Over baseball history, which park has been the best for run scoring?1 Which player would lose the most home runs after adjustments for ballpark effect?2 Which player claims four of the top five places for best individual seasons ever played, based on all-around offensive performance.3 (See answers, below). These are only three of the intriguing questions Michael Schell addresses in Baseballs All-Time Best Sluggers, a lively examination of the game of baseball using the most sophisticated statistical tools available. The book provides an in-depth evaluation of every major offensive event in baseball history, and identifies the players with the 100 best seasons and most productive careers. For the first time ever, ballpark effects across baseball history are presented for doubles, triples, right- and left-handed home-run hitting, and strikeouts. The book culminates with a ranking of the games best all-around batters. Using a brisk conversational style, Schell brings to the plate the two most important credentials essential to producing a book of this kind: an encyclopedic knowledge of baseball and a professional background in statistics. Building on the traditions of renowned baseball historians Pete Palmer and Bill James, he has analyzed the most important factors impacting the sport, including the relative difficulty of hitting in different ballparks, the length of hitters careers, the talent pool from which players are drawn, player aging, and changes in the game that have raised or lowered major-league batting averages. Schells book finally levels the playing field, giving new credit to hitters who played in adverse conditions, and downgrading others who faced fewer obstacles. It also provides rankings based on players positions. For example, Derek Jeter ranks 295th out of 1,140 on the best batters list, but jumps to 103rd in the position-adjusted list, reflecting his offensive prowess among shortstops. Replete with dozens of never-before reported stories and statistics, Baseballs All-Time Best Sluggers will

My Personal Review:
Michael Schell is a professor of statistics at the University of North Carolina. I find that we have much in common. Like him, I work in biostatistics and also I am a great fan of baseball. An age old question in baseball is who is the greatest home run hitter of all time. Naturally Babe Ruth is usually the first name that comes to mind. At the time this book was written the use and affect of steroids on home run hitting was not as evident as it is today. The home run explosion of the 1990s with McGwire, Sosa and Bonds as the key sluggers was viewed as being based more on exceptional talent. We now know that all these players probably used steroids and steroid use may be a key factor in this performance.

Putting that aside Mike Schell uses classical statistical regression models to adjust home run total for effects that don't relate to talent. One of the most important factors is the ball park effect. Everyone knows that Boston's Fenway Park is far different in shape and home run potential than say Yankee Stadium or Dodger Stadium and before the idea of humidifying baseballs to compensate for the altitude Coors Stadium gave up the most home runs by far. Since ball players play half their games in their home park their home run total is naturally affected by the home field. So without adjustment for the home field it would be impossible to compare even contemporary sluggers among themselves. With DiMaggio being a right hand hitter playing in Yankee Stadium the ball park hurt his home run production. As a left handed pull hitter in Fenway park Williams did not reap the advantages of the left field Green Monster. Yankee Stadium favored left hand pull hitters thus helping hitters like Roger Maris but hurting the right hand power alley hitters like DiMaggio. One interesting question is how would Williams playing for the Yankees and DiMaggio for the Red Sox have affected their home run production. The models that Schell develops in this book could be used to construct "statistical" answers to such questions.

However, I think his main goal was to rank the all time best home run hitters adjusting for the home field and the era in which the player played the game. The results are interesting and sometimes lead to big surprises.

Later on Mike ventured into the question of who the best hitters were using similar models. This was the subject of his second book in which he claimed that Tony Gwynn and not Ty Cobb was the all-time greatest hitter based on the rankings derived from the models.

For home runs Bonds clearly stood out over the rest. In his best years he got record numbers of walks including an amazing number of intentional walks. This meant that his amazing home run total came with the handicap of not getting as many opportunities to hit compared to an
average player. Today's skeptics could rightly say that it was steroids as much or more than talent that gave him the opportunity to produce so many home runs.

Other books similar to this one including Schell's other book and those of Albert and Bennett along with a number of publications by other statisticians and Bill James have demonstrated that statistics has a legitimate place in the science of sports and particularly in baseball.

This is a very interesting book and it gives an easy to read approach to statistical methods that the techniques themselves get a lot of attention. Statistical courses that use baseball examples make it pleasant and easy to learn the fundamental statistics concepts. Albert published a baseball book with this theme.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Baseballs All-Time Best Sluggers: Adjusted Batting Performance from Strikeouts to Home Runs by Michael J. Schell - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!