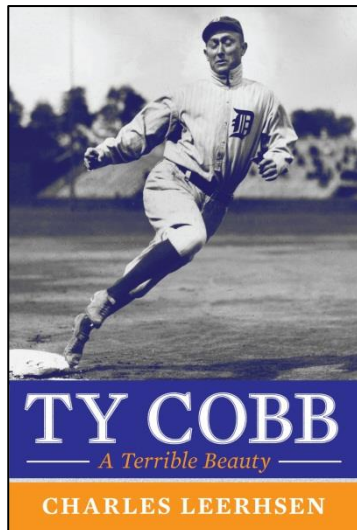




**** WINNER OF THE 2015 SABR Baseball Research Award ****



TY COBB

A Terrible Beauty

BY CHARLES LEERHSEN

SIMON & SCHUSTER | ON SALE MAY 12, 2015 | \$27.50

“Now Cobb has an advocate, one who’s actually read all the old newspaper clippings (some of which flatly contradict common ‘knowledge’), visited the terrain, and interviewed as many relevant people as he could find. Cobb was indeed a bruised peach but, as [Leerhsen] shows convincingly, not a thoroughly rotten one.”

—*Kirkus Reviews (starred review)*

“Leerhsen’s magisterial reexamination presents a detailed view of Cobb culled from actual research rather than hearsay... This is an important work for baseball and American historians.”

—*Library Journal*

“Leerhsen wraps his penetrating profile of Cobb in gripping play-by-play rundowns and a colorful portrait of the anarchic ‘dead-ball’ era, when players played drunk and fans chased offending umpires from the field. This is a stimulating evocation of baseball’s rambunctious youth and the man who epitomized it.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Surprise! It wasn’t the Georgia Peach who was prejudiced (especially), it was us, against him. Leerhsen’s feat of research brings the real Cobb home at last.”

—*Roy Blount Jr., author of Alphabet Juice*

“No matter what you think of Ty Cobb, you’ll want to read Charles Leerhsen’s fascinating biography, as he dispels rumors, exposes frauds, and challenges everything you thought you knew about the most controversial individual ever to play the great game of baseball.”

—*Kevin Baker, Sometimes You See It Coming*

“Superbly reported, wonderfully written and often quite funny, Charles Leerhsen’s *Ty Cobb: A Terrible Beauty*, is a highly enlightening and highly enjoyable book. A new Cobb emerges—many-faced and passionate—in this important, original view of a figure well installed in baseball lore. This is a first-rate book by a first-rate writer.”

—*Kostya Kennedy, author of 56: Joe DiMaggio and the Last Magic Number in Sports*

Ty Cobb: greatest hitter in the history of baseball or psychopathic racist who sharpened his spikes to injure opposing players? In **TY COBB: A Terrible Beauty (Simon & Schuster; Hardcover; \$27.50; May 12, 2015)** former executive editor of *Sports Illustrated* Charles Leerhsen argues that the truths we think we know about Cobb are inaccurate and that these dark tales were spun after his death by an unreliable collaborator and biographer. This revelatory new book explores the myths behind one of the game’s most controversial characters.

When Cobb retired in 1928, after twenty-one years with the Detroit Tigers and two with the Philadelphia Athletics, he held more than ninety records. When the Hall of Fame began in 1936, he was the first player voted in. But Cobb was also one of the game's most contentious characters. He got in a lot of fights, on and off the field, and was often accused of being overly aggressive. As Leerhsen writes, "Cobb often felt ashamed of his angry outbursts; he was, after all, a true *personage* who played poker and sipped bootleg whiskey with the president of the United States, Warren G. Harding, at a private all-men's club outside Augusta, not to mention a Southern gentleman." After his death in 1961, however, something strange happened: his reputation morphed into that of a monster—a virulent racist who also hated children and women, and was in turn hated by his peers. How did this happen? Who is the real Ty Cobb?

"Cobb—as surprising as it may sound to those who base their opinion of him on the ever-darkening myths that float through today's popular culture—was not always the crankiest person in the room," Leerhsen writes. "The current-day conventional wisdom about him as encapsulated in the line mouthed by the Shoeless Joe Jackson character in the movie *Field of Dreams*—'No one liked that son of a bitch'—simply isn't accurate."

Setting the record straight, Charles Leerhsen pushed aside the myths, traveled to Georgia and Detroit, and re-traced Cobb's journey, from the shy son of a professor and state senator who was progressive on race for his time, to America's first true sports celebrity. Leerhsen examined contemporary newspaper stories, interviews with teammates and opponents, and Cobb's own letters to sort out truth from fiction. In the process, he tells of a life overflowing with incident and a man who cut his own path through his times—a man we thought we knew but really didn't.

More than a book about baseball, **TY COBB** explores the character assassination of one of the game's greatest legends and attempts to remedy the ways in which the media perverted this star player's reputation after his death. Cobb was not a gifted athlete but a man who worked hard to develop an unusual hitting style and to outsmart his opponents. He succeeded beyond anyone's expectations save his own. And now he finally has the biography that he deserves.

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About the Author

Charles Leerhsen is the author of *Blood and Smoke: A True Tale of Mystery, Mayhem, and the Birth of the Indy 500* and *Crazy Good: The True Story of Dan Patch, the Most Famous Horse in America*. He has written for *Sports Illustrated*, *Esquire*, *Rolling Stone*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and other publications. He has been an editor at *SI*, *People*, and *US Weekly*. He has co-written books with Chuck Yeager and Brandon Tartikoff and teaches writing at the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism. Follow him on Twitter at @CharlesLeerhsen.

About the Book

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By Charles Leerhsen

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A conversation with Charles Leerhsen, author of
TY COBB: A Terrible Beauty

Q: What inspired you to write this book? Why does Ty Cobb deserve a new biography?

CL: I wrote **TY COBB: A Terrible Beauty** because there had not been a major biography of Cobb in more than 20 years, and the last one, the work of Al Stump, had been completely discredited.

Q: What does the subtitle, *A Terrible Beauty*, refer to?

CL: The phrase comes from the poem “Easter, 1916” by William Butler Yeats. It refers to Cobb’s desire to always be “a mental hazard” for his opponents.

Q: What do you think is the biggest misconception about Ty Cobb, the man? The player?

CL: Probably that he was universally disliked. In the movie *Field of Dreams* the Shoeless Joe Jackson character says, “No one liked that son of a bitch,” but that simply isn’t accurate. Many (including Jackson, Tris Speaker, Walter Johnson and the writer Ring Lardner) liked him, a lot.

The biggest misconception about Cobb as a player was that he purposely injured people with his sharpened spikes. Sportswriters and opposing fans liked to say this, but the players themselves knew better. “Cobb is a game square fellow who never cut a man with his spikes intentionally in his life, and anyone who gets by with his spikes knows it,” said his teammate Germany Schaefer—and many have echoed that sentiment.

Q: What was the most surprising thing you learned about Ty Cobb during your research for the book?

CL: That he was such an exciting ballplayer. His lifetime batting average, .366, is still the highest of all time, but that isn’t half his story. He prided himself on being a constant worry for the opposition, a disruptive force. He once stole second, third and home on three consecutive pitches. On another occasion he turned a tap back to the pitcher into an inside the park home run. “Watching Ty Cobb draw a walk is more exciting than watching Babe Ruth hit a home run, someone once said.”

Q: What was Cobb’s relationship like with Babe Ruth and other Deadball stars?

CL: Cobb was friends with Tris Speaker, Walter Johnson, Moe Berg, Honus Wagner and many other of his contemporaries. He had a more complicated relationship with Babe Ruth, who represented the new home run era in baseball, and whom he at first resented. On two occasions the superstars almost came to blows on the field, but eventually they bonded and became drinking buddies.

Q: Cobb was miscast as a virulent racist. What was his relationship like with the Negro Leagues?

CL: People make assumptions about Cobb’s attitude about race because he was born in Georgia in 1886. Also a biography that came out in the 1980s misidentified as black several white men with whom Cobb famously fought, fueling the myth about his bigotry. The truth is he descended from a long line of abolitionists, and he said nothing at all on the record about race until he came out in support of integrated baseball, telling *The Sporting News* in 1953, “The Negro should be accepted into baseball, not grudgingly but wholeheartedly. The Negro has the right to compete in sports and who’s to say they have not?” By that time, Cobb had attended many Negro League games, sometimes throwing out the first ball and sitting with the players in the dugout.

Q: If you could ask Al Stump one question, what would it be and why? Why were people so quick to believe Stump’s account of Cobb?

CL: I don’t have any questions for Al Stump. I know why he did what he did—because making up quotes and information is easier than doing research and reporting, and because sensationalism sells books. Stump was not a good writer, but he did understand that people thrill to the story of a monster running amok.

Q: What do you hope readers will take away from the book?

CL: I’d like people to see that Ty Cobb was a real human being, and an exceptional one at that. I’d like them to see that the man is more interesting than that myth.