



# The Farmers' Game: Baseball in Rural America

*David Vaught*

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Anyone who has watched the film *Field of Dreams* can't help but be captivated by the lead character's vision. He gives his struggling farming community a magical place where the smell of roasted peanuts gently wafts over the crowded grandstand on a warm summer evening just as the star pitcher takes the mound.

Baseball, America's game, has a dedicated following and a rich history. Fans obsess over comparative statistics and celebrate men who played for legendary teams during the "golden age" of the game. In *The Farmers' Game*, David Vaught examines the history and character of baseball through a series of essay-vignettes. He presents the sport as essentially rural, reflecting the nature of farm and small-town life.

Vaught does not deny or devalue the lively stickball games played in the streets of Brooklyn, but he sees the history of the game and the rural United States as related and mutually revealing. His subjects include nineteenth-century Cooperstown, the playing fields of Texas and Minnesota, the rural communities of California, the great farmer-pitcher Bob Feller, and the notorious Gaylord Perry.

Although?contrary to legend?Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball in a cow pasture in upstate New York, many fans enjoy the game for its nostalgic qualities. Vaught's deeply researched exploration of baseball's rural roots helps explain its enduring popularity.

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