



God Almighty Hissel: The Life and Legacy of Dick Allen

Mitchell Nathanson

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When the Philadelphia Phillies signed Dick Allen in 1960, fans of the franchise envisioned bearing witness to feats never before accomplished by a Phillies player. A half-century later, they're still trying to make sense of what they saw.

Carrying to the plate baseball's heaviest and loudest bat as well as the burden of being the club's first African American superstar, Allen found both hits and controversy with ease and regularity as he established himself as the premier individualist in a game that prided itself on conformity. As one of his managers observed, "I believe God Almighty hisself would have trouble handling Richie Allen." A brutal pregame fight with teammate Frank Thomas, a dogged determination to be compensated on par with the game's elite, an insistence on living life on his own terms and not management's: what did it all mean? Journalists and fans alike took sides with ferocity, and they take sides still.

Despite talent that earned him Rookie of the Year and MVP honors as well as a reputation as one of his era's most feared power hitters, many remember Allen as one of the game's most destructive and divisive forces, while supporters insist that he is the best player not in the Hall of Fame. *God Almighty Hissself: The Life and Legacy of Dick Allen* explains why.

Mitchell Nathanson presents Allen's life against the backdrop of organized baseball's continuing desegregation process. Drawing out the larger generational and business shifts in the game, he shows how Allen's career exposed not only the racial double standard that had become entrenched in the wake of the game's integration a generation earlier but also the forces that were bent on preserving the status quo. In the process, *God Almighty Hissself* unveils the strange and maddening career of a man who somehow managed to fulfill and frustrate expectations all at once.

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