

The Boys of Spring

Monday delivers in follow-up sports novel

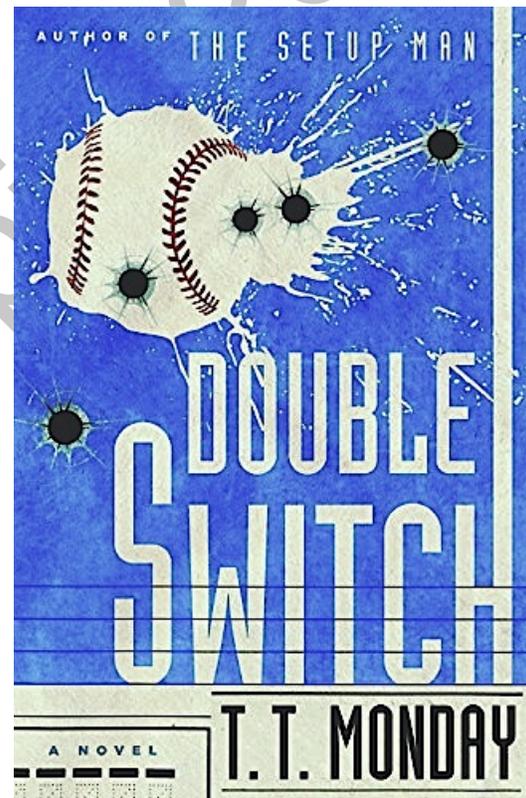
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

The second in a crime fiction series centering on major league baseball, *Double Switch* follows the exploits of Johnny Adcock, an aging relief pitcher for a West Coast American team, the San Jose Bay Dogs. As a middle-inning leftie reliever, Adcock works on average maybe thirty minutes a day trying to get his team out of trouble, for which he receives a comfortable one-and-a-half million dollars per year. Most people would be happy with that, but Adcock moonlights as a private detective, helping other players with problems in their personal lives. It's a clever adjunct to his pitching career, which he knows cannot last indefinitely, and mostly it consists of pretty routine stuff, such as checking up on errant wives or players with gambling issues.

But the thing about professional sports these days is that they're constantly changing. Image, both on and off the field has become important, and Adcock is not surprised when Tiff Tate, an upscale image consultant, approaches him about one of her

clients. Yonel Ruiz is a rookie outfielder recently acquired by the Colorado Rockies, and he's on a tear, eating up the opposition. But there's a dark side to his private



life: Ruiz recently fled Cuba to play in the big leagues, and Tiff tells Adcock that a Venezuelan crime cartel has kidnapped Ruiz's family, holding them hostage in Havana for a slice of his lucrative new (six-year, fifty million dollar) contract.

Tiff wants Adcock to locate them, promising that she'll take it from there. But unknown to Adcock, the cartel has dispatched a contract killer to ensure they get their money. As the bodies pile up Adcock finds himself playing a dangerous game that crosses the line into his personal life and threatens not only himself, but those close to him as well.

T. T. Monday's second novel nicely delivers on the promise of his debut tale, *The Setup Man*. He deftly combines action on the field with a well-conceived crime tale to create a fast-paced action thriller that carries the story along effortlessly. Nor is he lacking in depth: the characters around Adcock—not least his girlfriend, Connie O'Connell—are fully formed and convincing.

I'm told there are actually people who regard baseball as a kid's game, with brief moments of action punctuating long periods of tedium with the spectators having little to do but chew their hot dogs and watch the grass grow. Not so, and certainly not true of this novel. Monday (aka Nick Taylor) has an informed knowledge of the game's subtleties, and his insider's understanding of the ins and outs (pun intended) of what is in reality an intricate and calculated sport will resonate with many readers, and deepen the appreciation of others, all the while serving up a great curveball of a plot. All in all, *Double Switch* is a compelling and entertaining read.

Originally published on *Reviewing the Evidence*, April, 2016.

Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetingler*, *The Rap Sheet*, *Shots Magazine*, *Crime Time*, *Reviewing The Evidence*, *January* magazine, the *Montreal Review of Books*, the *Ottawa Review of Books*, and *Amazon.com*, as well as on his own award-winning crime fiction site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com