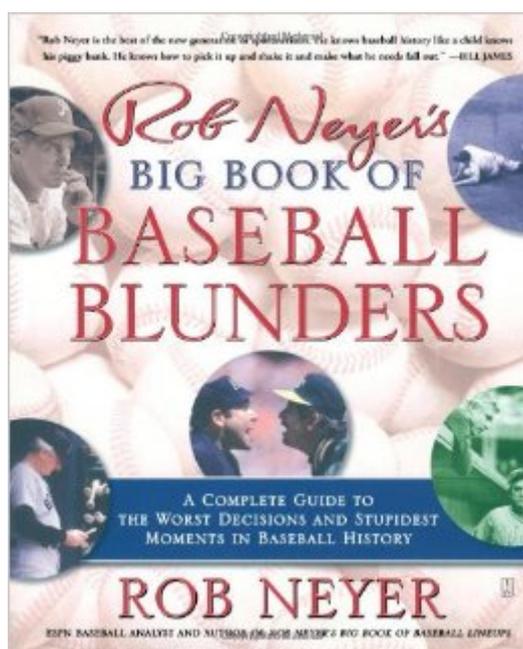


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# Rob Neyer's Big Book Of Baseball Blunders: A Complete Guide To The Worst Decisions And Stupidest Moments In Baseball History



## Synopsis

**BLOOPER: BALL SQUIRTS THROUGH BILLY BUCKNER'S LEGS. BLUNDER: BILLY BUCKNER'S MANAGER LEFT HIM IN THE GAME.** Baseball bloopers are fun; they're funny, even. A pitcher slips on the mound and his pitch sails over the backstop. An infielder camps under a pop-up...and the ball lands ten feet away. An outfielder tosses a souvenir to a fan...but that was just the second out, and runners are circling the bases (and laughing). Without these moments, the highlight reels wouldn't be nearly as entertaining. Baseball blunders, however, can be tragic, and they will leave diehard fans asking why...why...why? Rob Neyer's *Big Book of Baseball Blunders* does its best to answer all those whys, exploring the worst decisions and stupidest moments of managers, general managers, owners, and even commissioners. As he did in his *Big Book of Baseball Lineups*, Rob Neyer provides readers with a fascinating examination of baseball's rich history, this time through the lens of the game's sometimes hilarious, often depressing, and always perplexing blunders. • Which ill-fated move cost the Chicago White Sox a great hitter and the 1919 World Series? • What was Babe Ruth thinking when he became the first (and still the only) player to end a World Series by getting caught trying to steal? • Did playing one-armed Pete Gray in 1945 cost the Browns a pennant? • How did winning a coin toss lead to the Dodgers losing the National League pennant on Bobby Thomson's "Shot Heard 'round the World"? • How damaging was the Frank Robinson-for-Milt Pappas deal, really? • Which of Red Sox manager Don Zimmer's mistakes in 1978 was the worst? • Which Yankees trade was even worse than swapping Jay Buhner for Ken Phelps? • What non-move cost Buck Showalter a job and gave Joe Torre the opportunity of a lifetime? • Game 7, 2003 ALCS: Pedro winds up to throw his 123rd pitch...what were you thinking? These are just a few of the legendary (and not-so-legendary) blunders that Neyer analyzes, always with an eye on what happened, why it happened, and how it changed the fickle course of history. And in separate chapters, Neyer also reviews some of the game's worst trades and draft picks and closely examines all the teams that fell just short of first place. Another in the series of Neyer's *Big Books of baseball history*, *Baseball Blunders* should win a place in every devoted fan's library.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Given the title, one might think that this is a book where Neyer spends 250 pages criticizing boneheaded decisions, but it's not. Instead, Neyer takes the time to examine about 50 blunders, taking the time to analyze each decision instead of simply pointing fingers at those making the blunder. While the first blunder examined took place in 1917, this book is heavily weighted towards modern times. Only 15 take place before 1960, and almost half take place after 1970. Each incident is given about 4-7 pages of analysis, and many of the entries include side stories that Neyer includes in the margins. Many of the entries will be very familiar to baseball fans - the selling of the Babe, the trade of Roger Maris, and the Bagwell-Andersen deal. There are, however, many that aren't nearly so famous, like Tom Runnels' decision to shift Tim Wallach across the diamond, or the Pirates' benching of Kiki Cuyler during a stretch run. It's a good mix that Neyer has created. Along with the regular entries, there are several "interludes" to break things up, including a couple about bad trades, and a funny entry about managers who never should have been in that position. Neyer is, in my opinion, the most improved baseball writer over the past several years. He's always been a brilliant baseball mind, but now he seems to have found his touch as a writer. This book is enjoyable not only because of the cases he chooses to discuss, but also because of his style. There's plenty of analysis, some good humor, and little in the way of ridiculing or finger-pointing, which would have been easy to do in such a book. An excellent book, and it's tough to beat the price. I'd recommend it for any baseball fan, even if not everything in here is new to you.

This one is very well written baseball book about some very famous and some not so famous decisions made throughout the history of the game. As a baseball fan, and I think you would have to be one too to really enjoy this book, I was looking forward to read about recent blunders, things that I had witnessed in my lifetime or be familiar with, so when I saw that it started with the 1917 Chi Sox swapping firstbasemen I thought I wouldn't enjoy it that much. Well, wrong I was, that first story set

the tone of the book and from then on I just couldn't put it down until I finished it. One of the stories that touched me more was the one about the Oakland A's pitching staff of the early 80's. As an A's fan I clearly remember the Billy Ball era, the A's had a great starting rotation (Norris, Keough, Langford, Kingman, McCatty) and Billy Martin had them pitched some 96 complete games in 1980, after the strike shortened season of 1981 these 5 guys just disappeared from baseball, all of them plagued with arm injuries, undoubtedly they had paid the price for all those complete games for an Oakland team that finished 83-79 that year, in a far second place from Kansas City. This is a great book from Rob Neyer, you won't regret to get it

This is a pretty fast, enjoyable read. Nothing too earthbreaking and you will be familiar with lots of the more recent entries, but it's still a lot of fun. While you may quibble with some of the chapters (was the Cubs hiring Dusty Baker REALLY one of the biggest blunders in baseball history?), it's well researched and insightful. I especially liked the interludes about bad drafts (all the teams that passed on Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens for "sure things" you've never heard of) and the chapters on unqualified managers (the chapter on Maury Wills bumbling with the Mariners is hilarious). A lot of the chapters have a theme of "no one could have known how good "X" would turn out to be," which gets a little repetitive, but overall this is a fine addition to your baseball library.

If you've been a baseball fan for 20 or more years, many of the blunders will sound very familiar, no new ground broken. On the other hand, if you're a rookie, you may find it very enjoyable. I appreciated Neyer's placing certain transactions in their proper context, especially the Brock trade, for which the Cubs have never been forgiven. Neyer, however, sorts out all the facts and the trade, at that time, was about equal. Later on, with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, the media blew it way out of proportion while conveniently ignoring the proper context of this deal. The use of win shares in analyzing selected transaction adds a new insight into the long range evaluation of whom got the edge in trades. A bunch of blunders are given real short treatment and one wonders why the author even bothered to include them. There were two baseball history errors in this book, which are inexcusable, especially by such an authority as Neyer. Curt Simmons is described as a right-handed starter while Dale Murray is listed as a left-handed reliever...now that's careless research. In brief, if you a veteran baseball fan, you could pass on this one; however, if you value win shares, you may enjoy its application to certain trades.

On the one hand, you have the Baseball Encyclopedia, which is an argument ender. On the other

hand, you have, say, one of the Bill James Abstracts, which begins "let's start the arguin'". This book is in between. The best parts are when Neyer is revisiting well-known "bad trades" of all time, such as Jay Buhner for Ken Phelps, giving them context and often reaching conclusions different from the conventional wisdom. The worst parts are when he focuses on a single game or a single player as being the reason a particular team did or did not succeed; it's simply unconvincing. Yes, that .220 light-hitting shortstop might have used up a lot of outs, but the guy on the bench may or may not have had a hangnail and couldn't play; Neyer doesn't do enough research to tell us. Also fun are the lists of bad managers. I must admit when I read them, I wondered out loud, "where is Maury Wills?" only to discover he had his own chapter (someone should write a whole book about it). And the list of bad draft choices (though the Phillies picking J.D. Drew and passing on Troy Glaus might have had something to do with Scott Rolen, a point Neyer misses) is also fun; the basic idea is that no one in baseball knows anything. The highlight, to me at least, is the discussion of Spike Eckert, and all the silly decisions that went into his being appointed and his tenure as commissioner. We do have to give the Lords of Baseball this, though: they did get rid of him.

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