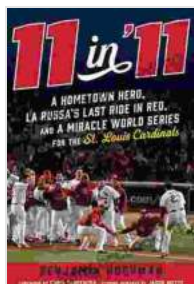


Hometown Hero: La Russa's Last Ride and Miracle World for the St. Louis Cardinals



11 in '11: A Hometown Hero, La Russa's Last Ride, and a Miracle World Series for the St. Louis Cardinals

by Benjamin Hochman

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 4844 KB
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In the heart of the Midwest, where the Mississippi River carves its path through rolling hills, a legend was born. Tony La Russa, the son of Italian immigrants, grew up in Tampa, Florida, with a burning passion for baseball. Little did he know that his love for the game would lead him on an extraordinary journey, culminating in a triumphant farewell with the St. Louis Cardinals.

After guiding the Oakland Athletics to three consecutive World Series appearances in the 1980s, La Russa took the helm of the Cardinals in 1996. For 16 seasons, he steered the franchise through both triumph and

adversity, becoming the second-winningest manager in Major League Baseball history.

As the 2011 season dawned, La Russa announced that it would be his last. The Cardinals, a team that had struggled in recent years, were not expected to make a deep playoff run. But under La Russa's steady leadership, they defied the odds.

With a nucleus of veteran players like Albert Pujols, Matt Holliday, and Chris Carpenter, the Cardinals surged through the regular season, winning 90 games and capturing the National League Central Division title. In the playoffs, they upset the Philadelphia Phillies, Milwaukee Brewers, and Los Angeles Dodgers, setting up a thrilling World Series matchup against the Texas Rangers.

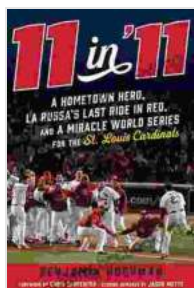
The World Series was a back-and-forth affair, with both teams trading blows. In Game 6, the Rangers held a 2-1 lead going into the bottom of the ninth inning. With two outs and runners on first and second, La Russa made a bold decision. He called for a double steal, a risky move that could have ended the Cardinals' season.

But La Russa's gamble paid off. David Freese, a journeyman infielder, delivered a game-tying double off the left-field wall. In the bottom of the 10th inning, Freese stepped up to the plate with the bases loaded and hammered a walk-off home run, sending Busch Stadium into a frenzy and propelling the Cardinals to an unforgettable victory.

La Russa's final game as manager was a moment of pure triumph. He had led the Cardinals to their first World Series championship in 24 years, cementing his legacy as one of the greatest managers in baseball history.

In the years since his retirement, La Russa has continued to be involved in baseball, serving as a special advisor to the Arizona Diamondbacks. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2014, a fitting tribute to his extraordinary career.

Tony La Russa's journey from small-town boy to baseball legend is a testament to the power of passion, perseverance, and leadership. His final ride with the St. Louis Cardinals was a miraculous season that will forever be remembered in the annals of baseball history.



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