



Rob Fink, *Playing in Shadows: Texas and Negro League Baseball*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010. 165 pp. Hardcover \$29.95.

Rob Fink's *Playing in Shadows: Texas and Negro League Baseball* is a focused look at the rise of baseball's popularity among African Americans in Texas during the first half of the twentieth century. Despite the difficulty of piecing together a past with limited available records and news coverage, Fink helps readers better understand the history and role local baseball leagues played in Texas communities. While early rosters are long lost to history, the book highlights important figures that helped shape baseball, including Andrew "Rube" Foster, "Smokey" Joe Williams, and Ernie Banks. While the stories recounted here relate only to their baseball histories, the text does give some insight into their personalities.

Fink chronicles various attempts at organizing semi-professional and professional leagues across Texas and with teams from Oklahoma and Louisiana. Unfortunately, each attempt succumbs to financial strain and outside pressures such as the Great Depression, World War II, and the integration of the professional leagues. While the influence of the leagues on the game as a whole is discussed, Fink emphasizes what made the leagues unique. The book takes its title and theme from its description of "Shadow Ball" exhibition games in which the players mime a game so perfectly with such athleticism it appears as if a ball is in play when in fact it is not.

This is a useful book for understanding an aspect of the African American experience in early twentieth century Texas, as well as a valuable addition to any collection on baseball history. It contains photographs, maps, and a roster of Negro League Veterans who played in Texas and were inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

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