

CHAMPIONS

OF AMERICAN SPORT



Foreword by

Red Smith



CHAM OF AMERICAN



PIONS SPORT

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and Margaret C. S. Christman



The National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

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Exhibition Itinerary:

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SPONSOR'S STATEMENT

*Buy me some peanuts and crackerjack,
I don't care if I never get back . . .*

. . . from the exhibition of outstanding American sports heroes and heroines of the past century and more, mounted by the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution. These heroes and heroines, with the legions of athletic idols they typify, occupy a special place in our lives and in our national psyche. To watch what they did so superbly could be called a form of social escape—but not entirely; and the exhibition does not seek mere outbursts of instant nostalgia for heroes and events vividly recalled, or vaguely remembered, or perhaps never even known.

Sports is lively, always contemporary and active. It is play and shared fun and then more: group drama, mass entertainment, community spectacle, politics. It is a feature of the times, inextricably woven into the tapestry of American life. From our days as colonies inching toward independence, the spirit of American sports has been an integral part of the American spirit. For many, rooting for the home team and the local athlete was our first conscious exercise in group belonging and patriotism.

Philip Morris Incorporated, through its corporate support of art, has helped to mine our country's rich lode of history for insights into our national traits. We have sponsored major exhibitions that have traveled through the United States—and, often, around the world—pertaining to American Indians, Western art, black art, women, native folk art, and children. Now, in the National Portrait Gallery, we support a show about the world of sports and one hundred of its great figures. Philip Morris and Miller Brewing Company are honored to be associated with this exhibition. Long before any of us joined the company, we, like almost everyone else, were committed fans of the greats of sports.

Perhaps what we Americans like best about our sports idols is that we created them with our own zest and enthusiasm. They *belong* to us; we revel in their glory, take possession of their triumph, and hold them as trophies in our collective memory. In the arena, on the track, wherever they play at whatever they play, they are our designated surrogates performing the impossible, striving for perfection and often achieving it. They are just like us, only more so: eleven feet tall and strong, fearless, fleet, keen of eye, daring, and unbeatable.

This exhibition is one of a kind, and we are glad we came to the game.

George Weissman
Chairman of the Board
Philip Morris Incorporated