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“An unforgettable ride through the world of Tommy Lasorda . . . Tommy is one of a kind, a master motivator, a great and gutsy manager, and an outrageous storyteller. This book has it all.” — Pat Riley, president of the Miami Heat and author of *Showtime* and *The Winner Within*

**“This uproarious and unvarnished portrait of one of baseball’s most beloved figures has captured the genius and the generosity of Tommy Lasorda.”
— Jeremy Schaap, ESPN Sports, author of *Cinderella Man* and *Triumph***

“Tommy Lasorda is a Hall of Fame manager. And if there were a Hall of Fame for colorful characters and great storytellers, he would be in those too. It’s all here, enjoy.” — Bob Costas, NBC and HBO Sports

I LIVE FOR THIS!

Baseball’s Last True Believer

Bill Plaschke with Tommy Lasorda

“Today Tommy Lasorda is, by all accounts, the most popular baseball figure in the world. But he is also perhaps the most complex. He is still the guy surrounded by fans but fighting loneliness, the guy showered with accolades but fighting insecurity, the poor kid from a small Pennsylvania town who still has something to prove, a complicated, shadow-filled, true American baseball hero. The last real baseball hero.” — from the Foreword

Tommy Lasorda, who on September 22 celebrated his eightieth birthday, has been an integral part of baseball for nearly sixty years. After this year’s summer of discontent in sports, Lasorda’s story — his real story — has never been more important. In **I LIVE FOR THIS!: Baseball’s Last True Believer**, the award-winning sportswriter Bill Plaschke provides an inside look at Lasorda’s life, dissecting the personality to give us the person, showing us Lasorda as we’ve never seen him before and revealing the secrets of this Hall of Famer’s amazing, unexpected success.

I LIVE FOR THIS!: Baseball’s Last True Believer by Bill Plaschke with Tommy Lasorda
Publication Date: October 24, 2007 * \$25 hardcover * ISBN-13: 978-0-618-65387-4
Jacket scans and press materials are available at www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com.

The epitome of a self-made man, Lasorda went from a scrawny, overlooked Italian kid of average ability — and even lesser means — to become one of the world's most recognizable baseball faces. He is one of the most successful managers in the game's history, having led the Dodgers to eight division titles and two world championships in his storied twenty seasons as a manager. (He has spent fifty-seven years to date with the Dodger franchise.) It is a success for which Lasorda has fought every step of the way.

In this fascinating, inside-baseball book, Plaschke strips the veneer from one of the sport's last living legends to show how grit and determination really can transform a life. With insight and candor, he takes us inside Lasorda's world and brings to light

- the secrets behind the 1988 World Series, the most unlikely upset win in baseball history
- the behind-the-scenes tale of Lasorda's remarkable victory at the 2000 Olympics, when he managed the United States to its first-ever gold medal in baseball
- the real story of Lasorda's sudden retirement in 1997, and the famous rift between him and his longtime protégé and handpicked successor
- Lasorda's strong opinions on the state of pitching today, including his assertion that pitchers have been babied and that players' agents — not managers or even the players themselves — have shaped pitching staffs and shortened pitchers' careers

Plaschke shows us a man who seems to be a bundle of contradictions — harsh yet tender, stubborn yet yielding, friendly yet fiery, who has by all accounts become an overwhelming success but still feels he has something to prove. Yet he is also a man who is single-mindedly determined to win, and who values family and loyalty — and Dodger Blue — above all else.

Revealing a side of Lasorda that few people really know, **I LIVE FOR THIS!** is an account that few people will forget.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bill Plaschke has been named the Associated Press Sports Columnist of the Year three times. He has been a sports columnist at the *Los Angeles Times* since 1996 and is a regular panelist on ESPN's *Around the Horn*. His work has been featured frequently in *The Best American Sports Writing*.™

Tommy Lasorda is one of the most successful managers in baseball history, a Hall of Famer who led the Dodgers to eight division titles and two world championships in twenty seasons. He also managed the U.S. Olympic baseball team in 2000, when it won its first gold medal. Lasorda currently serves as executive senior vice president for the Dodgers and lectures around the world promoting baseball.

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Advance Praise for *I LIVE FOR THIS!*

“This book is about one of baseball’s greats. Being a famous manager is not always easy, but Tommy Lasorda did it with class and style. I’m proud to call him a friend.” — Former President George H. W. Bush

“Everyone knows Tommy Lasorda bleeds Dodger Blue, but after reading this remarkable book, you realize he bleeds red, white, and blue. He is baseball’s best ambassador. Everywhere he goes, he creates new fans. But he is also one of baseball’s best managers. What he did with the 2000 Olympic team was the greatest managing job in baseball in the last hundred years. I’m proud to be a Hall of Famer alongside him. This book deserves to be there too.” — Joe Morgan, ESPN sportscaster and member of the Baseball Hall of Fame

“Tommy Lasorda is one of the greatest managers his sport — or any sport — has ever seen. *I LIVE FOR THIS!* takes readers inside his world, where honor, loyalty, hard work, and heart are not just part of the game plan but essential to life. He has succeeded where many would have failed, and this book tells you how — and why.” — Joe Paterno, head coach, Pennsylvania State University football

“*I LIVE FOR THIS!* reveals that Tommy Lasorda is much more than a baseball legend. His outlook on sports, family, America, and life is inspiring, funny, and poignant, and it is perfectly captured in this book.” — Ray Romano, actor and comedian

“Amazing . . . Bill Plaschke wades into Tommy Lasorda’s eighty-year-old continuing stream of consciousness, fishes out the best of the best, stuffs and mounts the outrageous quotes, opinions, and tales of Dodger Blue on a solid, engaging background of prose. Very nice work indeed . . . a winner.” — Leigh Montville, author of *The Big Bam*

“We see exactly who Tommy Lasorda is — complicated, sometimes desperate, but ultimately triumphant. It’s a joyride.” — Richard Ben Cramer, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and author of *Joe DiMaggio: The Hero’s Life*

“In this uproarious and unvarnished portrait of one of baseball’s most beloved figures, Bill Plaschke has captured the genius and the generosity of Tommy Lasorda. From Jackie Robinson to Sandy Koufax to Fernando Valenzuela, from Brooklyn to Chavez Ravine to Sydney to Honshu, Lasorda has lived a baseball life like no other. Finally, he shares — with humor, insight, and pathos — his memories of all that he has borne witness to. *I LIVE FOR THIS!* takes its place alongside *The Glory of Their Times* and *Ball Four* on the short list of indispensable baseball books.” — Jeremy Schaap, ESPN Sports, author of *Cinderella Man* and *Triumph*

“Tommy Lasorda is a Hall of Fame manager. And if there were a Hall of Fame for colorful characters and great storytellers, he would be in those too. It’s all here, enjoy.” — Bob Costas, NBC and HBO Sports

“*I LIVE FOR THIS!* takes readers on an unforgettable ride through the world of Tommy Lasorda. Here is where baseball’s goodwill is done on a day-to-day basis by a guy who defied all odds to become something in the sport he loved, and who succeeded like a true champion. Tommy is one of a kind, a master motivator, a great and gutsy manager, and an outrageous storyteller. This book has it all.” — Pat Riley, president of the Miami Heat and author of *Showtime* and *The Winner Within*

National Tour

CALIFORNIA

Barnes & Noble at The Grove, Los Angeles
Tommy Lasorda & Bill Plaschke signing
November 6, 7:00 pm

Vroman's, Pasadena
Tommy Lasorda & Bill Plaschke signing
November 7, 7:00 pm

Flintridge Bookstore, La Canada
Bill Plaschke talk & signing
November 8, 7:00 p.m.

Borders Books, Union Square, San Francisco
Tommy Lasorda signing
November 28, 7:00 p.m.

NEW YORK CITY

Barnes & Noble at Rockefeller Center
Tommy Lasorda signing
November 12, 1:00 pm

92nd Street Y
Tommy Lasorda interviewed onstage by Bob Costas
November 13, 8:00 pm

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Smithsonian Institution
Tommy Lasorda interviewed onstage by Bill Plaschke
November 14, 7:00 pm

Books-a-Million at Dupont Circle
Tommy Lasorda & Bill Plaschke signing
November 15, 12:00 noon

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia Free Library
Tommy Lasorda interviewed onstage by Larry Platt
November 16, noon

Barnes & Noble, Devon
November 16, 7:00 p.m.

A Conversation with Bill Plaschke about *I LIVE FOR THIS!*

So why Tommy Lasorda, and why now?

A couple of years ago, I was having dinner with Tommy in the dining room at Dodgertown, the spring training facility in Vero Beach, Florida. I had just finished writing a story about the latest Barry Bonds steroids scandal. Earlier that winter, I had written several columns about baseball's other ills, including umpiring trouble and scheduling problems and the struggles of the new Dodger ownership. All winter long I was inundated with talk about how the NFL has become the new national pastime and how baseball had lost all its charm.

These ominous feelings were running through my head when I sat down for that dinner. Within thirty minutes, however, they all vanished, blown away in laughter and tears and amazement as Lasorda, as usual, recounted his day, his week, his decades in baseball. I thought, now more than ever, baseball fans need to hear this. Sports fans need to hear this. Heck, the entire world needs to hear this.

For two hours that night, Lasorda regaled his dinner guests with tales of a simpler, more innocent game. He talked about the game that, through hard work and luck and plenty of humor, propelled him from a Norristown, Pennsylvania, tenement to the top of the sports world. He talked about a game filled with wacky characters and big dreams and honest drama. He talked about the game that we once all loved. I realized then that somebody needed to spread the word before it disappears forever. Somebody needed to tell Tommy Lasorda's story while it still has the power to change the way we feel about America's game.

But why Lasorda? How is he different from other baseball Hall of Famers?

No Hall of Famer is more celebrated worldwide than Tommy Lasorda. He is the most recognizable baseball figure on the planet. Hang around him for a couple of days and you'll understand.

He's like a rock star, his familiar face and belly attracting swarms of fans, from ballparks to shopping malls to gas stations. He has been greeted by cheering crowds in Asia, South America, and Europe, not to mention being given standing ovations in every ballpark in America. His postseason commercials for major league baseball were so effective, the *New York Times* wrote about them. His Slim-Fast commercials turned a small company into a \$600 million business. His motivational ideas have been shared from third-grade classrooms to the White House.

Lasorda has become far more than a Hall of Fame manager. He has become America's baseball ambassador, a teddy bear of a statesman who is embraced for his humor, grace, and wisdom.

Why did you write the book in your voice instead of his voice?

I didn't want the reader to listen to Lasorda from his mountaintop. I wanted the reader to walk alongside him during his daily journeys down from that mountain. I wanted to show the reader the real Lasorda, the real American dream, the real old-fashioned game of baseball, with all its challenges and triumphs and failures. In order to do that, I felt I needed to deliver the message myself.

What was your working arrangement with Lasorda?

It was easy. He loves selling the game, selling the ideals that made it a great game, selling his incredible personal story. So, basically, for parts of a year, I would follow him around and write whatever I saw and heard. I listened to him counsel poor young kids in Vero Beach, speak to wealthy adults in Las Vegas, argue in Spanish with kitchen workers in Los Angeles. I wrote the gospel as he spread the gospel, with nothing off the record.

Lasorda then read the manuscript and made some fact changes, but not much else. He wasn't always happy when I would reveal one of his warts, but he eventually understood that a man's legacy of triumph is only enhanced by recounting the failures too. He understood that by portraying him as fully human, I was able to relate his message as eternal.

Why is Lasorda still important?

Because he is baseball's last living character who gives us a reason to believe. We can still believe that a pitcher who never won a major league game can enter baseball's Hall of Fame. That's Lasorda. We can still believe that a kid who stole his first glove can win two World Series. That's Lasorda too.

We can believe that baseball can still be America's great equalizer, prejudiced toward none, rewarding the efforts of all, a sport where even a ragtag crew of minor leaguers can win an Olympic gold medal.

What was your favorite part of the book?

That would be the Olympic medal part. In 2000, Lasorda became the manager of a U.S. Olympic baseball team that had never won a gold medal. Baseball officials gave him a bunch of struggling kids and journeyman veterans. He didn't even know their names. But he somehow led them to a gold medal in Sydney, a competition that ended with a championship victory over powerhouse Cuba.

The story of how the aging Lasorda dug deep for one last bit of on-field motivation to win the most important event of his life is recounted for the first time in the book. It is Lasorda at his best, living baseball and America.