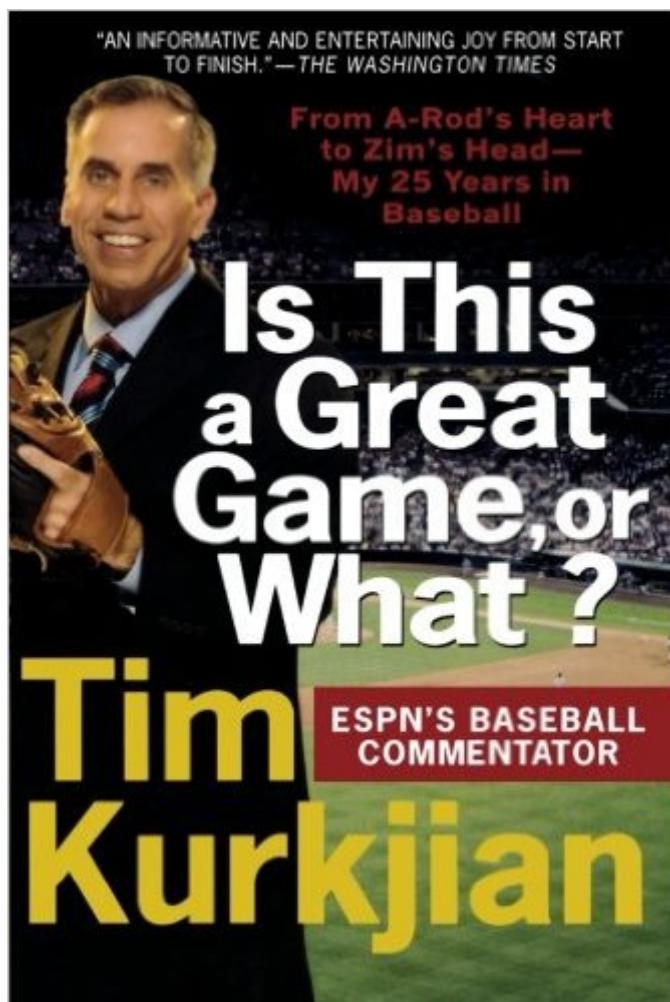


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# Is This A Great Game, Or What?: From A-Rod's Heart To Zim's Head--My 25 Years In Baseball



## Synopsis

ESPN's Tim Kurkjian has spent more than twenty-five years covering almost three thousand major league baseball games and interviewing about that many players, coaches, managers, and executives. In *Is This a Great Game, or What?*, Kurkjian combines his years of experience, uncanny knowledge, and deep love of the game, to create a book filled with some of the most fascinating insight into Major League Baseball this side of Jim Bouton's bestseller, *Ball Four*. Whether he's explaining what goes through a ballplayer's mind when he faces a fastball in the chapter "My Face Was Crushed by a Bowling Ball Going 90 MPH," detailing bizarre rituals and superstitions performed by baseball's greatest players, or taking us into the locker room to see what transpires in the clubhouse of a major league team, Kurkjian's tales are at times hilarious, other times horrifying, yet always entertaining. Kurkjian has spoken to some of the greatest ballplayers ever over the years, and they have revealed details about themselves and the game they love with a candor that readers won't find anywhere else. Filled with anecdotes and fascinating insights, this is an essential book for baseball fans or anyone curious about America's pastime.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

My wife picked up a copy of this book for me last weekend. I read it over the course of two days. What a great read. I've always enjoyed Tim Kurkjian's commentaries on baseball, be it on the radio, TV, or print and his take on the past twenty five years doesn't dissapoint. There are some really interesting stories that he shares, that you don't (at least I haven't) heard anywhere else. There is a chapter about the fear of the baseball. Conversations with numerous players who were hit in the

head with a pitch and how it affected them. There is a chapter called "Ambidextrous" that share funny stories about players like Mark Mulder, a left handed pitcher, who does everything below the waist (tie his shoe, golf, bowling) right handed. The book was also very well written and well laid out. Very much an enjoyable read.

I've always thought that Tim Kurkjian was the second-brightest mind on Baseball Tonight following the amazing Peter Gammons, and that's pretty much reaffirmed by this book. His insights and observations are excellent, and his discussion of the rightful place of statistics in the game is outstanding. He doesn't downplay the role of statistical analysis in baseball, but he does point out that the numbers should always be viewed in the proper context. The book itself is written at times in what is almost a stream of consciousness format. The stories about individual players or personalities jump around at times, but they're still incredibly funny and poignant. TK also does a great job of throwing in little historical and statistical footnotes. The book only got to me a couple of times. I felt myself bristle a little when he talked about how insightful John Kruk was on the show. Perhaps Kruk can be that way at times, but as a viewer I find him to be a senseless blowhard far too often. And while Gammons and Kruk are singled out for praise, little is said for the rest of the current crew. I'd like to know his true feelings on each of them, but I understand why he might not want to share those with everyone at this time. I also would have appreciated his thoughts on Harold Reynolds' firing - he praises Reynolds, but doesn't touch the topic of his dismissal. The other area where I would have liked a stronger view was the section on Selig. Overall, this is an extremely enjoyable read. There are plenty of great stories to make you laugh, and most of us will come away having learned something. I'd recommend it for any baseball fan.

Baseball is a great game with a history to match. Some of the stories are legend and some only known to true fans. What Kurkjian does well is tell the stories. What is done poorly is the editing. I found myself re-reading passages that made no sense. For example in the chapter about Baseball Tonight there is a description about a heated argument about knockdown pitches. "Brian Kenny told Dibble, 'Now make sure you say on TV what you said today in the meeting.' 'Don't worry' Dibble said. 'I will.' 'No, you won't,' Kenny said." (pg. 205). What is it? Say it or don't. This is typical of a fair amount of the book. Including the editing problems there are many factual errors. For instance he writes if Bill Buckner had not made the error and thrown out Mookie Wilson in game six of the 1986 World Series the game would have gone into extra innings (pg. 221 No. 8). The game was already in the 10th inning. Makes me wonder what other errors there are. If Kurkjian had been a baseball

player writing his memoirs I'd be more forgiving. However he is a credentialed journalist, his job is to make write accurate , well written accounts of events. For pure enjoyment of telling baseball stories, where accuracy may not be needed or wanted, you'll enjoy this book. Worth going to the library to check out.

Simply put, this is the best book about baseball that I have ever read. It kept me coming back for more. Kurkjian has a subtle tongue in cheek way of writing that make this book simply a joy to read. And to answer his question, yes it is the best game ever invented IMHO."PLAY BALL!!"

If you like baseball, you will like this book. You will forgive the minor flaws like a few repeated stories and slightly dated material and just go with it. Tim Kurkjian is the kind of a baseball fan who makes your own baseball obsessions (past, present or future) seem like little league. I'm reminded of my listening as a kid to Baltimore Oriole games in the 1970's on the RADIO while lining up each teams Topps baseball cards on the floor (we had terrible TV reception). I can imagine Tim's response to this information . . . THATS NOTHING!!! I TOOK MY BASEBALL CARDS TO THE ACTUAL GAME IN THE STADIUM AND RECITED EACH CARD BY MEMORY WHEN EACH BATTER CAME TO THE PLATE!!!! This book is a quick read and is fun, and actually a pretty substantial narrative on baseball in the past couple of decades. I am very glad I read it. In . . . oh . . . 3 days. You will like this book even more if you grew up an Orioles, Phillies or Texas Rangers fan as there are more antidotes from those teams. Since the last chapter is from 2007 . . . I think Tim is due for another book.

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