

FOREWORD

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Drunks drink, smokers smoke, and New York Mets fans love their team in inverse proportion to what it deserves. The more insulting and craven the behavior of their executives, the more slapdash or just plain sad the performance of their players, the more passionately fans hold to the Mets, as if by loving them well enough they could negate everything that the team actually is and transform it into something worthy of their ardor.

The quality of this devotion is probably best expressed in concrete terms. A reasonably serious baseball fan who watches 100 games a year and spends an hour every day reading about their team, grousing about it in bars and such will, at the end of the year, have spent 27 full waking days on the game. A really committed one, who takes in every game and spends two hours a day obsessing over the team, will spend nearly a fifth of their waking life on their team.

No sport other than baseball demands this kind of time, and probably no team in baseball offers such poor return on the investment as the Mets. For decades they've had less talent than their money should have bought and fewer wins than their talent should have earned, and they've shared a city with the Yankees besides, making their failures that much more galling. Of all sports fans, then, Mets rooters may be most naturally prone to paranoia and resentment, suspicions that the men who control the fate of something they care about so much regard them with at best indifference and more likely contempt, and the ever-present sense that they've wasted a great deal of time on a team intent on kicking them in the ribs at every chance.

The book you're about to read is, among other things, a testament to just how little hold such dark emotions really have on Mets fans. Given every reason to be churlish and bitter, they... aren't. Where fans of similarly inept teams lapse into sentimentality or apathy or create elaborate superstitions, Mets fans cherish the grand moments in team history and hold fast to concrete fact. Your man at the end of the bar will with the least provocation list the relative strengths and weaknesses of the defense of two generations' worth of fourth outfielders, the mild lawyer at the end of your row at Citi Field will discourse on the team's unwillingness to teach a curveball and name an astonishing number of minor leaguers undone by the organization's disdain for the pitch, and your 12-year-