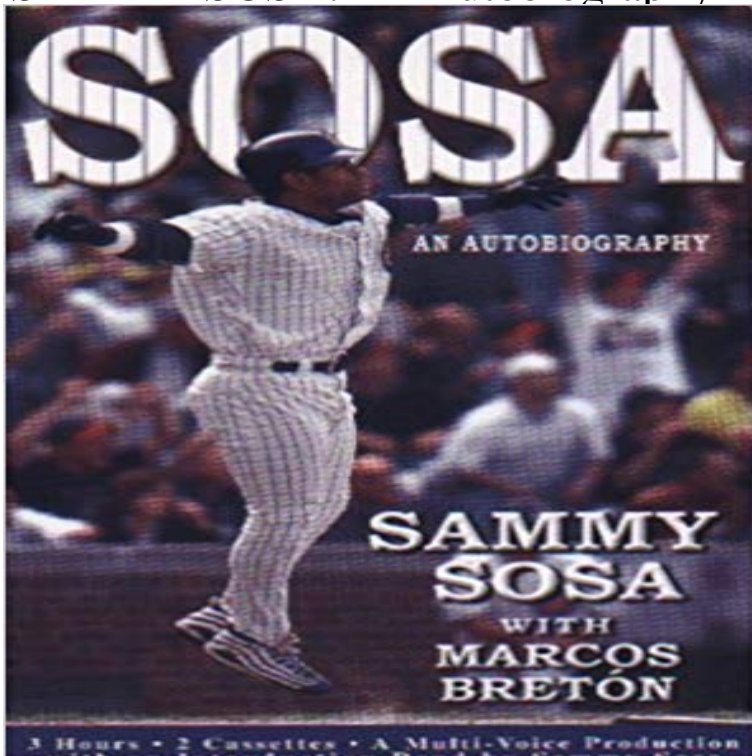


SAMMY SOSA: An Autobiography



What separates Sosa from the mainstream of sports star bios is the likability and exuberance of the subject and the form in which it was written. Cast as an oral history, Sosa lets Sammys voice--as well as those of his family, friends, and some important coaches--come through, and juxtaposed voices can make for some interesting observations. Sosa, of course, needs no introduction. Born in poverty in the Dominican baseball incubator of San Pedro de Macoris, he seemed destined to be just another good, solid journeyman ballplayer, a guy who could post eye-catching numbers and not hurt you too much in the field. Then came the miracles of 1998 and 99, back-to-back seasons of 66 and 63 taters with 158 and 143 RBIs, an MVP award, and the affection of fans everywhere. What happened? Sosa works best as it answers that, creating almost a dialogue between Sosa and Jeff Pentland, whom the Cubs elevated to Major League hitting coach midway through Sammys and the teams disappointing 1997. Pentland took a hard look at Sosa and saw the untapped talent. The two things that really stood out were his attitude and his aggressiveness, he says. Ive always felt as a coach the more aggressive the player is, the better, because its your job as a teacher to harness that aggression to where its productive. At that point, Sammy was aggressive, but wildly aggressive. From there on, its pretty much Sosa and Pentland, and through their exchanges we can see how and why the new hitter in Sammy emerges. Its good baseball analysis--technical, anecdotal, and brimming with the excitement and pride of Sammys remarkable achievements. When Sosa tries to pull biographical heartstrings, its sappy and sentimental; when it sticks to baseball, its as crisp as the crack of the bat. --Jeff Silverman

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