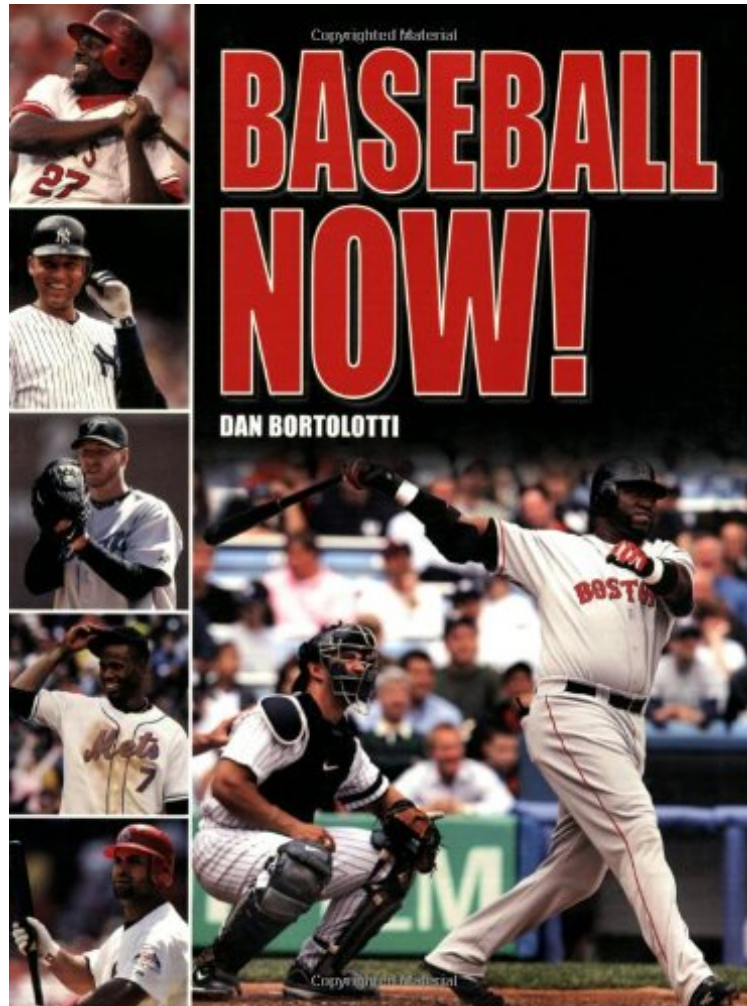


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Baseball Now!

Dan Bortolotti

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Dan Bortolotti : Baseball Now! before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Baseball Now!:

Insider information and up-to-date stats on today's greatest baseball stars. Grab a hot dog and a cold beer and immerse yourself in the drama of Major League baseball. Baseball Now! profiles the biggest stars in the game, including Albert Pujols, Alex Rodriguez, Roy Halladay, Andruw Jones and dozens more. Featuring more than 70 player profiles and up-to-date coverage of the 2007 regular season, playoffs and World Series, Baseball Now! provides an inside look at the game and showcases the best players at every position: Outfielders -- sluggers who are outstanding in their field

Infielders -- power on the corners, hot gloves in the middle Catchers -- the "quarterbacks" of baseball Designated hitters -- big bats off the bench Starting pitchers -- armed and dangerous Relief pitchers -- firemen who can take the heat Rookies and sophomores -- tomorrow's superstars. With all the latest facts and action-packed, full-color photos, Baseball Now! captures the excitement of a day at the ballpark.

It'll make you the smartest kid on the sandlot. (American Profile 2008-03-29)It was not easy selecting seventy of the best, but the author has done a good job. (Shelf Life (London ON))About the Author Dan Bortolotti is a journalist, editor and life-long baseball fan. He is the author of numerous books, including Hope in Hell: Inside the World of Doctors Without Borders. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Introduction Bud Selig likes to call this the golden era of baseball. Of course, Major League Baseball's commissioner has a vested interest in putting on a happy face, but the game truly is thriving as never before. For the fourth season in a row, MLB set a new attendance record in 2007, with almost 80 million fans buying peanuts and Cracker Jack. Meanwhile, in July of that year, NFL quarterback Michael Vick was being charged for running a dogfighting ring and NBA referee Tim Donaghy was found to have gambled on games that he officiated. Perhaps it was not a coincidence that baseball's single-day attendance record was smashed on July 28, when 717,478 people took in a major-league game. Five or six years ago, this unprecedented interest in baseball would have been hard to predict. Indeed, from the mid-1990s until well into the new millennium, the sport was in crisis. After the 1994 players' strike -- which wiped out the postseason for the first time in history -- fans stayed away in droves: attendance in 1993 had spiked at and two years later it plummeted by 30 percent. The power-hitting heroics of Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa coaxed more fans through the turnstiles in 1998, but attendance declined again every season from 2000 to 2003 as it became clear that anabolic steroids were a main reason for the recent rash of home runs. The lowest point may have come in the second half of the 2002 season, when yet another players' strike seemed imminent. What has reignited interest in baseball? For one, while the salary cap, the "competitive balance draft" and other schemes for leveling the playing field never came to pass, the problem of domination by big-money teams has lessened. While clubs in New York, Boston and Los Angeles continue to be successful, they are repeatedly challenged by small-market clubs in Oakland, St. Louis, Colorado, Arizona and Minnesota. America's national pastime is also increasingly international: the emergence of Japanese-born stars, especially, is enriching the game the way that European players revolutionized the National Hockey League in the early 1990s. Finally, baseball has made strides toward preventing the use of banned substances. In addition to doing more rigorous testing, MLB unveiled a new policy in 2005 that includes a 50-game suspension for players who test positive for steroid use once, and a lifetime ban for three-time offenders. Baseball still faces a number of challenges. Stratospheric salaries and rising ticket prices continue to alienate fans, and now that postseason games are all played at night, the youngest generation misses out on one of the best parts of October - unless they sneak a radio under the covers. The legacy of performance-enhancing drugs also remains: witness the lukewarm reaction to Barry Bonds' 756th home run on August 7, 2007. What should have been one of the greatest moments in the game's history was clouded by indifference, and even contempt. As Bonds approached Hank Aaron's hallowed mark, an ABC News/ESPN poll revealed that more than half of baseball fans hoped Bonds would fail to break the record, and only 58 percent believed he belongs in the Hall of Fame. Fortunately, many of those negative feelings were erased by another incredible performance the same day Bonds tied Aaron's record, as Alex Rodriguez became the youngest player ever to reach 500 home runs. Only a career-ending injury will stop him from eventually eclipsing Bonds. For the true fan the essence of baseball is not found in labor disputes, salary arbitration or drug policies. What keeps people coming to the ballpark in record numbers is the elegance of the game itself. Baseball is the thinking fan's sport: the rare game with no clock, where it truly ain't over until it's over. It is, as the cliché goes, a game of inches in which the finest line separates a two-out walk from an inning-ending strikeout, a dramatic stolen base from a rally-killing out, or a foul ball from a game-winning home run. Above all, baseball is about the players. It is a team game, to be sure, but it is defined by one-on-one confrontations: pitcher and batter separated by 60 feet, six inches. Perhaps more than any other sport, it can humble the mighty and make a hero of yesterday's goat. This inaugural edition of Baseball Now! celebrates the best players in the game today: the athletes who have helped shape the golden era of the grand old game.