

# A gripping, pitch-by-pitch replay of 1975 Series game

CLINT O'CONNOR

Carlton Fisk's 12th-inning home run to win Game 6 of the 1975 World Series probably ranks as the most overplayed sports highlight of all-time. (Or maybe it's just behind Al Michael's "Miracle" hockey call from 1980). Fisk, feet-hopping, arms-jerking, willing the ball to stay fair, is the signature shot from the spectacular showdown between his Boston Red Sox and the Cincinnati Reds.

For my money, it wasn't even the most thrilling homer of the game. That came four innings earlier, from the bat of Boston's Bernie Carbo. He nailed a pinch-hit, two-out, three-run homer to tie the game.

Both blasts are vividly brought to life by Mark Frost in "Game Six: Cincinnati, Boston, and the 1975 World Series — The Triumph of America's Pastime."

Frost delivers a good mix of history and tension, going behind the scenes with players, coaches, broadcasters and sportswriters to re-create the mythic night in Boston's Fenway Park on Oct. 21, 1975. Before Carbo connected, his epic at-bat included an especially futile flail at a pitch from Reds reliever Rawly Eastwick.

"As he settled back into his stance, [Reds catcher] Johnny Bench had one thought about his old pal Bernie: *He's done*," writes Frost. "In the press box, an entire row of America's best sportswriters winced, and immediately began chasing down metaphors to convey the sheer naked ugliness of Carbo's last swing."

Frost, author of several golf histories, including "The Match," has a nifty device. He doesn't just pepper his pages with stories on the principals between innings; he does it practically between every pitch. He delivers revealing glimpses of numerous baseball studs, from Carl Yastrzemski and Rico Petrocelli to Pete Rose and Joe Morgan, to a breakdown of the pool-hustler cool of the ageless former Indian Luis Tiant.

As the 2009 playoffs begin this week, "Game Six" adds up to fun nostalgia. But I wish Frost's editor had taken a sharper pen to some of the less scintillating asides, and a couple of factual errors, though minor, are troubling. A bibliography, or sources for some of the dialogue, would have been valuable.

Back in 1975, this series reawakened attendance and TV viewers, Frost writes, and served as a glorious sunburst just before the dark clouds of free agency arrived two months later, changing teams forever.

As Reds manager Sparky Anderson said after his team took the seventh game, "We didn't win the World Series, baseball did."

*O'Connor, like many fans, remembers exactly where he watched Game Six. He is The Plain Dealer's movie critic.*

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## NONFICTION Game Six

By Mark Frost

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