

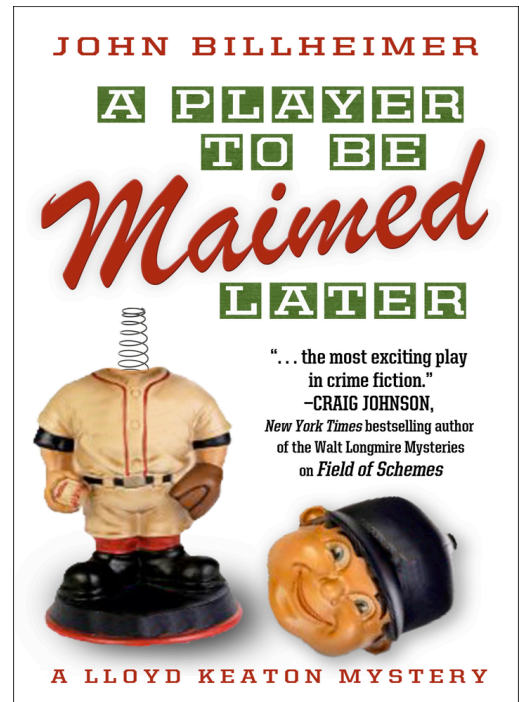
A PLAYER TO BE MAIMED LATER

by John Billheimer

Lloyd Keaton – who killed a successful sportswriting career with a gambling addiction – gets a second chance at the big time. Blaze Stender, a retired major-league superstar, asks his old friend Keaton to write his biography in the hope that the book will ensure the popular pitcher's election to baseball's Hall of Fame.

Keaton is barely on the job two weeks when Stender's pleasure boat crashes into a Lake Erie breakwater; the pitcher is missing and presumed dead. With the help of Stender's widow, Keaton continues work on the biography. He soon discovers, however, that the facts of his old friend's life are at odds with his popular image, and that Stender was keeping some dark secrets, including blackmail payments that could be related to a mysterious death. Stender's widow tells him to stop: She doesn't want her husband's image tarnished by a tell-all biography. But Keaton can't stop following a story, even when it leads to another killing and the reporter himself becomes a moving target.

The answers lie beneath the ice of Lake Erie, and when Stender's body is finally discovered, those answers threaten Keaton's ethics, his career, and even his life.



Advance Praise for *A Player to be Maimed Later*:

A beautifully observed and deftly written tale that clearly demonstrates the author's love of baseball, combined with a sure-footed ability to involve even those readers who aren't avid sports fans. Yet another smooth and satisfying read from Billheimer and a must-read for fans of his Owen Allison series.

— Zoe Sharp, author of the *Charlie Fox crime thriller series*

A winner—real intrigue and real suspense, plus real sardonic charm. I loved this book.

---Lee Child, *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Jack Reacher series*

Billheimer deals sensitively and knowledgeably with ageing, responsibility, fame, ego, gambling, deceit and redemption. The tale is full of perceptive observation, finely expressed. Although about far more than balls and strikes, the author's command of baseball history and issues is impressive too. This is an excellent follow-up to Lloyd Keaton's first appearance. I hope there will be many more.

— Michael Z. Lewin, award-winning author of the *Albert Samson series*