



The Best They Could Be: How the Cleveland Indians became the Kings of Baseball, 1916-1920

Scott Longert

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Since the founding of professional baseball, few teams have risen above years of mediocrity only to see their fortunes interrupted by war and tragedy. Fewer still have then rallied to win the World Series. In the early twentieth century, the Cleveland Indians brought the world championship to their city of passionate fans in a spectacular style that has yet to be replicated. *The Best They Could Be* recaps the compelling story of the ballplayers and team owner who resurrected this proud but struggling franchise. Although the Cleveland ball club had been an active part of professional baseball from the late 1860s and a charter member of the American League, by 1915 the team was on the brink of collapse. Into this dejected atmosphere came new owner James C. Dunn, who, lacking baseball experience, nonetheless had the business savvy to bring his club to the forefront, acquiring superstar center fielder Tris Speaker, Larry Gardner, and other great players. But during the rise of the franchise, the outbreak of World War I interrupted baseball. Then, in 1920, as the Indians were leading the pennant race, shortstop Ray Chapman died after a pitch fractured his skull. The outpouring of sorrow from teammates and fans alike made the Indians more determined than ever to fight their way to the top. Scott H. Longert's entertaining and poignant narrative traces the rise, fall, and rebirth of one of America's most beloved baseball teams.

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