

What Sports Authors, Commentators, and Historians are Saying about 1921

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"1921 is an incredibly comprehensive look at a pivotal baseball season—for the sport, for New York, for an America that was finally distancing itself from war. Steve Steinberg and Lyle Spatz have created a mosaic of a year in baseball that is both illuminating and entertaining."

—Frank Deford

"Two decades into the twentieth century, much of baseball was still playing a turn-of-the-century game. 1921 represents one of the pivot points in baseball history, as the old style and its proponents, embodied by John McGraw and his Giants, began to give way to what would become the modern game, as embodied by Babe Ruth and his Yankees."

—Bob Costas

"This is Lyle Spatz's and Steve Steinberg's sweet spot - nobody reports on this era better than they do, and the cast of characters from 1921 remains fun, combative, and ready for baseball to become big business."

—Marty Appel

"Steinberg's and Spatz's 1921 is a finely detailed, meticulously researched and documented, and well-illustrated book that conveys a vivid feel for the times in baseball and American society in general. . . . I wasn't there, but Steinberg and Spatz often made me feel that I was."

—Professor Charles C. Alexander

"Why are the Yankees the defending World Series Champions? The answers are found in part in this well-written, fully documented, and sometimes gripping account of a previous pivotal year, coming on the heels of the 1919 Black Sox scandal. The Yankees had sound management and an eye for plucking talent from other teams. They also had the "vision thing," as made plain by their resolve to build what was then a mammoth stadium. With vivid descriptions of Giants manager John McGraw, both teams, the city, and the broader era, this delightful reading by two experts on early 20th-century baseball is highly recommended."

—Library Journal, Spring Baseball Roundup, 2/1/2010

"The coauthors capture the burgeoning rivalry and the first of several "subway series" between the Yankees and Giants (and later, the Brooklyn Dodgers) that would take place over the next thirty-five years. The 1921 World Series marked the first time for such an event. . . . There's nothing like being on the New York stage to build a reputation, and this was the first of seven post-season bonuses for Ruth.

"Spatz and Steinberg, both members of the Society for American Baseball Research, are most adept at obtaining and presenting their findings in a manner that is both educational (if one can use that word when talking about sports) and entertaining."

—Ron Kaplan, ForeWord Reviews, May/June 2010

Despite the significance of the 1921 season—the Yankees' first pennant, the first all-New York World Series, Ruth's 59 home runs and the dawn of the lively ball era—the year had never been documented by any significant release. Steinberg and Spatz recognized the void in baseball's library. Both had written about Yankee history and baseball in the 1920s and knew there was a story here to be told.

"For about two years at SABR conferences we were joking with each other 'you should really write a book about 1921,'" Steinberg says.

In the end they wound up collaborating on the project from opposite ends of the country, Spatz in Florida and Steinberg in Seattle. They each tackled half the writing, and through the process of editing each other's work melded a manuscript that reads in one consistent voice.

Countless hours spent poring over microfilm helped the authors see the players and teams as witnesses of the era did. Newspapers were still king back in 1921, with a dozen different dailies in New York alone. Spatz and Steinberg mined the work of legendary sportswriters like Damon Runyon and Grantland Rice to bring the season alive in great detail. They also tapped into several private photo collections and included more than 50 photographs.

While the scoreboard watching and standings updates get a little repetitive in spots, the regular-season recaps are heavily sprinkled with stories that flesh out most of the players on each roster. Those background tales are the strength of the book, though the World Series chapters are exceptional as well.

As Steinberg states on his web site, "Time travel is possible." In "1921," he and Spatz will take you back to see this pivotal season for yourself.

—James Bailey, Baseball America, Sept. 30, 2010

"1921: The Yankees, The Giants, & The Battle For Baseball Supremacy In New York by Lyle Spatz and Steve Steinberg is one of the best books I've read in quite some time. Spatz and Steinberg put a lot of time and effort into their 515-page recollection of the 1921 season and it shows. In fact, the last 115 pages are loaded with appendices of box scores and league leaders, followed by a treasure trove of source notes, followed by a bibliography that could choke a baseball historian (or the horse he rode in on). For a baseball geek like myself, the source notes and bibliography are often as valuable as the text within the body of the work itself.

"But it's within the first 400 pages where Spatz and Steinberg really shine. Having written two books myself, I know how difficult it is to be both informative and entertaining, but Spatz and Steinberg are both and by the end of the book I felt like I knew just about everything there was to know about New York circa 1921 and, of course, baseball in general.

"It's no surprise that Ruth and McGraw are the main characters in 1921, considering their gigantic egos and personalities, and their accomplishments. . . . There were many more characters that

make the book such an interesting read . . . What I especially enjoyed about this book, though, was the authors' liberal use of contemporary quotes and newspaper and magazine reports from the era. I always like to know what was being written or said by those who were in the thick of The Game as it was evolving and Spatz and Steinberg don't disappoint."

—Mike Lynch, seamheads.com, July 12, 2010

"Not only do the authors offer a stellar account of the 1921 season, they repeatedly use the words of the sportswriters of the day, some of which present the social issues that help define the era. Sports fans followed the 1921 season from the pens of some of the best writers of the twentieth century—Grantland Rice, Heywood Broun, Damon Runyon, Westbrook Pegler and Ring Lardner to name just a few. . . . The result is a feeling akin to being an actual observer of the season."

—Duncan R. Jamieson, Arete, Sport Literature Association, June 15, 2010

"Lyle Spatz and Steve Steinberg portray a hinge moment in baseball history, where the early game gave way to the modern era. Hitting replaced pitching as the main attraction. The home run supplanted John McGraw's 'inside baseball.' The 1921 World Series was a showdown between the future, Babe Ruth's Yankees, and the past, John McGraw's Giants. . . . Babe Ruth (1895-1948) naturally occupies a central role in the narrative . . . He was the first sports star to transcend sports. He was the face of the transition from the old game to the new.

1921 stands on its own as the definitive work on the crucial 1921 season. . . . 1921 is a superior study of a particularly important baseball season and will be useful in sports history and popular culture courses.

—Robert W. Smith, *Journal of Popular Culture*, December 2010, Vol. 43, Issue 6

"In this book, veteran authors Lyle Spatz and Steve Steinberg argue convincingly that the 1921 baseball season was a turning point in the sport's history. . . . Spatz and Steinberg have successfully captured the atmosphere of the 1921 season. Often they take the reader into the Giants' clubhouse where the dictatorial John McGraw bullied and badgered his players to on-the-field excellence with tirades about their lackadaisical performance. . . . The reader feels the enormous pressure the frail and sickly Miller Huggins endured from players who revolted against him, an owner who did not want him, fans who jeered him, and sportswriters who constantly criticized his managing ability and excoriated him for a lack of leadership.

"Spatz and Steinberg also evoke the flavor of 1921 with more than fifty photographs and numerous quotations from the leading sportswriters of the time. . . . have refashioned this well-known data into a refreshing and rich mosaic with new and different perspectives and interpretations. With a vigorous analysis and a superb narrative, this well-written book vividly recreates the tension, drama, and excitement of the 1921 baseball season. Spatz and Steinberg's 1921 is an outstanding monograph. It enlightens and entertains, and may be read with enormous pleasure."

Kenneth R. Fenster, *NINE, A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring 2011

"Aside from having to lean mostly on the sports reporting for that time, the authors do their own tireless research with the help of many experts, and that shows, if only in the volume of material and meticulous notations. As many projects like this that want to distinguish themselves from just another throw-away history book, there's a full page of notes just on the photography used in the book, 50 pictures that have not been seen in years in some cases."

—Tom Hoffarth, Los Angeles Daily News, 4/8/2010

"This is a book that carefully and cogently tells the narrative of the United States and big league baseball on the cusp of change. It's Babe Ruth vs. John J. McGraw and their respective teams and a very interesting season and much more."

—Dr. Harvey Frommer on Sports, 4/4/2010

"[1921] is a handsomely presented, top-shelf physical product, with no stinting on any of the extras: wonderful photos aplenty, richly detailed endnotes and . . . the luxury of appendices providing box scores and statistical tables. . . . No detail has been overlooked, and no small effort spared. These accoutrements surround an equally major league quality of content. [1921] plainly aspires to be the premier source on its chosen subject . . . abundantly succeeds in that endeavor and . . . does a masterful job of elegantly weaving relevant quotations from other sources into the narrative."

"Nineteen-twenty-one was certainly among the most pivotal seasons in major league history, as the sport endeavored to re-establish credibility in the wake of the shattering Black Sox scandal revelations . . . while offering a brand-new high-scoring style, centered around the exploits of the most amazing sports superstar yet seen, and it did so with that superstar's New York Yankees achieving their very first pennant, and then facing off in the World Series against the long-dominant cross-town New York Giants. So it's easy to see why Spatz and Steinberg decided to focus on this year and this city."

—Steve Treder, Hardball Times, June 1, 2010

"Though a bit heavy on descriptive summaries of individual games during the 1921 baseball season, this carefully researched book is a good example of what baseball can teach about US culture and history. Specialists on early -20th century baseball, Spatz and Steinberg focus on the Yankees and Giants in their first intra-city World Series competition to reveal changes in post-WWI baseball and society. They emphasize how the excitement associated with Babe Ruth and his mounting home-run feats transformed the game, regenerated baseball's popularity, and closely paralleled the growing opulence, celebrity, and unconventionality of life in New York during the 1920s. . . . An informative, enjoyable book for the baseball fan, but not a requisite academic resource."

—B. Tavakolian, Science & Technology, August 2010, Vol. 47, No. 11

"Here's a piece of history that has a fine narrative energy, a star-studded cast of characters including Babe Ruth, and some memorable quotes from the likes of sports-writing immortals such as Damon Runyon, Grantland Rice, and Heywood Broun. . . . It includes over 50 photographs to bring that historic season alive."

—Robert Birnbaum, *The Morning News*, June 9, 2010

“The authors lead us through the season and the tight races that each team had, introduce us to the players, and, then, in the last third of the book, report on the eight-game World Series in which Ruth hit only one home run. It was a dramatic series, and the authors have done good research and have written an entertaining book.”

—Charles Stephen, *Lincoln Journal-Star*, 4/11/2010

“In many ways, 1921 was a watershed year in major league history. . . . Lyle Spatz and Steve Steinberg skillfully weave commentary on these issues into a stirring account of the 1921 season. The end result is a work both informative and a pleasure to read, a deserving winner of the Seymour Medal for outstanding baseball history. . . . The season that presaged this changing of the baseball guard has been vividly recaptured by Lyle Spatz and Steve Steinberg. Their 1921 is a well crafted and enjoyable read that is highly recommended.”

---Bill Lamb, *SABR Black Sox Research Committee Newsletter*. Vol. 3. No. 1, June 2011