

THE ULTIMATE PLAY LIST

BY
GREG
KELLY

WHAT ARE THE BEST
SPORTS SONGS OF ALL TIME?
IT'S TIME TO FACE THE MUSIC

Music and sports are so intertwined it's hard to imagine one without the other. Boston fans sing "Tessie" and "Sweet Caroline" to rally the Red Sox. The Alan Parsons Project greets the Bulls. "One Shining Moment" gift-wraps the Final Four. The action on the field has a built-in sound track—a perfect score.

It works the other way too: Sports is infused in music as much as music is infused in sports. Last year John Fogerty was honored at the National Baseball Hall of Fame on the 25th anniversary of "Centerfield." This month singer-songwriter Terry Cashman will receive the same nod for "Talkin' Baseball." In recent years Fenway Park has been a literal bandbox, hosting shows by Springsteen and the Stones, among others; in 2005, Jimmy Buffett (a monster Cubs fan and part-owner of a minor league team) played the first concert at Wrigley Field. Joe Frazier crooned, Bernie Williams strums, Ron Artest and Kobe Bryant rap (unfortunately) and former defensive tackle Mike Reid churns out beautiful country melodies. And the list of artists with sports-themed songs spans the breadth of popular music: Bob Dylan, Jay-Z, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, Common, New Order, Miles Davis, the Pogues, Snoop Dogg . . . and on and on.

That is the rich vein from which SI has mined its first collection of Sports' Greatest Hits. These aren't stadium anthems (no Gary Glitter here) or novelties (sorry, "Super Bowl Shuffle"). These are songs by serious artists who used sports as subject and metaphor, rated for both the music and their message. Many are by great storytellers with wonderful tales to tell.

The philosopher Umberto Eco said we like lists because they bring order to chaos and make us feel immortal. And we know that rock 'n' roll will never die. Read on, then, and live forever.

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TO HEAR SAMPLES OF THE SONGS ON **SI'S ULTIMATE PLAY LIST** AND DOWNLOAD THEM FROM ITUNES.



In Dylan's hands, the tale of Moore (left) and Ramos became a musical heavyweight.



1 WHO KILLED DAVEY MOORE?

Bob Dylan, 1963

► "This is a song about a boxer," the always enigmatic Dylan said when he introduced this ballad at his landmark Lincoln Center performance in 1964. "It's got nothing to do with boxing." That's true, in the same way that *Moby Dick* has nothing to do with whaling. Still, "Who Killed Davey Moore?" remains a searing indictment of the fight game to this day.

Moore was a 29-year-old featherweight champion from Springfield, Ohio, when he defended his title against a heavy-punching Cuban émigré named Sugar Ramos on March 21, 1963. A crowd of more than 25,000 filled Dodger Stadium, which was less than a year old and hosting its first fight night. Moore gave nearly as good as he got, but in the 10th round he was knocked to the canvas for the second time, his head snapping against the bottom rope, and the referee ruled a knockout. Moore was able to talk to reporters for 40 minutes after the fight, laughing and joking about a rematch. A short time later, however, the swelling in his injured brain stem sent him into a coma from which he never awakened. He died three days later.

In the song, which Dylan performed for the first time less than three weeks after the fight, several characters deny their culpability in Moore's death. The referee, the fight fan, the manager, the gambler, the sportswriter, the opponent all sing, "No, you can't blame me at all." But the prick to the consciences of all involved—and to the listener's—is inescapable.

Little changed after the fight. There were Senate hearings and calls for boxing reform after Moore's death, and the ring ropes were made safer as a result, but the sport goes right on. Not at one venue, though. In the 48 years since Davey Moore's death, there has never been another fight card at Dodger Stadium.



2 SURFIN' USA

The Beach Boys, 1963

► Think about where surfing would be without the **Beach Boys**. (And don't listen to surfing purists, who'll say, "Better off." They just want uncrowded waves.) In 1959 there were an estimated 5,000 surfers worldwide. Four years later there were two million, almost all of them in California. The movie *Gidget*, in '59, helped launch the craze, but the Beach Boys, who first hit the local L.A. charts with "Surfin'" in 1961, broadcast the sport's siren song all over the world, giving the craze its anthem.

Oddly enough, Brian Wilson, the Pied Piper of surf mania and the eccentric genius who wrote the Beach Boys' songs and meticulously crafted their sound, was deathly afraid of the water. But he had a role model close at hand—his brother Dennis. "Dennis wasn't really a musician in the beginning," says Domenic Priore, the author of *Pop Surf Culture*. "He really did fix up cars and race them, and he surfed a ton, so Brian primarily was writing songs about Dennis's lifestyle." Safe in his room, Wilson cranked out hit after hit about surfers, souped-up cars, summertime fun and girls in bikinis. "Surfin' USA" was the song that launched the band into national stardom.

3 ALL KINDS OF TIME

Fountains of Wayne, 2003



► Adam Schlesinger, the bassist for the ironic indie band Fountains of Wayne, is an unusually versatile songwriter. He's been nominated for a Grammy (for the

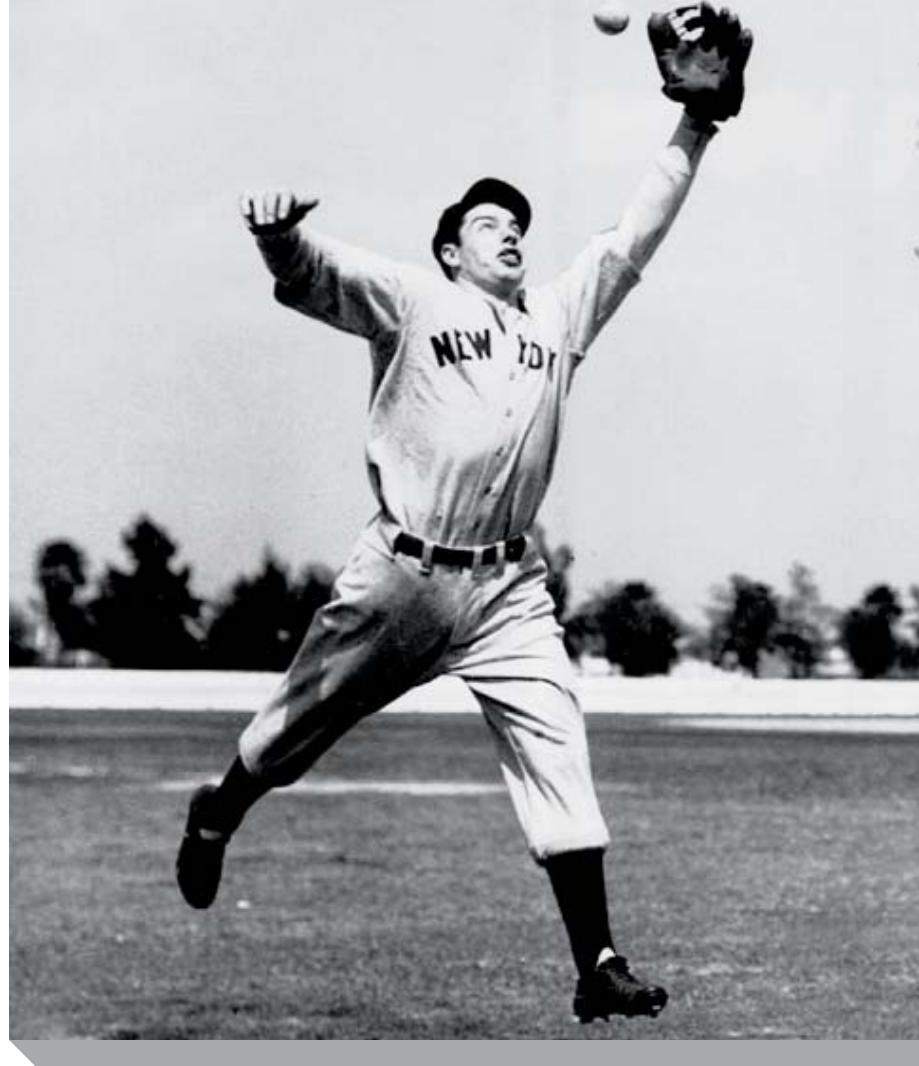
song “Stacy’s Mom”), an Oscar (*That Thing You Do*), a Tony (*Cry-Baby*) and an Emmy (*A Colbert Christmas*). But of all his compositions, “All Kinds of Time” might be his most satisfying. “Every once in a while a song turns out better than you expected,” he says, “and that’s what it felt like with this one.”

It begins with a sportswriting cliché—a young quarterback with “all kinds of time”—and turns into a moving ballad about youth, zen calm and coming through in the clutch. On a crucial drive the young QB drops back and, as tacklers close in on the pocket, finds time slowing down. Suddenly, he knows just what to do. He finds his open receiver, and the whole world is his. “I thought of that phrase *all kinds of time*, and taking it literally,” says Schlesinger, who describes himself as a casual football fan. “I wanted to pick one little moment in a game and see if I could stretch it out for the length of an entire song. NFL Films was the inspiration, pretty much. I just thought of it with that super slo-mo vibe.” That made it all the more satisfying when a few years ago the NFL used the song in a commercial with footage of iconic quarterbacks. “That was all I had really wanted for that song,” Schlesinger says.

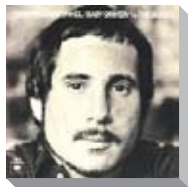
4 RACING IN THE STREETS Bruce Springsteen, 1978



► There are deliberate echoes of earlier muscle-car tunes in the opening lines: “I got a ’69 Chevy with a 396/Fuelie heads and a Hurst on the floor.” “I wanted my street racers to carry the years between the car songs of the ’60s and 1978 America,” Springsteen wrote in his book *Songs*. Those years haven’t been kind to the Boss’s racer, who is desperately holding on to his youth, a crummy job and the girl he won over three years earlier with his hot car. Author Nick Hornby calls “Racing” one of Springsteen’s bleakest songs—which is saying something. But for its magic of summoning an entire world of street racing in under seven minutes, it’s a powerful piece of songwriting.



5 THE BOXER Simon & Garfunkel, 1969



► When New York City was knocked onto the canvas in the weeks after Sept. 11, 2001, Paul Simon played this classic about a troubled pugilist on the first episode of *Saturday Night Live* following the terrorist attacks. Simon sings that, despite being discouraged and down on his luck, “the fighter still remains” and refuses to leave the city—the perfect message of perseverance for a country struggling to get back on its feet after absorbing a brutal blow. Simon told *Playboy* in 1984 that the boxer in the song was really a metaphor for himself, a way of describing his reaction when the enormously popular Simon and Art Garfunkel started to get negative feedback from music critics in the late 1960s. “Everybody’s beating me up,” he said, “and I’m telling you now I’m going to go away if you don’t stop.”

6 FIFTY MISSION CAP The Tragically Hip, 1992

► This clever rocker tells the story of **Bill Barilko**, a Maple Leafs defenseman who scored only five goals in 47 career playoff games but made his last one count: He won the 1951 Stanley Cup with an overtime score against the Canadiens. Barilko disappeared weeks later, presumed lost in a small-plane crash on his way home from a fishing trip. The Leafs’ fortunes plummeted as well. They wouldn’t win another Cup until 1962—the same year Barilko’s body was found in the wild.



TSW/CON/SMI (OMAGGIO); COLUMBIA RECORDS (RACING IN THE STREETS); COLUMBIA RECORDS/LEGACY (THE BOXER); AP (FIFTY MISSION CAP)

7 CENTERFIELD John Fogerty, 1985



► Fogerty was in a slump in 1985. He hadn’t put out an album in more than a decade and was mired in litigation with an old record company. Like a desperate ballplayer, he needed a hit. “As I thought about different things that were special or important to me,” he says, “I remembered the idea of centerfield I’d had as a kid.”

When Fogerty was growing up in Berkeley, Calif., “My dad and my uncles would talk about **Joe DiMaggio** and their eyes would get real big,” he says. “I got the idea that centerfield at Yankee Stadium must be the center of the universe and the coolest of all places. I said, ‘That’s it, I want to be in centerfield.’”

Centerfield became the name of the album, but it didn’t occur to Fogerty until most of the tracks were finished that adding a song about the position would make it perfect. The album went double platinum and was No. 1 on the *Billboard* charts—a certified home run.

8 HIGH EXPECTATIONS Common, 1997



► The Chicago-born rapper gets inside the head of a high school hoops star and presents a haunting interior monologue about the promises and pitfalls of being an NBA wannabe. Hoop dreams can be a blessing and a curse for kids looking to escape the inner city: “For the game of life, full courts ain’t preppin’ us/Schools want me, but the ghost of Manigault haunts me.” The baller’s interest in a life of letters, though, is limited to luxury cars (SEs and GSs, he says); he’s aware of the tragic example of Len Bias, but he chooses to ignore those lessons (“Either rich poor or Mike is who I wanna be like/Story of many black males that I refuse to rewrite”). Common, who also starred as a fictional New Jersey Net in the 2010 movie *Just Wright*, knows his pro hoops. His father, Lonnie Lynn, played for the ABA’s Pittsburgh Pipers.

WARNER BROS. RECORDS (CENTERFIELD); RELATIVITY/LEGACY (HIGH EXPECTATIONS); KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES (EMINEM); TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES (LIL WAYNE); BRYAN SMITH/GETTY IMAGES (JAY-Z); GRAHAM DENHOLM/GETTY IMAGES (SNOOP DOGG)

SHOUT-OUTS

HONORABLE MENTIONS

► Wu-Tang Clan frontman GZA once said that the goal of hip-hop is to “deliver the truth in a brutal fashion.” In other words, rappers rap what they know—which is why sports is like a lyrical backbeat for hip-hop artists. Jay-Z has shout-outs to everyone from LeBron James to Harold Miner. Pittsburgh rapper Wiz Khalifa saluted the Steelers last year with “Black and Yellow”; Lil Wayne answered with “Green and Yellow” for his Packers before this year’s Super Bowl. And musicologists could spend days sifting through the many athletic allusions of Jersey City rapper Joe Budden. Here’s SI’s ranking of the best sports name checks.



15. “There’s more to me than you’ll ever know/
And I’ve got more hits than Sadaharu Oh”
Hey Ladies,
Beastie Boys

14. “Money green, yellow broad/
Aaron Rodgers, MVP award...
Terrible towels, that s---’s borin’/
We got the ball, you know we scorin’”
Green and Yellow,
Lil Wayne

13. “I’m buzzin’, Dirty Dozen,
naughty, rotten rhymer/
Cursing at you players worse than Marty Schottenheimer”
Just Don’t Give a F---, Eminem

12. “I ball for real, y’all n----- is Sam Bowie/And with the third pick I made the earth sick/M.J., him Jay, fade away perfect”
Hola’ Hovito, Jay-Z

11. “I could fake to the left or,

penetrate like Mike/Or 360 degrees in the air as Dominique might”
Shooting Hoops, G. Love and Special Sauce

10. “When I come back like Jordan wearing the 4-5/
It ain’t to play games with you, it’s to aim at you”
Encore, Jay-Z

9. “Hey, is that the truth or are you talking trash?/Is your game MVP like Steve Nash?”
Promiscuous, Nelly Furtado featuring Timbaland

8. “You know how I do/We stay on your crew/Like Mario Lemieux”

7. “If you a thug or a rap artist/
Respect me like Pesci/If rap was hockey/I be Gretzky”
N----- Done Started
Something, DMX

6. “Analyze the strength of my game/Like Lee Corso/Call me a lost soul/With a vest on my torso”
Hellbound, Eminem

5. “Rap please us!/Deliver scriptures similar to Jesus/That you couldn’t catch/If you was Ivan Rodriguez”
Official, Pharoahe Monch

4. “I’m playin’ point guard on my favorite team/I got the big perm, doing interviews with Chick Hearn/At Stu Lantz we do a dance/When it rains poppin’ champagne”
Hoop Dreams (He Got Game), Snoop Dogg

3. “Now I can sit and talk s--- like Skip Bayless/You looking for these shoes baby, you can skip Payless”
That’s Not Love, Fabolous featuring Lil Wayne

2. “You was hot when Shaq teamed up with Penny/Man, you was magic/I mean, look at you now, ho, you just tragic”
Tragedy, Nicki Minaj

1. “I ain’t scared to buck at dude/He a Keith Van Horn n-----, he was only tough in school”
Wake Up Show freestyle, Joe Budden

9 3RD BASE, DODGER STADIUM

Ry Cooder, 2005



► Cooder, the producer and guitarist who united a troupe of Cuban musicians for the 1997 album *Buena Vista Social Club*, got a Grammy nomination eight years later for his album *Chavez Ravine*. The record tells the story of the Mexican-Americans displaced from their Los Angeles neighborhood in the 1950s for what was supposed to be a public-housing project, but in a bit of crony capitalism became the Dodgers' home instead. "3rd Base," laid out over a languorous Latin beat, tells the story of a stadium worker fondly remembering his old home, which once stood where third base is. **BONUS TRACK:** "There Used to Be a Ballpark," by Frank Sinatra. This 1973 tune has just the opposite sentiment: It laments the demolition of a ballpark to build a housing project.

10 MUHAMMAD ALI

Faithless, 2001



► Beneath a tough urban beat, the British dance band tells a sweet tale of a young black kid who becomes more confident by following the example of Ali: "Ten years old suddenly bold/Cause I resolved to live like my hero in the ring." Vocalist Maxi Jazz raps on top of a pulsing bass line. It's a strange mix of Philly soul and British trip-hop, and it works.

11 GOD'S FOOTBALLER

Billy Bragg, 1991



► The string arrangement is a bit weepy, but the tune has a spirituality appropriate to its subject: footballer Peter Knowles, who was a promising 24-year-old forward in The Football League in England when he abruptly walked away from the game in 1970. Knowles devoted his life to the Jehovah's Witnesses after he began to feel, as the song says, "The glory of the sports pages/Is but the worship of false idols."



The death of Kim (on canvas) after his loss to Mancini inspired two outstanding songs.

12 BOOM BOOM MANCINI

Warren Zevon, 1987



► Most songwriters grapple with the sport's morality in boxing songs. Not Zevon, who takes a swing at those who criticized Mancini after the 1982 death of Korean lightweight Duk Koo Kim, the reigning champ who was pummeled by Mancini, then fell into a coma shortly after the 14-round bout and passed away four days later. "They made hypocrite judgments after the fact," Zevon sings. "But the name of the game is be hit and hit back."

Mancini wasn't so cavalier about the tragedy; after Kim's death he fell into a depression. He was never the same fighter, but he did recover sufficiently to reclaim his lightweight crown in 1984 with a victory over Bobby Chacon—a bout celebrated in Zevon's song. And Mancini was thrilled with Zevon, who died of lung cancer in 2003. "I was a big fan of his," Boom Boom says. "He was alternative before there was such a word. When they told me he'd made a record about me, I was stunned."

13 DUK KOO KIM

Sun Kil Moon, 2003



► A different view of the Mancini-Kim fight—from the canvas—is presented in this beautifully melancholy ballad. Indie artist Mark Kozelek took Sun Kil Moon as his nom de musique, a reference to an obscure Korean bantamweight champ from the late 1980s. ("Great images with all three words, Sun Kil Moon," says Kozelek, who's that rare combination of emo rocker and fight fan. "I've probably used those words a thousand times in my songs.") He tells Kim's story in a 14½ minute homage with a Neil Young flavor. Says Kozelek, who has also

written tributes to two other fighters who died young, Salvador Sanchez and Pancho Villa, "The Duk Koo Kim tragedy, with his mother and the referee committing suicide afterward—I can't believe there aren't dozens of songs inspired by that. Books and movies are made about these guys, so why not songs?"



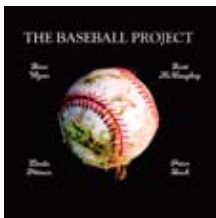
RICHARD JACKSON (MANCINI-KIM FIGHT); PETER BERSON/COLLECTION OF CRAIG HAMILTON (FIGHT POSTER); NONESUCH (THIRD BASE); ARISTA (MUHAMMAD ALI); YEP-ROCK RECORDS (GOD'S FOOTBALLER); VIRGIN RECORDS U.S. (BOOM BOOM MANCINI); CALDO VEROE (DUK KOO KIM)

PILING UP THE HITS

Thanks to The Baseball Project, those who love hardball *and* songs that rock have a new alternative | **BY STEPHEN CANNELLA**



The Baseball Project's heavy hitters, from left: Buck, Wynn, McCaughey and Pitmon.



Indie rockers generally don't need to bring their good fastball when they go on the road. But for the members of The Baseball Project—an alternative supergroup that includes guitarist and songwriters Steve Wynn and Scott McCaughey, bassist Peter Buck and drummer (and Wynn's wife) Linda Pitmon—throwing strikes is now as critical as staying in tune. Two albums packed with sharp, witty original baseball songs, *Vol. 1: Frozen Ropes and Dying Quails* in 2008 and this year's *Volume 2: High and Inside*, have

put the band on the ceremonial first-pitch circuit. In the last month McCaughey threw one in Milwaukee, Wynn in Chicago and Pitmon at a minor league game in Davenport, Iowa. "Linda's was high and outside," says McCaughey. "Mine was

high and outside. Steve's was just high. Very high." Wynn's defense: "It would have been a strike for Dave Winfield."

Musical explorations of the national pastime often devolve into hokiness, but The BP—the band hatched when Wynn and McCaughey got to talking baseball at a party the night before the 2007 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductions—avoids novelty status by combining ardent fandom with serious musical heat. Wynn has led several acclaimed alt bands, most notably the Dream Syndicate; McCaughey fronts The Minus 5 and is a frequent collaborator with R.E.M., which Buck helped found. The result: well-crafted, guitar-driven tunes that celebrate the game's giants (Ted Williams, Curt Flood, Roger Clemens), characters (Dizzy Dean, Satchel Paige) and tragic heroes (Big Ed Delahanty, Harvey Haddix, Carl Mays). "The Straw That Stirs the Drink," sung from the point of view of an unnamed but easily identifiable Yankees slugger, captures the flavor of the Bronx Zoo of the late 1970s: "The captain's a hero, he can't do what I can/The skipper's drunk and beating on the marshmallow man."

"Baseball is full of cool stories, strange twists of fate and moments that become turning points in people's lives," says Wynn. "The songs we write about baseball are as personal as songs we write about anything else." After the release of *Vol. 1*, the members of The BP learned they weren't the only rockers who embrace the game. *Volume 2* has guest appearances by several indie standouts, including The Hold Steady's Craig Finn, Death Cab for Cutie's Ben Gibbard, Steve Berlin of Los Lobos and Ira Kaplan of Yo La Tengo. "Once we made it safe for rockers to like baseball," says Wynn, "they all came out of the woodwork." It's easy to see why.



14 SONG FOR SONNY LISTON

Mark Knopfler, 2004

► It's a bluesy tune that perfectly captures the menace and mystery of the former heavyweight champ, whose death in 1970 was ruled a heroin overdose. The British guitar master sings of Liston's demise, "There was no investigation as such/He hated needles, but he knew too much." As for why he wrote it, Knopfler told *The New York Times*, "I was rooting around in my childhood, maybe the way you do when you get to a certain age. And I suppose **Sonny Liston** always stuck with me. One of the reasons why sports stays alive in us is that there's part of us that wants to keep the child alive."

15 BALLAD OF BJORN BORG

Pernice Brothers, 2001



► **Borg** won 11 Grand Slam titles, but it's easy to forget how quickly he flamed out. He won his last major tennis tournament the day after his 25th birthday and played only three times after that, sleepwalking into early retirement. Joe Pernice hasn't forgotten. He sets Borg's loss of interest to a dreamy melody that belies the Swedish star's ennui. The song can easily stand as a metaphor for a love affair that's played out. **BONUS TRACK:** "Moonshot Manny," also by Joe Pernice, is a catchy, Latin-flavored 2004 tribute to slugger Manny Ramirez.

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

These songs may not rank with the All-Stars—but that doesn't make them any less fun

1 That Last Home Run McKinley Mitchell (1974)

Written by the great bluesman Willie Dixon and performed by fellow blues traveler Mitchell, this tune honored Hank Aaron's pursuit of Babe Ruth's home run record. Dixon was outside Cincinnati's Riverfront Stadium hawking copies when Aaron hit his record-tying 714th in 1974.

2 Hit Someone (The Hockey Song) Warren Zevon (2002)

This bruising ballad was cowritten by *Detroit Free Press* columnist Mitch Albom, who apparently wasn't softened up by his Tuesdays with Morrie. That voice yelling, "Hit someone!" in the chorus is David Letterman's.

3 Day We Lost the America's Cup Tom Paxton (1985)

A wry folkie put-down of yachting and the bourgeoisie that asks a man on the street about the loss of the Cup. He responds, "Did we lose the saucer too?"

4 Baseball Altamont The Nightmares (1985)

A punk tribute to a 1984 mini-riot at Shea Stadium during a Mets game. It's worth hearing for the reference to Keith Hernandez's bumming a smoke from Doc Gooden and watching the chaos.

5 Let's Get Metsmerized The New York Mets (1986)

Perhaps George Foster's greatest contribution to the Mets: He got teammates to rap. Who knew Tim Teufel could rhyme?

16 BOXING Ben Folds Five, 1995



► A different look at Muhammad Ali, from later in his life. This is a poignant imagined conversation between the Champ and Howard Cosell as Ali's career is winding down: "My intention's become/Not to lose what I've won/Ambition has given way to desperation." "Boxing might have been a strange subject for a romantic waltz," says Folds. "But when something that's not normal gives me a chill while I'm writing it, even now, I don't question it—I'm thankful." **BONUS TRACK:** Check out Bette Midler's cover.



Ali (right) loved to clown with Cosell, but Ben Folds imagined them in a more serious vein.

17 SPEEDWAY AT NAZARETH Mark Knopfler, 2000



► A surprising tribute to Indy car racing from Knopfler, who said the song arose from his friendship with Stefan Johansson, a Swedish driver on the Formula 1 and CART circuits in the 1980s and '90s. It chronicles a fictional CART season: The narrator gets put into the wall at Phoenix, drives with three cracked vertebrae in Long Beach and barely qualifies at the Indy 500. His season is finally redeemed with a victory at Nazareth, Pa., the home of **Mario Andretti**. The song is only inspired by Johansson, though: He never won in more than 75 starts in F1 and CART.



18 FUGUE FOR TINHORNS Guys and Dolls, 1950



► "I got the horse right here/The name is Paul Revere/And here's a guy that says if the weather's clear/Can do, can do." There's never been a better tribute to the degenerate horse player and never will be. Based on the short stories of Damon Runyon and with marvelous music and lyrics by Frank Loesser, the *Guys and Dolls* classic (best when performed by Stubby Kaye) nails the gambler's perpetual—or is it misguided?—optimism.

19 TOURNAMENT OF HEARTS The Weakerthans, 2007



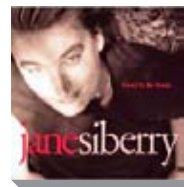
► Who has the greatest song about curling? None other than this Weezerish band from Winnipeg. Here the sport of stones and sweepers is both setting and metaphor. Over beers at a bonspiel, a lonely narrator likens his inability to communicate to a curling rock sliding by its target: "Why can't I draw right up to what I want to say/Why can't I ever stop where I want to stay?" Appropriately enough, the tune rocks.

20 TESSIE Dropkick Murphys, 2004



► "Tessie" was originally a Broadway standard from *The Silver Slipper*, a turn-of-the-19th-century play, about a woman singing to her parakeet. But during the first World Series in 1903, between the Boston Americans and the Pittsburgh Pirates, Boston rooters sang it so relentlessly and annoyingly that it was said to distract the Pirates, who blew a 3-1 lead and lost the best-of-nine Series. The Murphys knew their history and released a version—updated with lyrics about the Red Sox—in the summer of 2004. Sure enough, that year Boston pulled off one of the greatest rallies in baseball history, coming back from a 3-0 deficit to beat the Yankees in the ALCS and then winning the team's first World Series in 86 years. In the album's liner notes the band says, "We recorded this song in June 2004 and after giving it to the Red Sox told anyone that would listen that this song would guarantee a World Series victory. Obviously no one listened to us or took us seriously. . . . Luckily for us things turned around for the Red Sox, and the rest is history."

21 HOCKEY Jane Siberry, 1989



► A sports song? While this Canadian singer-songwriter is more closely associated with *Grey's Anatomy* than, say, the Grey Cup, she sings an ethereally sweet and impressionistic tune about the joys of pond hockey. But even shinny can get rough. Siberry drops a couple of f bombs and makes a nice reference to the riots in Montreal after NHL president Clarence Campbell suspended Maurice Richard for the playoffs in 1955 because the Rocket had slugged a ref. (A Canadiens fan later slapped Campbell during a game at the Montreal Forum.) "I remembered the purity of staying outside just to stay outside, the feeling of cold cheeks, sisters picking up and brushing off their younger brother," says Siberry. "The response to the song has been very strong. It seems remembering pure things brings a sense of loss, but it can be a good reminder to weave such joy into our lives."

22 THE HITTER Bruce Springsteen, 2005



► If you think "Racing in the Streets" is bleak, don't look for uplift here. "The Hitter" is right out of John Steinbeck: It follows the rise of a fictional Depression-era fighter and then his crushing downward spiral. In his prime the character beats Jack Thompson, the real-life welterweight champ in the early 1930s. But in the end, after he's wasted his money and been forced to take a dive, he's reduced to pleading with his mother to unlock her door and give him a place to rest awhile. And then he's on the move again:

*Tonight in the shipyard, a man draws a circle in the dirt
I move to the center and I take off my shirt
I study him for the cuts, the scars, the pain man nor time can erase
I move hard to the left and I strike to the face.*

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VOCAL COACH

San Francisco's **Tim Flannery** can usually be found doing one of two things: flashing a sign or singing a song | **BY KELLI ANDERSON**



Giants third base coach Tim Flannery learned most of his baseball history from song lyrics, and he doesn't hesitate to use those lyrics to teach. Not long ago he shared a cautionary tale from the work of Chuck Brodsky, whose 2002 album *The Baseball Ballads* includes the story of Fred (Bonehead) Merkle, who cost the 1908 Giants a chance to win the pennant when as a base runner he failed to tag second base on what would have been a walk-off single. "They thought it was a bedtime story," says Flannery. "But it could happen again."

Yet baseball is rarely the overt subject of the songs written by Flannery, a guitarist and singer-songwriter whose bluegrass style reflects influences that range from the Kentucky roots of his banjo-playing grandmother to the country rock of the late Gram Parsons. "A lot of my songs could be baseball songs, even though they aren't about bats and balls," he says. "They are about being on the road, and the characters you meet out on the road."

After his 11-year career as an infielder with the Padres ended in 1989, Flannery, 53, managed for several years in the minors, often pulling out his guitar and harmonica for the 15-hour bus rides. "The guitar was a great way to connect with the players when I was managing," says Flannery, who plays 20-plus gigs every off-season and has performed with Willie Nelson, Jackson Browne and Jimmy Buffett. Now, though, he says, "Baseball holds your music back. I don't want baseball fans to show up thinking I'm going to do baseball songs. Our following is music people. I have two separate lives." Some people find that weird, he adds. "They ask, 'Why do you play music?' That's like someone asking me, 'Do you want water or air?' I have to have both."

Like Tim Flannery, a number of musicians have made the transition from professional athlete to musician. Here are our fave five.



Carlos Arroyo
The 10-year NBA veteran launched his own label, and his 2010 reggaeton single, "Se Va Conmigo," established him as a player to watch on the urban Latin music scene.



Joe Frazier
Smokin' Joe started out as a singer, working nightclubs when he wasn't boxing on the weekends. He sang throughout his career, and his 1976 single "If You Go, Stay Gone," has a nice, soulful vibe.



Mike Reid
It's hard to believe that the former trench warrior and All-Pro on the Bengals' defensive line wrote Bonnie Raitt's achingly beautiful "I Can't Make You Love Me," but he did.



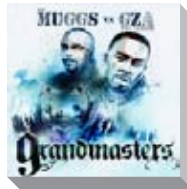
Wayman Tisdale
A star at Oklahoma and a 12-year NBA vet, Tisdale, who died in 2009, laid down smooth-jazz bass lines on eight albums. *Face to Face*, in 2001, hit No. 1 on the *Billboard* contemporary jazz chart.



Bernie Williams
He's played centerfield at Yankee Stadium and classical guitar concerts around the country—the man knows big stages. His 2009 album *Moving Forward* was nominated for a Latin Grammy.

23 QUEEN'S GAMBIT

GZA and DJ Muggs, 2005



► GZA, a founding member of Wu-Tang Clan and widely considered one of rap's top wordsmiths, outdoes himself here,

working the name of almost every NFL team—the Falcons missed the cut—into this ballad of sexual bravado. (Note: The explicit content is not for the easily offended.) Admittedly, some of the NFL name dropping is tortured ("She told me to call her if I came to town/I started Texan her soon as my plane had touched down"), but GZA gets credit for the effort, and the lines that work are pay dirt.

24 LAUGHING RIVER

Robert Earl Keen and Greg Brown, 2009



► Heartbreak is essential to sad country songs, and whose heart has been stomped on more than a career minor leaguer's?

Brown, who wrote the tune, and Keen team up for a bluegrass duet about an aging ballplayer who has spent 20 years in the bushes and is ready to call it quits. His cousin wants to fix him up, and there's a pitch-perfect touch of desperation, pride and hope as the ballplayer says about the potential blind date, "she even saw me play once."

25 MUDFOOTBALL

Jack Johnson, 2001



► The celebrated surfer dude specializes in laid-back acoustic rock, and even when his subject is football there's a gentle vibe. This is the kind of pickup game in the mud that everyone remembers fondly: "Rain is pourin', touchdown scorin'/Keep on rollin', never borin'." But the memories are balanced by a bitersweet chorus that reminds us that good times like this don't last forever.

TIM MANTOANI (FLANNERY); ALEXANDER TAMARGO/GETTY IMAGES (ARROYO); BETTMANN/CORBIS (FRAZIER); THOMAS S. ENGLAND/GETTY IMAGES (REID); JAMES SCHNEP/TISDALE); AL THEEMANS (WILLIAMS); ANELES/RECORDS (QUEEN'S GAMBIT); LOST HIGHWAY RECORDS (LAUGHING RIVER); EVERETT INC. (MUDFOOTBALL)



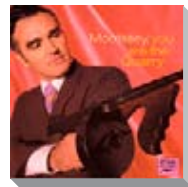
26 DREAM TEAM

Spearhead, 1994

► Michael Franti, the rabble-rousing leader of the hip-hop group Spearhead, mixes up a rollicking potion that's one part basketball and two parts black-liberation philosophy. He points out that while the country was embracing the **Olympic Dream Team** in '92 there were also riots in L.A. over the beating of Rodney King: "Brothas on the street/And everyone is scared of ya/So how could 10 Africans represent America?" So Franti assembles his own fantasy squad of black heroes. Huey Newton is the shooting guard "'cause he was extra hard." Marcus Garvey rebounds and outlet passes to Nat Turner, "'cause he can turn the corner." Angela Davis is posting up, and then there's the ultimate sixth man: "Dr. King/We bring him in in a pinch."

27 MUNICH AIR DISASTER 1958

Morrissey, 2004



► Think about the shock it would be in this country if an NFL or MLB team's plane went down midseason. That's what happened to

English football when Manchester United's plane crashed during takeoff on an icy runway during a refueling stop after Man U played Red Star Belgrade in the 1958 European Cup. Over half the players were killed, and others were injured too severely to play again. The overwrought emotion Morrissey brings to the song makes a larger point about fandom and the tragedy of athletes dying young. **BONUS TRACK:** "News and Tributes," by the Futureheads, a more up-tempo treatment of the same subject.

THEO WESTENBERGER (DREAM TEAM); SANCTUARY RECORDS (MUNICH AIR DISASTER); RED PAJAMAS RECORDS (A DYING CUB FAN'S LAST REQUEST); OKEHE/EPIC RECORDS (SHOOTING HOOPS); HELL CAT EPITAPH (THE WARRIOR'S CODE)

28 A DYING CUB FAN'S LAST REQUEST

Steve Goodman, 1983

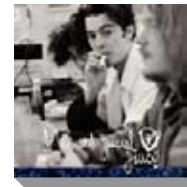


► Goodman is most famous for writing the original version of Arlo Guthrie's 1972 hit "City of New Orleans." But the singer-songwriter's

wry look at the deathbed wishes of a Wrigley Field bleacher bum is just as powerful. Goodman's fan says: "Have Keith Moreland drop a routine fly. . . /And I'll be ready to die." It's especially poignant, though, knowing that Goodman had leukemia when he wrote the song and died a year later, on Sept. 20, 1984—12 days before the Cubs played in their first playoff game since 1945. Goodman was scheduled to sing the national anthem before Game 1 of the NLCS but had to be replaced by his pal Jimmy Buffett. **BONUS TRACK:** "All the Way," by Eddie Vedder, lead vocalist for Pearl Jam (the group was originally called Mookie Blaylock). It's also a love song to the Cubs.

29 SHOOTING HOOPS

G. Love and Special Sauce, 1994

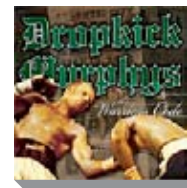


► A valentine to pickup ball from the Philadelphia alternative hip-hop band. The music is a slow blues, but the message is upbeat:

"Lunch from a hot dog stand, a pretzel and a pop/We've been playing all day 'cause we've had this court nonstop." The group, which pledged its allegiance to the Sixers in "I-76," also gives a shout-out to the run at Philly's Seger Park as the city's best.

30 THE WARRIOR'S CODE

Dropkick Murphys, 2005



► "Another murderous right/Another left hook from hell/A bloody war on the Boardwalk/And the kid from Lowell rises to the bell." Before Micky Ward's tale was immortalized by Mark Wahlberg in the 2010 film *The Fighter*, this hyperactive Irish-flavored punk band from Boston paid a knockout tribute to the never-say-die Irish-American boxer.

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CAMEOS

TRAVELING FAR AFIELD

An album of Marv Albert's musical stylings? Too much. But he's among the sports figures to make memorable pinch-singing appearances



MARV ALBERT

Appeared on the 1992 song "Perfect Sense Part II" by Pink Floyd's Roger

Waters, announcing a war as if it were a basketball game: "He's at periscope depth. It looks to me like he's going to attack. He fires one. Yessss!"



WILLIE MAYS

The New York Giants centerfielder sang backup on The Treniers' 1954

hit "Say Hey (The Willie Mays Song)," produced by Quincy Jones.



MICKY MANTLE

Teresa Brewer had a minor hit in 1956 with "I Love Mickey." The owner of the atonal voice that asks "Mickey who?" periodically throughout the song? The Mick himself.



PHIL RIZZUTO

The Scooter claimed not to have been aware of the sexual connotations

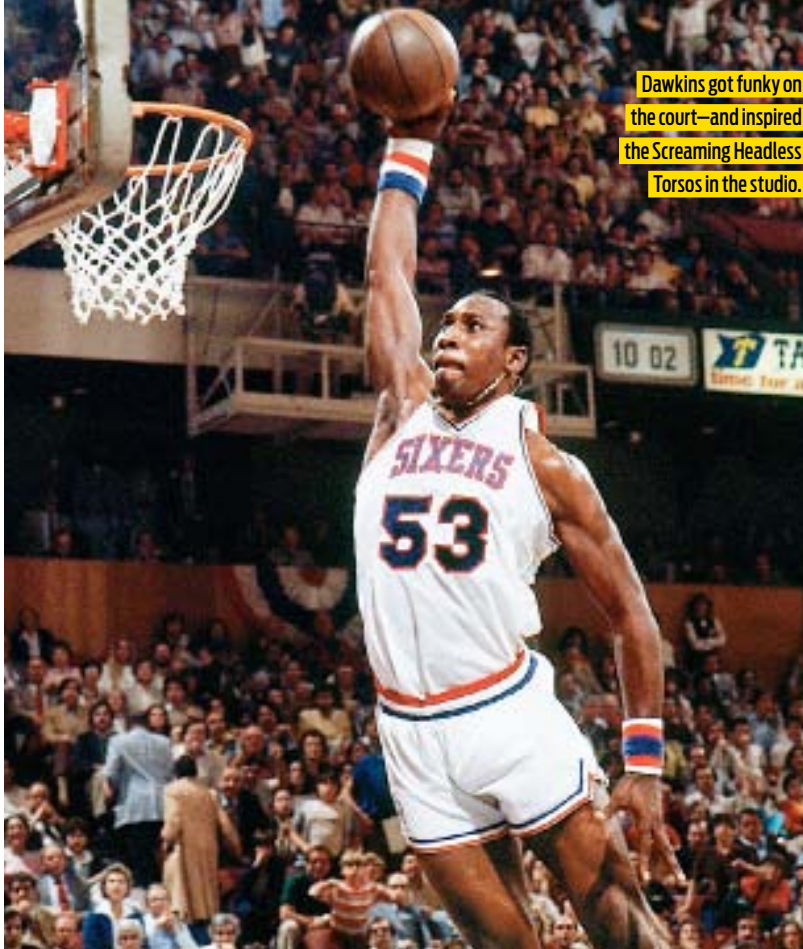
of his contribution to Meat Loaf's "Paradise by the Dashboard Light," the 1977 epic that includes Rizzuto's double entendre-rich play-by-play of a backseat rendezvous between two amorous teenagers. Meat Loaf insists Rizzuto knew.



MIKE TYSON

Iron Mike proved to be flaccid at the mike when he contributed

a few lackluster rhymes to "Second Round K.O." by the rapper Canibus in 1998.



Dawkins got funky on the court—and inspired the Screaming Headless Torsos in the studio.

31 BASKETBALL

Kurtis Blow, 1984



► Maybe you prefer the updated 2002 version by Bow Wow, but respect must be paid to the original, by one of rap's pioneers. Blow helped invent the form, becoming the first rapper to sign with a major record label, Mercury. *Basketball* established a link between hip-hop and hoops that has only grown and strengthened since (somehow surviving Allen Iverson's Jewelz phase). And with one of rap's first videos—replete with ballers, ninja fighters, an inexplicable fat guy eating a hot dog next to a giant chicken and endless trash talk—the song reinforced the idea, good or bad, that basketball is not as much about the game as about the player. **BONUS TRACK:** "NBA Rap," by Hurt Em' Bad in 1982, played its part too in helping hip-hop cross over.

32 DARRYL DAWKINS' SOUND OF LOVE

Screaming Headless Torsos, 2001

► No one combined fun and funky quite like former Sixers center Darryl Dawkins, and this cut from an influential '80s jazz-funk band is a suitable tribute to the first citizen of Lovetron. The Torsos lay out the perfect vibe for Double D with a soulful beat topped with Hendrix-style guitar licks, as vocalist Dean Bowman sonorously sings, "Some still may wonder/Of the glorious power of Chocolate Thunder./A legend at the most/Down low in the post/Guard him and you're toast."

33 CHESAPEAKE

Mike Aiken, 2003



► There are hundreds of sailing shanties, and there's Christopher Cross's "Sailing" and Jimmy Buffett's "Take It Back" (the best and perhaps only America's Cup rooting song). But nobody sings about the nautical life better than Aiken. He spends much of the year aboard a 42-foot cutter near Chesapeake, Va., and this simple ode to being on the water explains the appeal.

TOTALLY AGAVE.



34 VAN LINGLE MUNGO
Dave Frishberg, 1969

► It's little more than Frishberg crooning colorful names of ballplayers from the '40s to jazzy piano lines, but it's wonderfully entertaining. (Where else will you hear Max Lanier rhymed with Johnny Vander Meer?) The one discordant note: The song's mellow lilt hardly fits with the hard-drinking and combative **Mungo**—who, legend has it, once had to be secreted out of a restaurant in Cuba in a laundry bin to avoid an angry husband with a butcher knife.

35 STEWBALL
Leadbelly, 1940



► It might have the richest history of any sports song. The tune was originally an English ballad from the 1700s telling the story of an 11-year-old gelding belonging to Lord Godolphin, who sent the horse to Ireland to race an uppity landowner's champion. "Stewball" made its way to America as a slaves' work song. In Leadbelly's version, the iconic bluesman urges underdog-loving horseplayers, "Bet on Stewball, you might win, win, win." A different version was a hit for Peter, Paul and Mary in 1963.

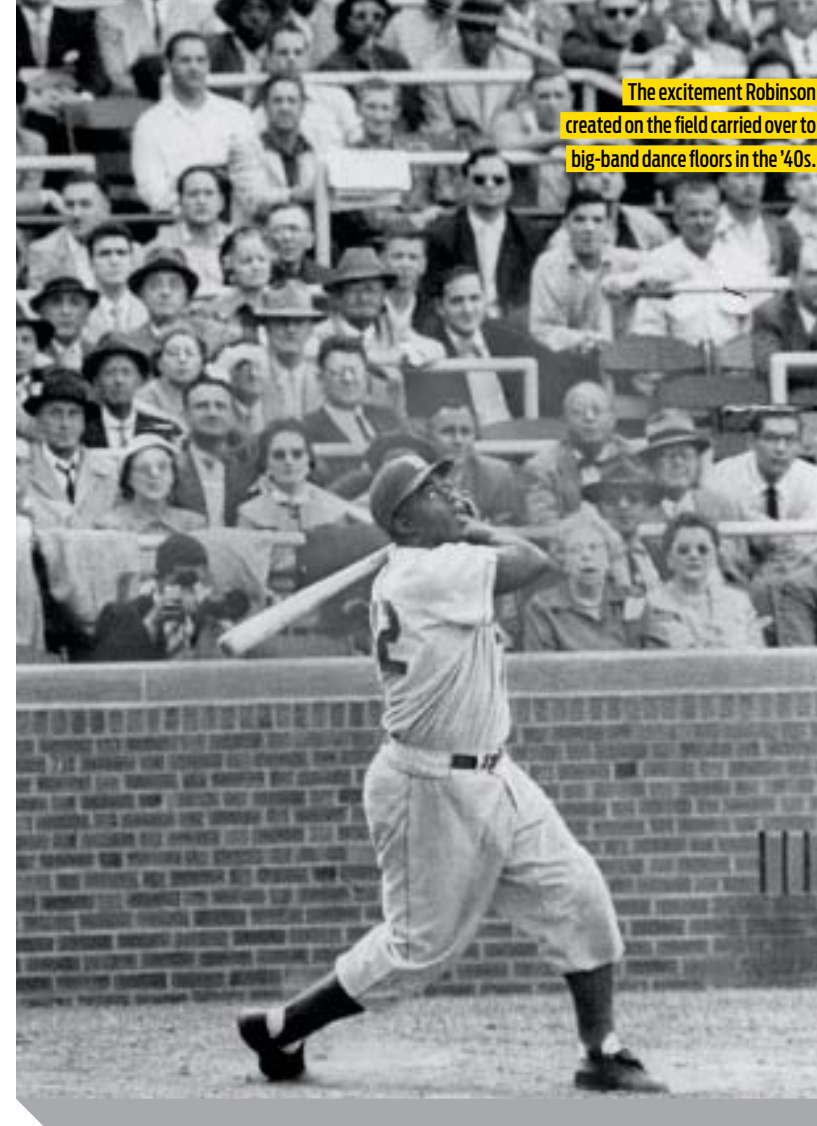
36 AMERICA'S FAVORITE PASTIME
Todd Snider, 2009

► **Dock Ellis**'s 1970 no-hitter on LSD has inspired at least a half dozen songwriters. Barbara Manning and the SF Seals did the trippiest version, in 1993, but Snider, a countryish storyteller from the John Prine school, has the most entertaining. He vividly imagines the day the Pirates' right-hander no-hit the Padres after dropping acid ("Taking the mound the ground turned into the icing on a birthday cake. . ."). Said Snider, "As soon as I heard [about that game] I knew I was going to make a song about it."



37 LET THE BIG HORSE RUN
John Stewart, 1975

► After **Secretariat** won the Triple Crown in 1973—with record times that still stand at Churchill Downs and Belmont—the country clamored to see the colt race. But he never ran west of Chicago. Secretariat retired to stud, leading to this plea from Stewart to the horse's owner. Once you get past the clichéd opening, the singer implores, "Please Mrs. Tweedy/I saw him on the TV/Send him out to run in the California sun."



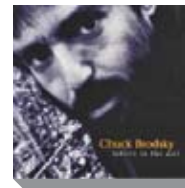
The excitement Robinson created on the field carried over to big-band dance floors in the '40s.

38 DID YOU SEE JACKIE ROBINSON HIT THAT BALL?

Buddy Johnson Orchestra, 1949

► Two years after Robinson broke the color barrier in baseball came this assertion of pride in an African-American ballplayer by a black bandleader. It climbed as high as No. 13 on the charts, a measure of the excitement Robinson brought to baseball but also a window into the changing cultural scene in America.

39 THE BALLAD OF EDDIE KLEPP
Chuck Brodsky, 1996



► Brodsky specializes in wonderful folk songs about baseball. In this one he keeps alive the memory of the first and probably the only white player to appear in the Negro leagues. Brodsky misspells his

hero's name—it's Klep—but he gets the record straight on the born-under-a-bad-sign ballplayer who faced reverse racial discrimination as a pitcher for the Cleveland Buckeyes in 1946.

40 LEVITATE
Bruce Hornsby and the Noisemakers, 2009



► Hornsby composed this tune for his score for Spike Lee's 2009 documentary *Kobe Doin' Work*. It revisits the basketball theme that Hornsby—a starting center at James Blair High in Williamsburg, Va., in the early 1970s—mined decades earlier in "Rainbow's Cadillac" and "The Old Playground." Only this time the king of the court is headed for the NBA, because, as the song goes, "We been puttin' our time in while you playin' games." □

TOTALLY SMOOTH.



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AP (VAN LINGLE MUNGO); SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS (STEWBALL); BETTMANN/CORBIS (AMERICA'S FAVORITE PASTIME); JOHN IACONO (LET THE BIG HORSE RUN)