



# The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, the Dodgers and Their Final Pennant Race Together

*Michael Shapiro*

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In the bestselling tradition of *The Boys of Summer* and *Wait 'Til Next Year*, *The Last Good Season* is the poignant and dramatic story of the Brooklyn Dodgers' last pennant and the forces that led to their heartbreaking departure to Los Angeles.

The 1956 Brooklyn Dodgers were one of baseball's most storied teams, featuring such immortals as Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee Reese, Duke Snider, Gil Hodges, and Roy Campanella. The love between team and borough was equally storied, an iron bond of loyalty forged through years of adversity and sometimes legendary ineptitude. Coming off their first World Series triumph ever in 1955, against the hated Yankees, the Dodgers would defend their crown against the Milwaukee Braves and the Cincinnati Reds in a six-month neck-and-neck contest until the last day of the playoffs, one of the most thrilling pennant races in history.

But as *The Last Good Season* so richly relates, all was not well under the surface. The Dodgers were an aging team at the tail end of its greatness, and Brooklyn was a place caught up in rapid and profound urban change. From a cradle of white ethnicity, it was being transformed into a racial patchwork, including Puerto Ricans and blacks from the South who flocked to Ebbets Field to watch the Dodgers' black stars. The institutions that defined the borough – the Brooklyn Eagle, the Brooklyn Navy Yard – had vanished, and only the Dodgers remained. And when their shrewd, dollar-squeezing owner, Walter O'Malley, began casting his eyes elsewhere in the absence of any viable plan to replace the aging Ebbets Field and any support from the all-powerful urban czar Robert Moses, the days of the Dodgers in Brooklyn were clearly numbered.

Michael Shapiro, a Brooklyn native, has interviewed many of the surviving participants and observers of the 1956 season, and undertaken immense archival research to bring its public and hidden drama to life. Like David Halberstam's *The Summer of '49*, *The Last Good Season* combines an exciting baseball story, a genuine sense of nostalgia, and hard-nosed reporting and social thinking to reveal, in a new light, a time and place we only thought we understood.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, the Dodgers and Their Final Pennant Race Together Details

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## From Reader Review The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, the Dodgers and Their Final Pennant Race Together for online ebook

### **Katherine says**

A well-written and -conceived, thoroughly-researched, and involving description, not just of the Brooklyn Dodgers' final season and how Brooklyn lost the Dodgers, but of the political, technological, cultural, and socio-economic changes which took place in the mid-to-late-1950s that affect Brooklyn, the New York Metro area, New York State, and the country to this day.

Warning: if you love Brooklyn, the true Dodgers (what the heck are they dodging in L.A.? no one walks out there), New York City and/or state, you may occasionally want to throw the book across the room in anger and frustration. Don't blame the messenger; Shapiro's simply reporting what happened. I suggest you go spit on Robert Moses's grave instead.

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### **Kenneth says**

A real gem of a book that I came across this year.

Shapiro gives some really nice up close profiles of the players, what type of men they really were. A very personal and human view of the players and the owner Walter O'Mally- who was no Branch Rickey. He clearly shows the powerful hand of New York's "power broker", Robert Mosses, and reminds us that NOTHING got built in NYC without his approval. He also covers in depth the way Brooklyn was changing in the 1950's. I picked up this book for my father in law (the Brooklyn Dodgers were his team when he was growing up), but I decided to read it first.

If you love Brooklyn, the Dodgers, or baseball, then read this book.

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### **Bill Clarkin says**

Good historical background. Liked the history on the Dodgers moving to LA. Also liked that it didn't just give Robinson sainthood and showed some flaws.

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### **Laura says**

As a long time Dodger fan I really enjoyed starting the new baseball season exploring this slice of history before my time (slightly).

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### **Daryoush says**

I really should have enjoyed this book, and I did parts of it. Despite the obvious title, I think I was looking for a broader view.

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### **Jim says**

There are some really silly editing mistakes in this book that keep it from being a '5.' But the way Shapiro shifts between baseball anecdotes and Brooklyn history in the era of Robert Moses is really engaging. Perhaps subject matter this good is hard to mess up, but it's one of the better baseball books out there.

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### **Eric Hines says**

The kind of book that leaves you wanting more--more info on that 1956 season, more about this team, more about the civic leaders who neglected & wooed the Dodgers, more about the fans and the neighborhoods they came from. Shapiro does a good job here--keeping the narrative short enough to be an easy read, but complete enough to sell this as a story to be concerned about from a number of different perspectives. Deserving of a less-structured, fact- & anecdote-filled follow-up. Shapiro obviously has the material to do so.

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### **Lanny Carlson says**

As a 72 year-old lifetime Dodgers fan, I have read a lot of Dodgers books, but this is one of the very best. 1956 was the last National League championship in Brooklyn. In 1958, the Dodgers were in Los Angeles. The book does an excellent job of describing the season, each section of the book focusing on one month of the season. But the book is also about Brooklyn and the sociological dynamics and changes in that borough, and the politics involved in trying to keep the Dodgers in Brooklyn.

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### **Mike says**

A great recounting of the Golden Age of New York City baseball, the Giants, Dodgers and Yankees all had a place in New Yorkers' hearts. The heyday of the Dodgers before moving to LA. The players were an integral part of the neighborhood.

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### **Eric says**

I did not think that I would be interested in any more writing about the well-documented Brooklyn Dodgers, and their exodus from Brooklyn. But The Last Good Season takes a different point of view that paints Walter O'Malley not as the villain he is usually portrayed as, but rather as a victim of Robert Moses, and the City of New York, who were not committed to helping O'Malley build a new stadium in Brooklyn. O'Malley was a businessman who wanted to make a profit, he was not terribly sensitive to what cities meant to their inhabitants, but he is not the villain in this story. He would have kept the Dodgers in Brooklyn had the opportunity been there. The book gets caught up in the play by play of baseball games. But overall, this is a different take on a familiar story, and an entertaining read.

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## Henry says

Nicely done and fairly well researched. Shapiro doesn't bring a typical sportswriter sensibility to this subject which is a good thing. He tells the story of the Dodgers' last pennant in Brooklyn and does a good job of presenting Robert Moses as the true bad guy in the story of how/why the Dodgers left NYC. The book could use some editing. Okay, the editing is terrible and I usually give an example or two, but there were dozens of mis-spellings and the like, so we'll leave it at that. Shapiro also hits on some good observations about the nature of cities and neighborhoods, but he could have used a little more diversity in his subjects. Again, a well-done book and it GR had half-stars, this would easily be a 3 1/2 star rating.

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## Rick says

The last good season is the Brooklyn Dodgers next to last season in Brooklyn. It is a year after the Bums finally beat the Yankees in the 1955 World Series and their team is aging, their home ballpark decrepit, and their owner apparently losing a political battle with Robert Moses that might have kept the Dodgers in Brooklyn. In 1956 the Dodgers win the pennant on the last day of the season, take the first two from the Yankees in Brooklyn before losing three at Yankees stadium, winning game six at Ebbets Field and then getting blown out in game seven. Los Angeles and O'Malley have secretly been negotiating. Moses has been quietly subverting plans for a new ballpark at the closed meat market near the railroad yards next to BAM. Shapiro does what he can to lift the blame that has always been laid almost exclusively on O'Malley's shoulders onto another of New York's favorite villains, Moses. But the case isn't fully convincing, making the sections devoted to it less than riveting. The baseball writing is okay but lacks the voice and knowledge of an old time sportswriter, say Roger Kahn. He tries to inject drama (where no such injections should be necessary) into a flat chronicle of games by overstating things as the season approaches its end. For example, he hypes the meaning of a blown chance for the Braves to deliver a "mortal" blow when such a blow, had it been delivered, that is the game won by the Braves, it would have only backed the Dodgers up from a two game to a three game deficit with weeks yet to go. When I was done with the book I immediately started Roger Kahn's The Era to accomplish what Shapiro's book failed to do, bring the time and personalities to life and to get me through the final weeks of spring training.

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## Paul says

Surprisingly good account of the aging Dodgers in the 56 pennant race, O'Malley's eventual move to LA, and a changing Brooklyn.

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