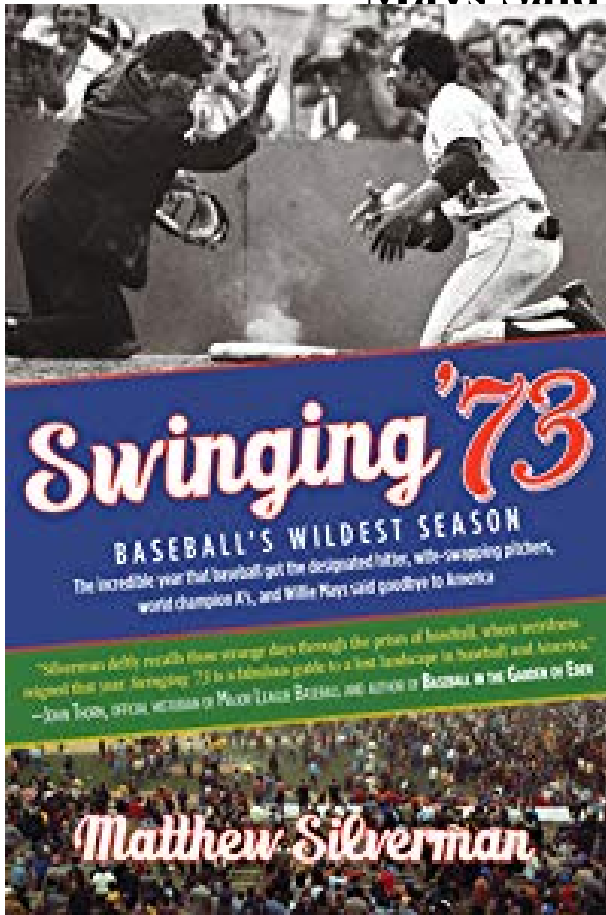


Swinging '73: The Incredible Year Baseball Got the Designated Hitter, Wife-Swapping Pitchers, and Willie Mays Said Goodbye to America



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Interest and attendance were dropping, and football was ascending. Stuck in a rut, baseball was dying. Then Steinbrenner bought the Yankees, a second-division club with wife-swapping pitchers, leaving the House That Ruth Built not with a slam but a simper. He vowed not to interfere—before soon changing his mind. Across town, Tom Seaver led the Mets' stellar pitching line-up, and iconic outfielder Willie Mays was preparing to say goodbye. For months, the Mets, under Yogi Berra, couldn't get it right. Meanwhile, the A's were breaking a ban on facial hair while maverick owner Charlie Finley was fighting to keep them underpaid. But beneath the muttonchops and mayhem, lay another world. Elvis commanded a larger audience than the Apollo landings. A Dodge Dart cost \$2,800, gas was a quarter per gallon.

A fiscal crisis loomed; Vietnam had ended, the vice president resigned, and Watergate had taken over. It was one of the most exciting years in the game's history, the first with the designated hitter and the last before arbitration and free agency. The two World Series opponents went head-to-head above the baby steps of a dynasty that soon dwarfed both league champions. It was a turbulent time for the country and the game,

neither of which would ever be the same again.