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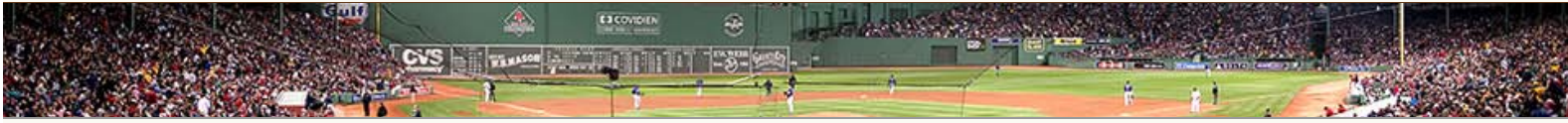
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Book Review: Extra Innings — The Ted Williams's Comeback Story by Bruce Spitzer

By [Nick Bohlen](#) in [FEATURED](#), [OPINION](#), [RED SOX](#) · August 1, 2012 at 8:30am · [Post a comment](#)



Ever wondered what would happen to Ted Williams after he was cryonically (and controversially) frozen in 2002? Would there come a day far off in the future when we might see Teddy Ballgame step back onto a baseball field to a rousing ovation, like in the 1999 Midsummer Classic at Fenway Park?

Well, the wait is over. (Kind of.) While science hasn't made enough advancements over the past ten years to make the impossible happen, author Bruce Spitzer has in *Extra Innings*, the story of the Splendid Splinter's return to life and baseball (or what passes for America's pastime) in 2092.

Spitzer's imaginative first novel brings Williams's comeback to life, weaving together elements of science fiction, biography, romance, sports story, and military thriller to create the story of The Greatest Hitter Who Ever Lived (Twice). There are robot pitchers with flesh-pad fingertips, Williams's classic struggles with the press, what the author likes to describe as "adult situations," Red Sox appearances in the World Series, and high-speed aerial combat scenes straight out of a *Top Gun* remake.

The result is a highly engaging and entertaining read that manages to satisfy the most nerdy *Dune* dork, studious Ted Williams' biographer, sensitive romantic, diehard baseball fan, and adrenaline-fueled reader of Tom Clancy. Spitzer isn't lying when he says there is something for everyone in his book.

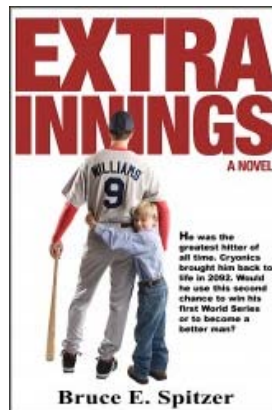
Sometimes I found the dialogue to drag, advancing the plot instead of reflecting the character who spoke. And, falling under the "diehard baseball fan" category, I personally would have liked more of a focus on Williams between the white lines.

But I was still fascinated, especially by the future Spitzer portrays 80 years from now – from the way someone could be brought back to life, to the way the game of baseball would be played. I just couldn't put *Extra Innings* down.

Having finished the book without quite getting my full fix, though, I was lucky enough to get in touch with Spitzer while he was out touring to promote his new novel. He was kind and gracious enough to set aside LOTS of time to answer my numerous burning questions after reading.

[How do you feel having finished and published your first novel? How has the reception been?](#)

It feels great and the reception has been terrific. Ted Williams is just such a big fountain of



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information and personality to draw from and use to imagine the man returning to life one day. There were times during the writing that the book felt like it was writing itself—I merely had to get it into the computer. It has been very gratifying to see readers react positively to the story from all over the country – not just Red Sox fans – and not even baseball fans. I intended it that way; this story has many layers. The latest review – a positive response – on Amazon is from a Yankees fan. It’s kinda cool to see readers picking up the book from all over the country – they respond in fan email – and some are even from overseas.

[Did you have any particular audience in mind while in the process of writing this novel?](#)

Extra Innings is a cross-genre novel, part sports, sci-fi (speculative fiction), and military thriller. As such, I didn’t have any one group in mind during the writing process, my only concern was to tell a good story and get the facts straight because Williams was a real person. The reader responses indicate I hit the mark. There seems to be something in it for everyone. Obviously, first and foremost it’s a sports novel but one woman said to me, “I thought it was going to be all about sports, but it turned out to be a love story disguised as a baseball book.” That shouldn’t turn off the baseball purists, by the way. You’ll like this book. God, that sounds immodest, but I have the benefit of some feedback now. Even readers who were afraid of the sci-fi stuff, and I couldn’t avoid it, have said, “Hey, there’s enough but not too much in there.”

[Why did you decide to have the book mirror Ted Williams’ “first” life?](#)

Well, it doesn’t – it couldn’t – completely, that would be dull. However, the realization did hit me that any of us, given this kind of second chance, might fall into a pattern of repeating ourselves, that is, gravitating toward the familiar. On the other hand, it is the world’s greatest opportunity to make some things right that maybe Ted didn’t get right during his first trip around the bases. *Extra Innings* is all about second chances and redemption. Readers have been saying, “It made me think, if I had a chance to do it all over again, what would I do differently?”

[Did you feel like you had to or wanted to explain Teddy Ballgame’s prickly nature to almost redefine his reputation?](#)

It’s a good question. There were scenes in the novel that get at that and they unravel slowly to the reader to add insight into the man. There is no doubt that he was a complicated guy, but also loveable, admirable. I merely had to capitalize on that in imagining a second life.

[Did you ever struggle between staying true to Williams’s salty language and making the book friendlier to a younger generation?](#)

Another good question – I knew early on that to stay true to the man that his language had to stay. I often warn parents about the language and then leave it up to them if they want to expose their kids to it and a few “adult situations” in the novel. In fact, my editor and I have discussed the possibility of at some point of reissuing a version just for kids. So, we’ll see.

[Why did you settle on the title *Extra Innings*?](#)

(Laughing.) Well, it was either that or “The Comeback,” right? Actually, *Extra Innings* has been the title of many books. You can’t copyright a book title. The knowledge that it had been used before was a bit of a deterrent but not so much that it prevented me from using what is, rather obviously, the best title given what happens in this book.

[You tackle a number of big issues in the book, a lot of them moral in nature – steroids, global warming, war, technology, even the existence of God. What made you want to address these topics and expand the scope of the novel outside of just the game of baseball?](#)

I wanted this book to be more than just a sports book, to make it interesting to a wide variety of readers – and given what happens in the book some of it was unavoidable. For example, I didn’t set out to do a treatise on the existence of God, but when I was immersed in the writing, it occurred to me that the first person in the world, like Ted, who is brought back to life, is going to be asked, “Does God exist and is there an afterlife?” So, there were issues like that that were unavoidable. Others were just fun to contemplate and make a part of the various subplots or the background. Because the novel is set 90 years in the future, someone called it “Field of Dreams in reverse.” That’s a nice compliment. When you think about it, the movie and its book, “Shoeless Joe,” were about much more than baseball. Thankfully, readers of *Extra Innings* are picking up on that too. But there’s plenty in *Extra Innings* to satisfy the baseball fan.

[Speaking of baseball, your novel has the Red Sox winning the World Series multiple times before Ted](#)

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Williams' return in 2092. Since the Red Sox are apparently no better than a .500 team, would you mind telling me what years that will happen? Do I have reason to hope? Or do I need to plan my own cryonic preservation to see another World Series parade on the Charles?

(Laughing again.) A number of people have said, "How fast can we bring Teddy back – we need him now!"

Lastly, your website www.ExtraInningsTheNovel.com shows you have another book in the works. I understand the topic is secret, but when can we expect your follow-up novel?

Right now we're just beginning the second phase of the marketing of *Extra Innings*. Initial reviews and publicity have been great, including a feature in Sports Illustrated Magazine and other publications worldwide. It even appeared on the 23-story electronic Reuters sign in Times Square. Now, we're in the midst of the book-signing tour with upcoming stops in the Midwest and the West Coast. So, at the present time, I'm not writing the second novel, but the outline is complete and I'm ready. Writers write. It'll be fun to get back to it. I expect this one to go faster than the last, but there's no telling how long it will take. The goal is to make it good. Period.



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About Nick Bohlen - [My Twitter](#)

I am a weekly contributor for the Patriots, Celtics, and Red Sox sections of SoB. As a Red Sox fan first and foremost, I am predisposed to expect the worst and masochistically relish it. I apologize in advance with a celebratory '04 David Ortiz (see right).



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