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# Baseball Book A Reality

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## For Elmhurst's Boyle

by Craig Brueske

At first, it was hard to believe. Never before had a book been published about Major League Baseball's Most Valuable Players until now. After two years of diligent work and hours of frustration, Elmhurst resident Timm Boyle and Downers Grove's Dave Masterson completed their dream.

Boyle, sports editor at the Suburban Life Graphic, and Masterson, an associate editor at the paper, combined their efforts into print in "Baseball's Best, The MVPs" (Contemporary Books, \$10.95), which profiles the best players baseball had to offer from as early as 1931 and St. Louis Cardinal second baseman Frankie Frisch to 1984 when



**Craig's Corner**  
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Sports editor

Chicago Cub second baseman Ryne Sandberg received MVP honors.

A baseball fan at heart, Boyle was honest about how the idea got off the ground. "I would like to say that it was my idea but it was really Dave's," said Boyle. "He came up with the idea in 1980. He had read a lot of baseball books but never came across any on the MVPs of baseball."

At first, Boyle started to

work alone but he soon found out what many other authors have discovered. "It was just too big of a job for one person so we put it on the back burner until May of 1983," said Boyle.

"Two years ago, Dave asked me to try out the project," recalls Boyle. After four sample chapters were finished, the pair sent out forms to 30 different publishers, most of them located on the east coast in Boston and New York. What they received from the publishers was mainly bad news.

"We got back forms from most of them saying that it was a good idea but we can't use it at this time," said Boyle. "It got discouraging after awhile."

For the 32-year-old, baseball has been a long love

affair stemming back to his childhood days. "My first love was and still is baseball," said Boyle. "My father was in the Philadelphia Phillies' organization as a business manager when I was a kid. When we lived in Oak Park, Bobby Richardson (New York Yankee second baseman) used to come over to the house and visit my father. When he would come, all of the other kids on the block used to stand around in the front and wait to see him."

Boyle played some sports in high school, with four years on the baseball team and one on the basketball team, and still tries to stay active. "Right now, I'm playing on a Wheaton church league 12-inch softball team two nights a week," said

Boyle.

In August 1983, the pair received their first break when Contemporary Books of Chicago called and wanted to talk possibilities over. Then in October of that year, they received their first interview and things multiplied quickly.

"They came right out and asked us when we could have it done by," said Boyle. "They said that spring 1984 would be the deadline date. At first, I figured there would be no way to complete it by then because we only had finished eight of the 198 chapters."

Given a reprieve and an August 1984 deadline, they had 10 months to complete the book. "We planned out a schedule and I ended up

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Timm Boyle

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working five to seven nights a week after work, five to six hours a day on the weekend," remembers Boyle. "It definitely was the hardest thing I ever had to do."

According to Boyle, a library system was devised for research purposes. "I went to four different libraries (Wheaton, Downers Grove, Oak Park and Elmhurst)," said Boyle, "ones I figured were the best in the area."

"I'd say about three-fourths of the project was research," added Boyle. "I never had to wear glasses until I worked on this book. It required a lot more reading than I thought and it became more intensified as time went on."

Most of the research consisted of hunting and scraping for any information about the Most Valuable Player, whether it was in a newspaper, magazine, baseball card or book. For Boyle, finding out a little extra on the older ballplayers was most intriguing.

"I had the most fun looking for information about the older players in the 1930s and '40s," said Boyle. "Sometimes, I got caught reading too long about a player that fascinated me."

Brooklyn Dodger Hall of Fame third baseman Jackie Robinson, the first black player in major league baseball, was Boyle's favorite to research. "I couldn't believe all of the hard times he had to go through until I found out more about him," said Boyle.

As a youth, Boyle collected baseball cards, not unlike most teen-agers. "I probably collected about 2,000 and my mother never threw them away on me," joked Boyle.

turned himself around in 1944 when he compiled a 29-9 record and the following year, he won 25 while dropping only nine.

"A lot of people think New-houser won the MVP because he pitched during the war years when players were serving," said Boyle. "But he com-

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piled a 26-9 mark in 1946 but injured his arm a couple of seasons later."

• Bucky Walters, a light-hitting third baseman who was talked into pitching by Philadelphia Phillie manager Jimmie Wilson and went on to capture the 1939 National League MVP award by winning 27 and losing 11 with a miniscule 2.29 earned run

average.

"Bucky was well-known back then but people forget about him now," said Boyle.

• Sandy Koufax, a left-handed fireballer for the Los Angeles Dodgers, who won the coveted MVP award in 1963 with a won-lost mark of 25-5 and ERA of 1.88. "People forget how great he really was," said Boyle.

Before retiring at the age of 31 with chronic arthritis in his pitching arm and shoulder, Koufax compiled a 165-87 record in 12 seasons. During his peak years (1963-66), the left-handed hurler achieved incredible statistics such as a won-lost mark of 97-27 and a walk-to-strikeout ratio of 269 to 1,228.

• Zoilo Versalles, a Minnesota Twin shortstop, won the American League MVP in 1965, but had to resort to selling his prized trophy as his financial woes worsened.

After 18 months of waiting and working, the finished product became a reality in mid-April of 1985. "During the first printing, some 7,500 books were sold and I'd say

the current figure is around 8,500," said Boyle. "We are hoping the price would be \$9.95 for psychological reasons but the publishers decide on the price according to the profit margin."

The four big bookstores in the country (Crown, B. Dalton, Kroch's & Brentano's and

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Walden) carry the 359-page book. "The book is being sold across the country," said Boyle.

"The determining point in the book's success is how well it sells the first year," added Boyle. "It is the type of book that can be updated every couple of years."

When the work was completed, Boyle felt a sense of relief. "I was very tired and my friends wondered why I wasn't more excited," said Boyle.

"The first time I saw the book on the shelf (at Walden in Yorktown) was a thrill," said Boyle. "I think my parents (living in New Jersey) were more excited than I was."

Boyle said the book helped him realize more about his own personality as well. "I didn't think I could do it but I learned a lot about myself," said Boyle. "I never had a day off so it required a great deal of discipline."

His next goal is to start writing a novel and another baseball book is in the back of his mind. "Right now, I want to

take a break for a month or two," said Boyle.

He gave an honest appraisal of the finished product. "I would buy it even if I didn't have anything to do with the book," said Boyle. "I think it's worth it, but I may be a little biased."

With the personal insight, lifetime statistics and illustrated photos found in the book, Boyle and Masterson may have discovered something through hard work and perseverance. And with the