary side of the game. In the end, the best team \$270 million could buy lost out to the analytics and sabermetrician gurus who are the current rage in the baseball. Even though on paper the Dodgers have a collection of better players, their rival Giants have been more successful by basing their team on pitching, defense, and new age statistics. As a result, the Dodgers were forced to undergo a major overhaul in order to field a more competitive team.

Knight bridges the gap to the current statistician lead Dodgers in her final chapter. The reader is left hanging if the new Dodgers ever win a title, and will have to watch baseball games to find out. The Best Team Money Can Buy left me excited for the upcoming baseball season. A solid 3.75 stars, I look forward to reading more of Molly Knight's work in future magazines and baseball journals.

Matt Jimenez says

Worth reading for the Greinke anecdotes alone.

Carolyn says

The only thing I didn't like about this book was having to re-live the last two Dodgers' playoff series.

Ryan Hock says

The only way I can start this review is what a great book! There was not one story being told that was un-interesting. Molly Knight does a phenomenal job of showing that you can be a fan of a team and still cover the team with integrity.

The story about Zack Greinke getting up during a club house meeting and urging people to wash their hands after going to the bathroom is one of the genuine times I have laughed out loud while reading.

The only complaint I have is that the chapters sometimes jump around the narrative to a previous topic but who am I to criticize when I don't know how I would solve it?

I would recommend this book to everyone who is even slightly interested in baseball, sports, and an insider view of the inner workings of an organization.
