The 1998 season was a year of wonders, to be sure, but attendance remained lower than it was before the 94 strike, 14 clubs suffered box-office declines, and the TV ratings for the World Series were in the tank. Baseball is back, Hall-of-Fame second baseman Joe Morgan observes, but its not back all the way. One of the National Pastimes most engaging and entertaining explainers--as broadcaster, author, and spokesman--Morgan steps up in complexity from the basics of his last effort, Baseball for Dummies, to take some candid swings at whats right with the game these days, whats wrong with it, and how the wrongs can be righted.

Naturally, he insists that baseballs owners and the players union put their house in order, and here hes not afraid to point fingers and name names. He hates that an owner like the White Soxs Jerry Reinsdorf can cry about the lack of fiscal responsibility in the game and then break the bank 18 months later to sign Albert Belle, a move that was so expensive he had to dismantle his team to pay for it. Who, asks Morgan, twisted his arm to do that? Nor does he keep still about baseballs less-than-excellent record on minority hiring in executive and managerial positions. On the field, he strongly advocates a return to more base stealing and a higher mound, the dumping of the DH, and a less fluid strike zone. In a nice touch, he recruits the opinions of prominent baseball names--like union head Donald Fehr, manager Dusty Baker, executive Mike Veeck, and pitcher David Cone--and then comments on them. He presents a strong case for why former teammate Pete Roses only admission to the Hall should be by ticket. For Morgan, the 1998 season opened a window, but thats all it did. How we utilize this opportunity, he writes, will determine whether baseball can reclaim its title as the National Pastime, or will become a sport that has passed its time. --Jeff Silverman

My Personal Review:
Joe knows more about baseball than Admiral Doubleday. It is an honor and a privilege to read Joe's insight into the game. I am not so sure Joe is on base in the last chapter dealing with minorities in executive positions. Joe went back to college to earn his degree because he promised his mother he would. Do all of the minority candidates Joe speaks about being qualified for high level positions in MLB have degrees? Is that a prerequisite? Worth thinking about...

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