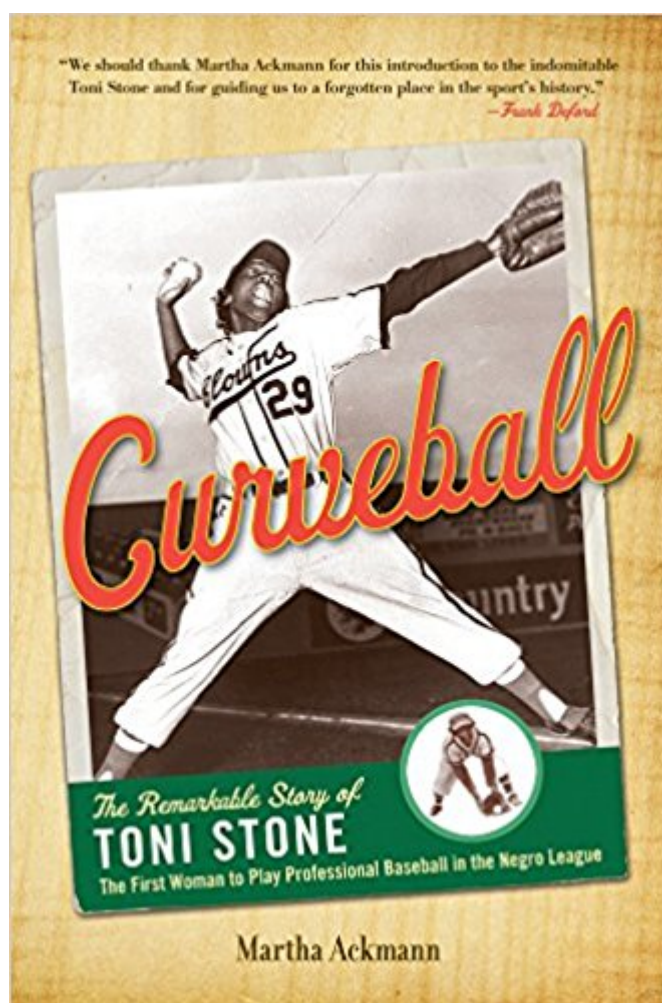


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# Curveball: The Remarkable Story Of Toni Stone, The First Woman To Play Professional Baseball In The Negro League



## Synopsis

From the time she was a girl growing up in the shadow of Lexington Park in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Toni Stone knew she wanted to play professional baseball. There was only one problem--every card was stacked against her. *Curveball* tells the inspiring story of baseball's "female Jackie Robinson," a woman whose ambition, courage, and raw talent propelled her from ragtag teams barnstorming across the Dakotas to playing in front of large crowds at Yankee Stadium. Toni Stone was the first woman to play professional baseball on men's teams. After Robinson integrated the major leagues and other black players slowly began to follow, Stone seized an unprecedented opportunity to play professional baseball in the Negro League. She replaced Hank Aaron as the star infielder for the Indianapolis Clowns and later signed with the legendary Kansas City Monarchs. Playing alongside some of the premier athletes of all time including Ernie Banks, Willie Mays, Buck O'Neil, and Satchel Paige, Toni let her talent speak for itself. *Curveball* chronicles Toni Stone's remarkable career facing down not only fastballs, but jeers, sabotage, and Jim Crow America as well. Her story reveals how far passion, pride, and determination can take one person in pursuit of a dream.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A fine addition for all baseball shelves." *Library Journal* "What makes *Curveball* stand out are the moving stories of racism faced by the black players, and Stone encountered more of it than most." *Publishers Weekly* "Expertly captures Stone's significant life and the impressive strength of her will." *Kirkus Reviews* "Martha Ackmann's biography of Toni

Stone is three stories in one—of barnstorming baseball, the insidious Jim Crow era of segregation, and gender bias by blacks and whites. They are stories worth reading." — Larry Tye, author, *Satchel: The Life and Times of an American Legend*"Wow! Martha Ackmann has done a wonderful job telling the story of Toni Stone, this remarkable woman. There are no tears, no quit, no despair in baseball. Stand tall, keep your eyes on the Prize. SWING!" — Nikki Giovanni"We need to know [Toni Stone's] story, and in Martha Ackmann's capable hands, we do. From this time forward it will be impossible to overlook Stone or her heroic contribution to both the National Pastime and the cause of women's rights." — Glenn Stout, author, *Young Woman and the Sea: How Trudy Ederle Conquered the English Channel and Inspired the World*; editor, *The Best American Sports Writing 2009*"Curveball is an eloquent and a necessary work. Toni Stone's life and this book are both wonders to behold." — Dayn Perry, columnist, FOXSports.com, and author, *Reggie Jackson: The Life and Thunderous Career of Baseball's Mr. October*"Martha Ackmann has lovingly introduced us to someone in baseball whom almost none of us ever knew existed. We should thank her for that introduction to the indomitable Toni Stone and for guiding us to a forgotten place in the sport's history." — Frank Deford, columnist, *Sports Illustrated*, and author, *Bliss, Remembered*"Curveball tells the remarkable story of Toni Stone, a trailblazer who broke the gender barriers in the world of professional baseball. Her courageous journey and experiences are sure to be an inspiration to anyone seeking to make a way out of no way." — Donna Brazile, author of *Cooking with Grease*, syndicated columnist, and Democratic strategist"As the Negro Leagues have faded from living memory, the tales have grown taller and truth has, sadly, become a casualty. Curveball bucks that trend, providing an unflinching and unvarnished account of Toni Stone's life in baseball which ultimately does more to honor her legend and example than any amount of mythmaking." — Craig Calcaterra, NBCsports.com

Martha Ackmann is a journalist and the author of the award-winning *The Mercury 13: The True Story of Thirteen Women and the Dream of Space Flight*. Her sports commentary has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and on *National Public Radio's Only a Game*. She has held fellowships and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and the Society for American Baseball Research. She teaches in the gender studies department at Mount Holyoke College.

Too little has been written about Toni Stone. This well-written biography covers her entire life,

smoothly bringing together anecdotes, interviews, and facts (and you know how baseball loves its facts and stats!). It's a book boys and girls, and the men and women they become, should read to provide a woman's perspective in the early 1950s about traditions and customs, gender roles, "official" rules, barriers of all types, and discrimination. What's changed? What more should change? Appropriate for high school and up, and recommended for all, even non baseball fans.

I loved CURVEBALL. I read it a few months ago and I've been itching to write this review.

CURVEBALL is more than just a great baseball story. It's a wonderful journey through the life of Toni Stone an extraordinary woman and athlete. Ackmann provides new insight into the often told stories of the Negro Leagues. It's hard to believe that Toni Stone's amazing life has been a secret for so long. Ackmann's love of the sport definitely comes through in her writing. Her attention to detail and her appreciation of the nuanced game of baseball make this book a joy to read. The care given to framing Stone's role in a sport reserved for men makes this book as solid as a screaming line drive to left. Sorry, just couldn't help myself - I had to toss in a baseball analogy. But, you'll be in a great baseball mood too after you read about the tribulations and triumph of Toni Stone.

This book recreates the story of Toni Stone, a ballplayer from the time she was in her teens. Unlike other pieces on Stone, which are articles or chapters, this is an entire book, and it's not padded. The author starts with Stone's life as a child in St. Paul, Minnesota, where Toni so persistently hung around ball games and ballplayers that she got asked to play by boys teams, by white teams, by older teams. Toni Stone was the real thing: a ballplayer. Curveball covers Toni's life in San Francisco and her life on the road with the Indianapolis Clowns. The terrifying conditions that black Americans faced as they traveled through the Jim Crow South are realistically depicted. The discrimination that Toni Stone faced from her own teammates are likewise realistically portrayed. Considering the fact that she had very few statistics to work with (Negro League games weren't meticulously recorded the way MLB games are), Ackmann has done an excellent job of recreating the baseball parts of Toni's life. There are places where explanations slow down the book, mainly in the middle, but the book as a whole recreates and pays tribute to the life of a strong woman who was also a ballplayer. Thanks to Ackmann's research and writing, the story of Toni Stone has been saved for posterity.

Very interesting, engaging and sad all rolled into one. I would highly recommend this book to young female ball players

One of the best baseball and civil rights books I've ever read.

Curveball will give you wonderful insight into the life of an amazing women. It is wonderfully written. This is absolutely, a must read.

Everyone should read this book because it tells a story that could be lost if not told. Toni was a remarkable woman and a ball player.

Although Toni Stone was a trail blazer, her story was buried in with other Negro League players. I feel the author lost sight of her impact and spoke a little too much about Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron, and other Negro League stars. More focus should have been placed on her alone.

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