

# BARTON

## LIBRARY

*Dare to Know*

### Sports Comics

*Comics in which playing a sport or the love of a sport has a significant impact on the protagonist or plot.*

A genre in which the theme of sports and athletics is the central focus. Sports became a fixture in American popular literature in 1896, beginning in inexpensive pulp magazines before moving to “slick” magazines, novels, and comics. Protagonists are typically professional or amateur athletes who face struggles on and off the field or court in connection with their sport. They may also be young people first discovering their natural athletic talents and navigating new opportunities. Team sports is often emphasized, and the story of the underdog, be they a misfit team and a single, scrappy player, is a timeless theme. Dreams and goals are another common trope, and achieving those is the central point of the novel, although not necessarily the most important one. Athletic seasons offer an opportunity for prolonged story and character development arcs. The outcome of the final game is often critical to the story’s conclusion: if the underdogs lose, they have still learned valuable life lessons; if they triumph, they have achieved something great. Sports comics are character-driven, action-oriented, and fast-paced. These stories are normally set in the real world, either the present or the recent past. As they can depict moments of drama, intensity, and sometimes comedy, sports fiction may blend with **coming-of-age comics** and **humorous comics**. Street & Smith’s *Sport Comic* (1940-1941) and *True Sport Picture Stories* (1942-1949); Timely Comics’ *Powerhouse Pepper* (1942-1948); Holyoke Publishing’s *Sparkling Stars* (1944-1948); Harvey Comics’ *Joe Palooka Comics* (1945-1961) and *Babe Ruth Sports Comics* (1949-1951); Ray Gotto’s *Ozark Ike* (1945-1958); Hillman Publications’ *All Sports Comics* (1948-1949), *All-Time Sports* (1949), *Hot Rod and Speedway Comics* (1952-1953); Will Eisner’s *Baseball Comics* (1949); Atlas Comics’ *Sport Stars* (1949) and *Sports Action* (1950-1952); Fawcett Comics’ *Jackie Robinson* (1949-1952), *Joe Louis* (1950), and *Bob Swift, Boy Sportsman* (1951-1952); Elliot Caplin and John Cullen Murphy’s *Big Ben Bolt* (1950-1978); Ziff-Davis Publishing’s *Baseball Thrills* (1951-1952), *Football Thrills* (1951-1952), and *Bill Stern’s Sports Book* (1951-1952); Charlton Comics’ *Frank Merriwell at Yale* (1955-1956); Jordan Lanski and Mel Keefer’s *Mac Divot* (1955-1975); Charles M. Schultz and Jim Sasseville’s *It’s Only a Game* (1957-1959); Jack Berrill’s *Gil Thorp* (1958-ongoing); and Chester “Chet” Adams’s *All in Sport* (1960-1974) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

Passion for a sport
Character growth
Commitment
Competition
Team work
Sportsmanship
Hustling

The ultimate test
The big game
The unlikely ringer
The mentor figure
Baseball
Football
Basketball

Boxing
Hockey
Tennis
Golf
Track and field
Horse racing
Auto racing

**Graphic Novel Examples**

<i>Arsenal: The Game We Love</i> (2021) by Phillippe Glogowski
<i>Bash!</i> (2023) by Rudy Gobert and Hellef Bay
<i>Check, Please! Book 1: Hockey</i> (2018) by Ngozi Ukazu
<i>Dodge City</i> (2018) by Josh Trujillo and Cara McGee
<i>Fence Volume 1</i> (2018) by C. S. Pacat and Johanna the Mad

<i>The Fifth Quarter</i> (2021) by Mike Dawson
<i>A Map to the Sun</i> (2020) by Sloane Leong
<i>Southern Bastards Volume 1: Here Was a Man</i> (2014) by Jason Aaron and Jason Latour
<i>The Tank McNamara Chronicles</i> (1978) by Jeff Millar and Bill Hinds