

BOOK REVIEW

The Baseball Bat: From Trees to the Major Leagues, 19th Century to Today by Stephen Bratkovich, published by McFarland Press. Available at <https://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/the-baseball-bat/> and <https://www.amazon.com/Major-League-Baseball-Century-TodayThe/dp/1476679282>. Proceeds donated to charity.

FROM THE BOOK'S BACK COVER

Why do modern-day sluggers like Aaron Judge prefer maple bats over the traditional ash bats swung by Ted Williams and others? Why did the surge of broken bats in the early 21st century create a crisis for Major League Baseball and what steps were taken to address the issue? Are different woods being considered by players and manufacturers? Do insects, disease, and climate change pose a problem long-term? These and other questions are answered in this exhaustive examination of the history and future.

REVIEW BY JONATHAN STRANDJORD

If you love baseball, this new book by Stephen Bratkovich is sure to increase your enjoyment of the game. And even if you are not a fan, there is plenty to enjoy here for anyone who loves trees, American history, or woodworking.

Steve is a lifelong baseball fan, a student of the history of the game, an experienced forester, and a wood scientist who knows why certain parts of certain trees are best for different uses. He also has a gift for sharing information with a regular folk like me. This book is written in a clear, memorable style that includes a generous number

of engaging stories. One of my favorites is his account of how the Louisville Slugger bat came to be. I was surprised to learn that I (and millions of others) have had the joy of swinging those bats because a 17-yr-old lathe operator skipped work 1 day back in 1884, so he could go watch his favorite team play. A player broke his bat—and the rest is history.

There are so many other great stories here about past and present famous ballplayers and their insights, obsessions, quirks, and superstitions about bats. Steve also provides details and photos of how the shape, size, and weight of bats have changed over the last century and a half. And he shares how conservationists and foresters have followed in the footsteps of Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, identifying threats to our trees and taking steps to see that Americans continue to enjoy the benefits of forests (including baseball bats) for generations to come.

REVIEW BY SHELBY JONES, RETIRED MISSOURI STATE FOREST PRODUCTS SPECIALIST

This is probably the most thoroughly researched and documented book I have ever read. It will surely be used by future baseball authors and students of the game to pursue historical details. Dr. Steve Bratkovich uses his scientific background regarding forestry and wood products to acquaint the reader with the detailed history of an essential component of "America's pastime." In the process, you will learn a lot about the sport of baseball and individuals who have contributed to its popularity.