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Rob Newell, *From the Playing Field to Battlefield: Great Athletes Who Served in World War II*, Annapolis, MD : Naval Institute Press, 2006. 165 pp.

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More often than not, the mainstream media with its commitment to drama focuses too much attention on the professional athletes who engage in acts of self-destruction or anti-social behavior. Much less attention is geared toward those athletes that do their job and invest in their families, communities, and country. Rob Newell, a career naval officer has produced a commendable little book, which briefly traces the lives of seventeen professional athletes who walked away from their professional careers to serve a far-greater cause.

Over fifty professional athletes served in the American armed forces during the Second World War, yet some who served have passed into obscurity. Here Newell attempts to partially redress this void by providing essays on Bob Feller, Tom Landry, Jack Ramsay, Jerry Coleman, Jack Lummus, Bert Shephard, Nile Kinnick, Bill Tosheff, Bob Chappuis, Hank Luisetti, Monte Irvin, Mario Tonelli, Cecil Travis, Lou Brissie, Lefty Brewer, and the ever-colorful Art Donavon. Each essay is based on the relevant secondary sources, and Newell has made use of some original source material as well. Together he has welded these sources together to provide a highly favorable assessment of each man and highlights their personal character and their contributions to the war effort.

As would be expected, Ted Williams is one of the central figures of the book. Williams was a studious man, who transformed hitting the baseball into a science. His dedication reaped reward on the playing field. In 1941, Williams became the first man since Bill Terry to hit over .400, and one year later his performance was a seminar in perfection, winning the highly coveted Triple Crown. His was the most brilliant of performances, yet the public, with images of Pearl Harbor seared in their minds, wondered whether Williams would be drafted into the military. Ultimately, Williams became a pilot in the United States Marine Corps, where he approached his development as a pilot with the same zeal and dedication to perfection that became Williams' trademark on the baseball field. Service in the Second World War, cost Williams some of the best years of his professional career, however, he was called to serve a second time during the Korean conflict and Williams again answered the call.

The overriding theme has much relevance for contemporary American pop culture. Newell rightly claims that these were men of honor, who understood that they had a responsibility to their country and stepped forward to serve the country that granted the opportunity to make a living by playing a game. He attempts to account for the motives and reasons which influenced these men to take up arms. Newell is hardly a disinterested observer; he is partial to men of principle, and rightly questions whether or not contemporary Americans are cut from the same cloth.

For example, the work closes with a brief epilogue dubbed the "Throwback;" Pat Tilman, a professional football player with the Arizona Cardinals was stirred into action by the September 11 attack on the United States . Tilman scuttled his life of ease, walked away from a multi-million dollar professional football contract to become an Army Ranger. While on patrol in Afghanistan , Tilman was killed in action by friendly fire, however, the author contends that the same values and principles that motivated Tilman were part of the genetic makeup of the generation of athletes who served the country during the Second World War.

There is much to admire in *From the Playing Field to the Battlefield*, the general reader and avid sports fan will find the essays interesting and inspiring. After reading the work, however, the reader is left to think about the numerous men and women who understand the meaning of the word sacrifice.



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