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*To Absent Friends from Red Smith* by Red Smith, NY: Atheneum,  
1982

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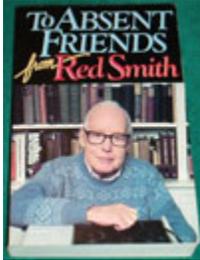
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## Because Ideas Matter...

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### Recommended Readings



#### *To Absent Friends from Red Smith*

by Red Smith, NY: Atheneum 1982

Reviewed by Dick McGowan

A journalist friend told me: "In the old days, sportswriters trained to write news but couldn't break into the important writing of the newsroom. That's why those old sportswriters were so good." A perfect example of my friend's observation is Red Smith.

The Pulitzer prize-winning sportswriter worked his way from reporter, to copy writer and sportswriter for various newspapers to the premier sports columnist for the New York Times. *To Absent Friends* is the compilation of the columns he wrote as affectionate farewells to those in sports. Sports enthusiasts will love the book, but so will anyone interested in good writing and character portrayal.

Here, for instance, are the opening lines of a column: "Just about everything worth saying about Sam Langford has been said, in the record books and the obituaries and the sports columns and on the editorial pages. A lot of it is true and no doubt some of it is important." For those who don't know, before Joe Louis, there was Sam Langford, both victim and victor of racism. Red Smith needed only nine paragraphs to capture the history of the day and the triumphant character of the man.

Some columns may be timepieces to us, living in a different era. However, many well-known figures-Babe Ruth, Joe Louis, Vince Lombardi-populate the book's pages. Smith provides insight into them all, with stories happy and sad.

Red Smith misses his friends and the sports pages miss Red Smith.

- Dick McGowan is an instructor in the College of Business at Butler University.