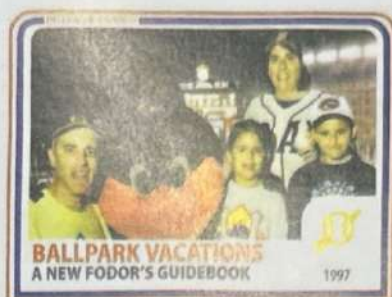


# THE BOOKS THAT INSPIRE BIG TRAIN BASEBALL

by Bruce Adams

Most of the inspiration for what has become Big Train baseball at Shirley Povich Field came from trips across America in the mid-1990s as my wife Peggy and I researched our *Fodor's Ballpark Vacations: Great Family Trips to Minor League and Classic Major League Ballparks Across America*. Peggy and I, with our two young kids Emily and Hugh, traveled 50,000 miles on our four year summer adventure. We visited 46 states and saw games in 140 ballparks. We collected 26 foul balls and saw three rainbows. It was tough work, but someone had to do it. Most significantly for Big Train fans, we met Mike Veeck, owner of the St. Paul Saints. Mike became our baseball muse.



Every summer immediately after the Big Train season, I take a roadtrip to collect best practices from other summer college leagues. I spent a weekend this May watching SEC baseball at Mississippi State and Alabama. Nothing beats seeing the real thing. But for me, reading about it can come really close.

I have collected a library of books in the Povich Field press box with the hope of inspiring our summer interns to gain the same appreciation I have of learning from the best through reading. My Big Train Library starts with the Veecks. The classic is *Veeck as in Wreck* by Mike's dad Bill Veeck, the Hall of Fame owner all the other owners hated and all the fans loved. Our neighbor and Big Train fan Paul Dickson has written a Veeck biography. Also on the shelf is *Fun Is Good* where Mike shares the Veeck magic.

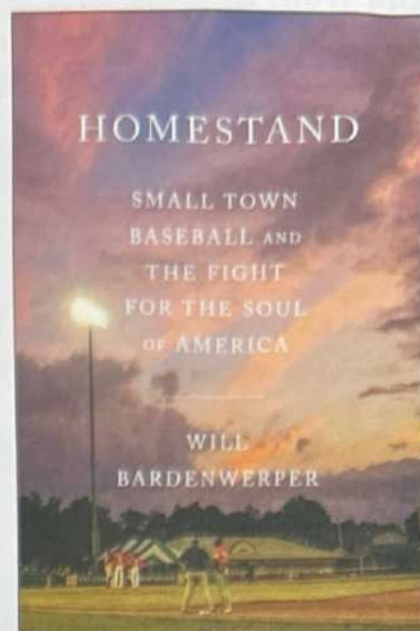
You'd be hard pressed to find a personality more different from me than Jesse Cole, the genius behind the Savannah Bananas. Cole is a natural showman. You are unlikely to find me in a yellow tux and top hat. But what he wrote in his recent *Banana Ball* is exactly my story: "I wasn't much of a reader through high school and college, but I became absolutely voracious when I got into the baseball business. Knowledge really is power. I started *inhaling* books – and I couldn't get enough of Walt Disney." Richard Snow's *Disney's Land* mesmerized me with Disney's extraordinary attention to detail and customer service. Big Train's relentless commitment to putting fans first and creating an unmatched fan experience is the main message the Veecks, Cole, and Disney have taught me through these books.

In addition to books by the geniuses of the *Fun Is Good* and *Fans First* philosophies we try to follow at Big Train, I get inspiration, amusement, and ideas from books about the zany nature of life in

the minor and summer college leagues. There are seven of these classics in my Big Train Library.

Big Train fans will have a special treat on Wednesday June 18 when the authors of two of the very best of this genre will be speaking at a pre-game picnic at Povich Field. This April, as I read Will Bardenwerper's *Homestand: Small Town Baseball and the Fight for the Soul of America*, I was constantly nodding my head in recognition of situations from the crazy to the frustrating to the joyful that we have experienced here these last 25 years at Povich Field. Bardenwerper, upset when major league baseball wiped out 41 minor league teams in 2020, spent the summer of 2021 in Batavia, New York. Having lost its affiliated minor league team, Batavia reinvented the Muckdogs as a summer college team. Bardenwerper set out to write not just a tale of a baseball season but the story of how a gritty community responds in the face of a raw deal. It is a terrific book that Big Train fans will love.

Since the fans are always first at Povich Field, we are going to give you two for one on June 18. Acclaimed author Stefan Fatsis set the standard for these fun tales of grassroots baseball in 1995. His *Wild and Outside: How a Renegade Minor League Revived the Spirit of Baseball in America's Heartland* is the story of the independent Northern League with my mentor Mike Veeck as a central character. Literally two for one — Stefan will be interviewing Will from 6 to 6:30 p.m. in the Davis Family Picnic Pavilion AND he has agreed to donate copies of his *Wild and Outside* to the first ten fans to sign up online to attend our conversation and buy Will's book from us through our friends at the new Wonderland Books in Bethesda.



## Wednesday June 18

**5:30 p.m.** Picnic Supper at the Davis Family Picnic Pavilion

**6 to 6:30 p.m.** Will Bardenwerper, author of *Homestand*, interviewed by Stefan Fatsis, author of *Wild and Outside*

**7 p.m.** Big Train v. DC Grays – Ripken League wooden bat baseball  
*Books on sale by Wonderland Books with pre-order recommended*