With a new epilogue covering the late 1990s, this book takes a look at the world of baseball scouting. Kevin Kerrane makes clear the point that baseball is big business.

My Personal Review:
Dollar Sign on the Muscle was the first work of serious literary journalism I ever read. I bought it in the sixth grade, in the gift shop at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., which I was visiting for the first time with my parents. I read most of it in the airport and on the flight home to Florida.

The book had a more significant impact on me than the trip to Washington did. It was astonishing to me that books like this existed in the world. When we returned, I raided all the narrative nonfiction books about sports from the Palm Beach County library. Most of them weren't so great, but I did, by way of this search, find my way to George Plimpton, Gay Talese, Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, etc., which set me on a lifetime course of better and more fulfilling reading.

I recently reread Dollar Sign on the Muscle, and it's better, actually, than I remembered. It's a historical document, now. The scouts and the world of old-time baseball men belong largely to the past. The era of Theo Epstein and Billy Beane, with its emphasis on all things quantifiable, is probably good for baseball, but it's not terribly romantic.

But that's not what makes the book so good. It's the knack Kerrane has for rendering his characters whole. You feel like you know these guys, you know what makes them tick, you know what it's like to spend an afternoon with them, you know what they want, need, desire, what makes their hearts beat hard. Many of Kerrane's old scouts are likely dead now, but in the pages of Dollar Sign on the Muscle, they live and breathe like they did then.

Perhaps with time, this book will find its way into print again. I hope so. Meantime, see if you can find a used copy somewhere. It'll be worth whatever it costs you, I promise.