



# Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games

*A. Bartlett Giamatti , Jon Meacham*

Download now

Read Online ➔

# Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games

A. Bartlett Giamatti , Jon Meacham

**Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games** A. Bartlett Giamatti , Jon Meacham

A philosophical musing on sports and play, this wholly inspiring and utterly charming reissue of Bart Giamatti's long-out-of-print final book, *Take Time for Paradise*, puts baseball in the context of American life and leisure. Giamatti begins with the conviction that our use of free time tells us something about who we are. He explores the concepts of leisure, American-style. And in baseball, the quintessential American game, he finds its ultimate expression. "Sports and leisure are our reiteration of the hunger for paradise- for freedom untrammelled." Filled with pithy truths about such resonant subjects as ritual, self-betterment, faith, home, and community, *Take Time for Paradise* gives us much more than just baseball. These final, eloquent thoughts of "the philosopher king of baseball" (Seattle Weekly) are a joyful, reverent celebration of the sport Giamatti loved and the country that created it.

## Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games Details

Date : Published March 15th 2011 by Bloomsbury USA (first published 1989)

ISBN : 9781608192243

Author : A. Bartlett Giamatti , Jon Meacham

Format : Hardcover 128 pages

Genre : Sports, Baseball, Sports and Games, Nonfiction, History

 [Download Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games** A. Bartlett Giamatti , Jon Meacham

---

# From Reader Review Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games for online ebook

## Joe says

In this magnificent gem of a book, Bart Giamatti argues for a classical view of sports and leisure generally. Drawing heavily from Aristotle and Shakespeare, he argues that the mark of truly free people is in how they use their freedom. Many areas of our public and private lives have some element of "work" to them, some compulsion to produce in a particular way, but in our games, we live by the rules which we choose for no particular reason at all. When we play a game, we choose to create the game's world for a while, and even when we participate as spectators, we hope to see a spectacular performance within that created world. This is a philosophical, abstract section; beautiful but (as other reviewers have noted) deceptively deep in places.

In the second section of the book, Giamatti considers the role of sports in cities, pointing out the social benefits and tensions in our arenas. This section is somewhat more practical and less theoretical. With twenty-some additional years, we can see Giamatti's predictions coming through in some places, such as his concern over athlete's salaries and the cost of the sport becoming a barrier between the athlete and the fans. In others, such as the issues around steroids and cheating, we can only wonder how he might have handled the 90s or 2000s. As the first section makes you think about theories, the second section makes you consider our current world of leisure.

The third section is a smart man's paean to his beloved sport of baseball. The baseball section of your local library or bookstore is chock-full of this kind of writing, and Giamatti's is as good as anyone else's I've read. That said, it's not particularly better, nor does it reflect his status as commissioner in any obvious way. Perfectly nice to read, though, and a dense volume like this probably does need a lighter ending.

---

## Susan says

The true voice of Giamatti is that of a philosopher and professor, and was difficult to read without eliminating all other distractions (including pet cats). And it's definitely not a beach read unless you read Plato or Socrates for breakfast.

The topic itself was quite entertaining, once a state of reading nirvana is attained. Giamatti pours his philosopher's soul into the musings of societal influences and reflections on play, games and, eventually, that of the sport of professional baseball.

As several other reviewers have stated, this is not solely about baseball, nor is it for the faint of heart. It is for those who ruminate on the decline of society's joie de vivre and its resulting escapism in organized sports.

The last words of his epilogue, the simplest and truest, are the heart of the whole of this book:

"If we have known freedom, then we love it; if we love freedom, then we fear, at some level (individually or collectively), its loss. And then we cherish sport. As our forebears did, we remind ourselves through sport of what, here on earth, is our noblest hope."

*In compliance with FTC guidelines, I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads.*

On my blog.

---

### **TK421 says**

After a Cubs World Series victory, this slim volume perfectly illuminates why baseball is so important and beloved in America (and around the globe).

---

### **Alan says**

"To know baseball is to continue to aspire to the condition of freedom, individually and as a people, for baseball is grounded in America in a way unique to our games. Baseball is part of America's plot, part of America's mysterious, underlying design--the plot in which we all conspire and collude, the plot of the story of our national life."

A very kind recipient of the First Reads ARC passed this to me as she was unable to read/review.

The first two chapters of this extended essay were quite wide-ranging ruminations on the place of leisure and sport in society. I enjoyed them though they were probably too philosophical for most casual baseball fans. The third section reveals why baseball is the quintessential American game.

Over the last decade or so, there has been a bit of a backlash against the sentimentalization of baseball and the attempts to over intellectualize what is really just an overgrown kids game. I am not amongst these critics. I tear-up watching *Field of Dreams* and cannot get enough of Ken Burn's nostalgic documentary.

The late Giamatti, a one time Yale English Professor and President of the college, president of the National League and commissioner of MLB has been called, the "philosopher king of baseball". This short treatise cements that reputation.

---

### **Zach Koenig says**

Keep in mind when deciding to read this book that it is as much "philosophy" as "sports". If that's okay with you, but all means proceed. If not, you may want to steer clear.

---

### **Mary Ronan Drew says**

Baseball fans can be divided into two types, those who are exasperated at attempts to make over-arching abstract observations about the game and those who see baseball as a metaphor for something else, usually life itself. **How Life Imitates the World Series, Why Time Begins on Opening Day**, the Big Bang theory of run scoring, and the baseball park as the Garden of Eden.

The last is the beloved metaphor of Bart Giamatti, Renaissance scholar, Yale president, etc. At the end of his life he made his way to the garden and died as Commissioner of Baseball, his second most beloved game. "I have always found baseball the most satisfying and nourishing game outside of literature." This is a man who enjoys playing with words and in this book he has applied that game to baseball in a strikingly original and satisfying way.

He is not alone in his love of baseball language. Bill James as described in **Moneyball**:

"Language, not numbers, is what interested him. Words, and the meaning they were designed to convey. 'When the numbers acquire the significance of language,' he later wrote, 'they acquire the power to do all of the things which language can do: to become fiction and drama and poetry . . .'"

And so it was for Giamatti. In this little book of essays that he wrote just before his death in 1989, he describes baseball as an ever-repeating return to the Garden of Eden from which we are all expelled at the end of the game, at the end of the season. For him as for James, baseball " . . . is grace, glory, consistency, sacrifice, courage, it is success and failure, it is frustration and bad luck, it is ambition, it is overreaching, it is discipline. . . . a safe deposit box containing life's secrets."

---

## **Tom Spisak says**

Giamatti's thesis, which has become more true in the 20 years since *Take Time for Paradise*'s first publication, is that sport -- particularly baseball, but all leisure -- defines us because it expresses our hunger for paradise.

We know our heroes are personally flawed. But Roger Clemens and Barry Bonds no more diminish the sublimity of their game than pedophile priests, adulterous rabbis or murderous imams decrease the transcendence found in cathedral, synagogue or masjid. Wayward priests -- and if sport is American religion, then players are priests -- challenge the institution but not the experience. An institution that can not police straying mediators may lead the flock to seek transcendence in other venues but the search will continue.

For example, while Bonds was engaged in his joyless march to 751, I argued elsewhere, "By the Thirteenth Amendment I can have no property interest in Barry Bonds' body itself. However, as a baseball fan I may have a property interest in how his abuse of that body may have skewed the game. Two authorities are in place to resolve the clash between his right to abuse his body and my right to a good game.

"Through litigation, society may define the extent of my property interest in a good game. If society sets that value too low I can cede my interest in the game.

"At the same time, I have agreed that [the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs] can define 'the best interests of the game.' If I disagree with that definition strongly enough I am also free to withdraw my patronage and become a bicycling fan."

But Giamatti's argument still stands. Overarching the sordidnesses and failings of our idols and priests are those moments of transcendence -- for this son of Boston: the Red Sox seizing four games from the mouth of another annual disappointment, Havlichek stealing the ball, Orr scoring though tripped -- that hint we might exceed our limits.

Sport matters for those glimpses of the divine.

---

### **James Murphy says**

A. Bartlett Giamatti writes poetically, philosophically, and eloquently about games and leisure and about their meaning to Americans. He's not a sports writer. He's a classicist. So he sees leisure linked to Aristotle as well as to the sacred as in holiday or holy day. All sport becomes ceremony. Since sport is conducted in stadiums, because the intense emotion is about winning or losing through ceremony and ritual, the joy of the gods is brought back when people gather. In every sport, ritual is enacted. In that same way, sport perpetuates community by bringing together groups of people so that elements of our necessary rituals, including winning and losing, can be performed.

The 3d essay, "Baseball as Narrative," is so beautiful it'll break your heart if you love baseball. He sees baseball in Homeric terms, each game a tale of quest and homecoming, each game played on a geometric grid of circles, squares, and rectangles, and each game involving specific tasks and challenges centered around the idea of leaving and coming home. It's a story of how we find our origins. Confined within boundaries and patterns which constrain the rhythms of play and passion, the game allows us the joy of accomplishment and helps us realize freedom in the fulfillment of a complex order. Baseball is a retelling of the same story and is a refinement of the fable we live over and over. Just as each game is made up of a ritualistic repetition of pitches and outs ordered by a numbering system centered on 3 and 4, each game in itself is a repetition of the story we never tire of reliving.

It's a paean to baseball. I have a volume of poems about baseball which I love and have read many times. But none of the poems in it compare to Bartlett's magical, elegant explanation of the deeper philosophical connotations of baseball and what it really means to us.

---

### **Scott Allen says**

A wonderful little book about the game I love, told by someone who speaks poetically about his own love and understanding of the game. Would be a great read right before baseball season each year.

---

### **Ron says**

\*\* "Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games" Professor of English Renaissance literature and later President of Yale University, A. Bartlett Giamatti, wrote the first section of this essay as a classical picture of the practice of leisure as individual time as opposed to work which is one's chosen vocation. Man participates in leisure activities which he calls sport and in the 20th century these activities may be one team against another team with the teams being a congregation of athletes proficient in the sport in question. A team may be chosen from among various participants that go to the same elementary school, high school and college or it may be professional athletes paid to represent the team. Giamatti says that these college or professional teams become a community of individuals that band together to accomplish certain tasks (win the game) and that included in these teams are the individual spectators who support that team. A. Bartlett Giamatti, president of the National League of baseball, and later Commissioner of Baseball, wrote the final section as an essay on the beauty of baseball as the national sport of America.

It is a masterful description of the game of baseball that includes all of the enjoyment of playing and being a fan of the game. It aids the understanding of this section to have been a collector of baseball cards from 1949 and later and to have been a fan of the New York Yankees or Boston Red Sox and to know that Bobby Brown was the third baseman of the New Yankees in 1949 who later became a doctor of medicine and who later became a part owner of the Texas Rangers. After stepping down as President of Yale University, Angelo Bartlett "Bart" Giamatti (April 4, 1938 – September 1, 1989) was the president of Yale University and later the seventh Commissioner of Major League Baseball. Giamatti negotiated the agreement terminating the Pete Rose betting scandal by permitting Rose to voluntarily withdraw from the sport to avoid further punishment. Giamatti brought back to baseball the integrity of the sport while pushing aside the decadence and the iniquity which had corrupted the love of the game. Giamatti did not finish his task, but he completely turned it around in less than a year. \*\*This book was reviewed as a condition of receiving a free copy by Library Thing.

---

## **Marcie Kremer says**

The late former Major League Baseball Commissioner and Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti has written an elegant and philosophical dissertation on the integral relationship of baseball and American life and leisure. Jacques Barzun once wrote that "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball," and Giamatti's excellent analysis of the spirit of American independence intertwined with the strong sense of community in our leisure time gives credence to that observation.[return]As sports fans, all of us have jumped to our feet in the midst of a game or performance. Giamatti's insights into why that happens demonstrate the depth of his far-ranging thought. He writes, "And when in the midst of that free time activity a person on the field or fairway, rink, floor, or track, performs an act that surpasses – despite his or her evident mortality, his or her humanness – whatever we have seen or heard of or could conceive of doing our selves, then we have witnessed, full-fledged, fulfilled, what we anticipated and what all the repetition in the game strove for, a moment when we are all free of all constraint of all kinds, when pure energy and pure order create an instant of complete coherence. In that instant, pulled to our feet, we are pulled out of ourselves. We feel what we saw, become what we perceived." [return]Giamatti also does not spare the "cult" of the young athlete in his incisive analysis of leisure and sport and their places in American life. He writes of young star athletes who discover their careers are over: "...there is no place in the general culture for them when they no longer fit in the cult...because no one told them or they refused to believe that there comes an end to running, an end to the cheers, an end to the life lived on the cuff, an end to the endless pleasuring of themselves." He continues, "Blame or guilt is not the issue. The issue is to warn us against giving over our young as hostages to any powerful social convention, even one as seemingly innocent or pleasurable as sports." Powerful observations such as these deserve to be read again and again and pondered by everyone, not only those whose careers are in the sports industry. We fans are part and parcel of this phenomenon.[return]In his insightful analysis of the geometry of baseball and its relationship to force and energy, readers who are not die-hard fans of the sport may find the explanation a bit lengthy and repetitive, but for those of us who do truly believe baseball is inextricably interlaced with American life, it rings true and presents another valuable dimension to the almost hypnotic draw of life on the baseball diamond.[return]Baseball fans who spend time musing about the philosophy of baseball and its relationship to life in America today will truly enjoy this book. Sports fans who are more than just the "put the feet up and pop a beer" type of fan will also appreciate Giamatti's profound analysis and insights into American life and culture. The sad counterpoint to all of this is that Giamatti is no longer with us, and we cannot look forward to more of his beautiful and philosophical observations.

---

## Kelly says

*(Full disclosure: I received a free copy of this book for review through Library Thing's Early Reviewer program. This review is written by my husband, on whose behalf I requested the book.)*

Ingrained in my memory of my youth, is the summer of 1989. Just a few days before I entered high school, Pete Rose, the all-time hits leader was banished by baseball for gambling. The baseball commissioner, A. Bartlett Giamatti was suddenly someone famous to me. He, the outsider intellectual from Harvard, had done what was once thought impossible. Giamatti had kicked out, rightfully so, Pete Rose. Just a few days later Giamatti died, replaced by a faceless old man, and my life moved on. I rarely thought about Giamatti as a baseball commissioner for many years. His time was too brief to make any other sort of impression. This was my loss.

Written years ago, but re-printed now, Take Time for Paradise explains and expands upon Giamatti's now well documented love of the game of baseball. This book takes the reader beyond the superficial trappings of baseball and into the psyche of a baseball lover. While a simple game on the surface, once you are immersed in the spirit of the game you see the randomness, the complexities, and the humanity in the game itself.

The book is broken down into only three chapters "Self Knowledge", "Community", and "Baseball As a Narrative". The book is not a long one, but the sophisticated writing and concepts meant that re-reading passages will almost be a necessity. The common theme across all the chapters is how baseball is such an American game, in both creation and spirit. This view is made without any political baggage and is not a political statement. Baseball has reflected both best and worst in America since its hazy beginnings. Giamatti does the sport and the country proud with a well written essay on America's pastime.

---

## Bart Hill says

A rather deep, philosophical essay of what is the meaning of "sport" and how it can be seen as having religion-like meaning to some players and participants-- or, simply as an enjoyable pastime for those having the leisure to watch/discuss/analyze the game(s) that they enjoy.

Not really my subject of interest, even though I once took a college class , or two, on leisure studies in the United States.

---

## Kelley says

So, it has taken me forever to write this review, but I've had a super busy summer and I kept telling myself I need to get this done.

Anyway, Take Time for Paradise is a really Interesting read. There are three parts to the book and being approx. 130 pages it is a relatively quick read. Part 1 is more philosophical and the terminology may slow you down if you are not familiar with it.



I found the comparison of sports and leisure fascinating and really well argued. The American reverence for both is dissected too. I also really liked the theory that sports is something by which people come together and is an outlet of sorts for fans to share hopes and dreams and root for the home team.

In fact, one of the reasons why it took me so long to read the book after I received my free copy from the Goodreads Giveaway was because my Dallas Mavericks were playing in the playoffs and went on to beat the Miami Heat to win the 2011 NBA Finals and become the National Champion. The atmosphere and camaraderie that resulted from the Mavs' win was exactly like the book talked about. Community and fans of all kinds came together to support, cheer, and celebrate each and every win.

Part 3 is where the baseball references come into play. I love baseball and my whole family practically grew up playing, watching, or going to games. This part of the book talks about baseball as America's favorite past time and how it started out as a gentlemen's sport compared to today's business/career/entertainment industry.

All in all, Take Time For Paradise is a great read especially if you are interested in the philosophical, mental, sociological aspects of what sports have meant to history and spectators alike.(less)

---

### **Arlo says**

Giamatti was an intellectual powerhouse. That being said, this was not really a baseball book. The last chapter was brief and directly about baseball. The majority of the book was an argument about sport and society on a macro level. Somewhat like a graduate thesis paper.

---

### **Steve Smits says**

A. Bartlett Giamatti, when he was made commissioner of baseball in 1989, was an intriguing choice for the job. He was an unusual combination of scholar, academician and administrator (former president of Yale and the National League) and baseball aficionado. I thought at the time that he was likely to have performed well and would bring to baseball's self-absorbed actors(players, their union and the owners) a more balanced sensibility about the game and its relationship to its fans. Sadly, Giamatti was in the job for only six months; his sudden death left his promising impact on the game unrealized.

"Take Time for Paradise" was written shortly before his death. It is a scholarly treatise on the meaning of leisure and games in western life and thought, linking back to Greek conceptions of the place of leisure in our lives. Leisure, Giamatti says, is at its essence a form of freedom, an opportunity through choice to express our place in the culture. If leisure's opposite, work, is a burden we must bear in order to live ("work at its heart a negotiation with death....") leisure is choice and (with special meaning to the American ethos) freedom.

Giamatti gives us insights into the relationship of sports to community, both of participants and spectators. He talks about the nature of the "city" -- an artifact constructed purposely by and for people who choose to live by rules that constrain untrammelled freedom. Sports also is a form of community governed by rules that define and constrain it. The shared nature of both cities and sports is that they are "entirely created by human will and imagination, social agreements for organizing energy that make no sense except in their own terms."

He warns, though, about the tendency for sports to become cultic where obsession and fixation can lead to damaging results, particularly on athletes for whom their sport becomes their lives' only dimension constantly reinforced by the pressure of expectations from fans, owners and media. This can be exceedingly harmful as today's scandals with doping and the manipulative treatment of student athletes bears out.

Giamatti's final chapter on "Baseball as Narrative" was most enjoyable. He describes why baseball's place in our culture is so uniquely American. "Baseball is part of America's plot, part of America's mysterious, underlying design [...] Our national plot is to be free enough to consent to an order that will enhance and compound -- as it constrains -- our freedom." His description of the symmetry of baseball, both the geometry of the field's dimensions and the rhythm of the rules (so much is in patterns of three's and four's) explains that feeling of coherence and satisfying pattern that we get while experiencing the game. Baseball's sense of order is rather like compositions of Bach, so much organizing symmetry that defines the work, but in the background, subtle but compelling.

Giamatti describes the meaning of baseball's play in a literary sense that connects the game with fundamental themes appearing and reappearing in the western psyche. The path a player takes in baseball is a journey, leaving from home and travelling amidst constant danger and travail. The batter is a lonely figure who must progress or utterly fail. Failure, in fact, is the most common result of a player's actions. But, to be "safe", to return "home" is the essence of human yearning and striving -- Odysseus's journey, the Pilgrim's Progress. Expelled from Eden we journey in danger and trouble yearning with hope to return to Paradise.

Needless to say, "Take Time to Paradise" is not light reading, but this thought-stimulating short book expands one's thinking about the nature of leisure and sports and will make one consider the game of baseball on a different and satisfying plane.

---

## **Co2 says**

One of the first baseball books I ever read was "Ball Four". It was written by a pitcher, Jim Bouton, and was revolutionary for its time. Of all the revelations in the book a major one for me was that baseball players were/are willfully anti intellectual. Players ridiculed readers. That stays with me at least partially for the irony. Baseball writers have always seemed the most creative and the best stylists. The sport appeals to sports nerds.

So, today there are more college educated and insightful players today, the game has moved beyond our rural, pastoral past but it still brings out the lyrical side of writers. Bartlett Giamatti wasn't primarily a writer and certainly not a writer for any mass market but the game drew him into the philosophical facet of sport.

Giamatti's premise, I think, was that sport is inconsequential but necessary part of society. The candy store.

Giamatti was an academic, his writing is at a master level, don't expect an easy read. He wrote for other academics. Not me certainly, but give it a shot. Take your time and appreciate the craft. Its worth the effort. While it can be very dry for a few pages then he will surprise you with some very lyrical stretches.

---

## **Margo says**

The late former Major League Baseball Commissioner and Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti has written an elegant and philosophical dissertation on the integral relationship of baseball and American life and leisure. Jacques Barzun once wrote that “Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball,” and Giamatti’s excellent analysis of the spirit of American independence intertwined with the strong sense of community in our leisure time gives credence to that observation.

As sports fans, all of us have jumped to our feet in the midst of a game or performance. Giamatti’s insights into why that happens demonstrate the depth of his far-ranging thought. He writes, “And when in the midst of that free time activity a person on the field or fairway, rink, floor, or track, performs an act that surpasses – despite his or her evident mortality, his or her humanness – whatever we have seen or heard of or could conceive of doing our selves, then we have witnessed, full-fledged, fulfilled, what we anticipated and what all the repetition in the game strove for, a moment when we are all free of all constraint of all kinds, when pure energy and pure order create an instant of complete coherence. In that instant, pulled to our feet, we are pulled out of ourselves. We feel what we saw, become what we perceived.”

Giamatti also does not spare the “cult” of the young athlete in his incisive analysis of leisure and sport and their places in American life. He writes of young star athletes who discover their careers are over: “...there is no place in the general culture for them when they no longer fit in the cult...because no one told them or they refused to believe that there comes an end to running, an end to the cheers, an end to the life lived on the cuff, an end to the endless pleasuring of themselves.” He continues, “Blame or guilt is not the issue. The issue is to warn us against giving over our young as hostages to any powerful social convention, even one as seemingly innocent or pleasurable as sports.” Powerful observations such as these deserve to be read again and again and pondered by everyone, not only those whose careers are in the sports industry. We fans are part and parcel of this phenomenon.

In his insightful analysis of the geometry of baseball and its relationship to force and energy, readers who are not die-hard fans of the sport may find the explanation a bit lengthy and repetitive, but for those of us who do truly believe baseball is inextricably interlaced with American life, it rings true and presents another valuable dimension to the almost hypnotic draw of life on the baseball diamond.

Baseball fans who spend time musing about the philosophy of baseball and its relationship to life in America today will truly enjoy this book. Sports fans who are more than just the “put the feet up and pop a beer” type of fan will also appreciate Giamatti’s profound analysis and insights into American life and culture. The sad counterpoint to all of this is that Giamatti is no longer with us, and we cannot look forward to more of his beautiful and philosophical observations.

---

## **Kim Miller-Davis says**

Two days ago, while scouring the local dollar store in search of inexpensive materials for my son's school project, my eyes flickered over what must be the most demeaned position in the entire establishment--a bottom shelf dedicated to random, unwanted items. Right there amongst the broken pinwheels and aged Christmas candy, sat a motley disarray of printed materials, out from under which something about this little gem of a book caught my eye. It seems as if it needed rescuing--as if the reality of its physical location was too unbearable. There's nothing flashy about this book--nothing on the cover--nothing within the pages that screams out for attention. Instead, it is the exact opposite. Using classic literary and philosophical texts,

Giametti presents his case that modern American sports are functionally analogous to the best works of art as they both engage creator and observer in a symbiotic relationship in which the transformation of personhood is effected by the journey of self-knowledge that accompanies the process itself. His analysis is so filled with erudite, astute commentary that the bombastic presence of plastic trinkets becomes a poignant graphic illustration of the exact cultural dichotomies that Giametti's world of sports seeks to unify.

---

## **Jack Morris says**

After finishing A. Bartlett Giamatti's book, *Take Time For Paradise*, I couldn't help but wonder how Major League baseball would have been different if Giamatti hadn't died tragically while serving as baseball commissioner. Would the 1994 baseball strike have occurred? And, after the strike, would Major League baseball have turned a blind eye to steroids that has tainted the game from the late 1990s to the present? It's an unanswerable question but Giamatti left some clues within the book on his tolerance for what was to come in baseball.

Giamatti's book, while less than 100 pages, is nonetheless packed with brilliant philosophical ruminations on American and leisure. If you're looking for light and breezy baseball reading, this book isn't for you. It's a dense look at American's at play in leisure time. I found myself reading and re-reading passages as I tried to grasp what he was writing. It's worth the effort however.

The book is broken into three chapters or essays that build upon each other. Of particular interest to me was in the second chapter entitled "Community," where Giamatti wrote about cheating. "Cheating – a covert act to acquire a covert advantage – strikes at the heart of this basic convention of openness and equality and the agreement that they are essential." Later on he wrote, "The highly moralized (because rule-bound) world of any sport is very fragile in the face of the amoral quest for betterment, the hunger to win at any cost, even at the cost of destroying the game, the game being the only context where winning in this way has any meaning whatsoever."

With passages such as that, reading it 22 years after its original publishing date, it makes it easy to think "What if ..."

---