



Forging Genius: The Making of Casey Stengel

Steven Goldman

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When Casey Stengel was named the manager of the Yankees in 1949, baseball wags were stunned. What had Stengel ever done? His work managing the Brooklyn Dodgers and Boston Braves had been long on personality and remarkably short on success. They thought the Yankees would never be able to compete with the Red Sox or Indians with that broken-down old man in charge. At the All-Star break, the Yankees looked like a banged-up bunch of also-rans, not like a team about to embark on five straight championships. Yet Stengel seemed confident of success. As Steven Goldman explains, people had forgotten that Casey knew how to come back.

How did he know? Goldman refutes claims that anyone could have won with the Yankees. Casey knew how to win because of the years of struggle and ignominy, because he'd learned how to manage by running two of the game's worst sad-sack franchises, because he had learned through failure. To understand Stengel's formative years, Goldman retraces Stengel's baseball education in playing for the great John McGraw, from whom he also learned that success permits no room for nostalgia. Goldman follows Stengel through his years with the Dodgers and Braves, his return to the minors, a spat with Bill Veeck, and his success as a businessman away from the diamond.

Forging Genius gives insights to Stengel's irrepressible love of the game and his incorrigible desire to entertain. As Casey put it, "Because I can make people laugh, some of them think I'm a damn fool." His humor camouflaged a relentless hunger for success, glory, and the respectability he desperately sought. Goldman gives readers an unprecedented vision of one man's lifelong pursuit of genius on the baseball diamond.

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