

SOARING EAGLES

SOARING EAGLES



NEWARK
AND THE
NEW YORK
EAGLES
LEAGUES



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Front cover: Eagles infielder Len Pearson, a five-time Negro League All-Star

MAYOR SHARPE JAMES

and

THE MEMBERS *of the* NEWARK MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

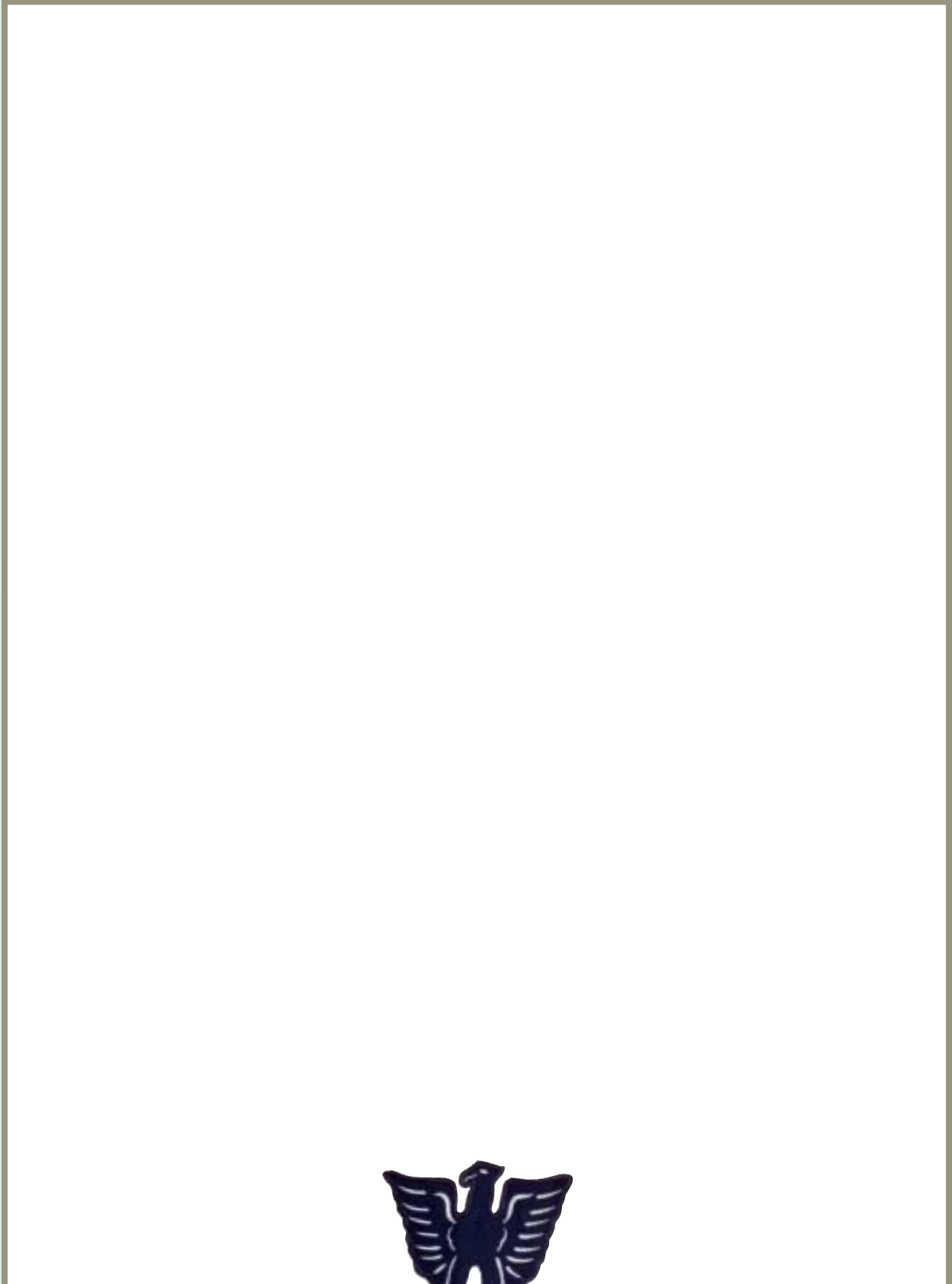
present

AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH TRIBUTE

SALUTING THE HISTORY
of
NEGRO LEAGUE
BASEBALL



Autographs



Three outs were all it took.



When the Newark Eagles took the field for the ninth inning on a fall day in September 1946, they were three outs away from immortality. It was game seven of the Negro League World Series against the Kansas City Monarchs. The Eagles, down three games to two in the series just two days before, had fought back to force a final showdown in Newark.



Rufus Lewis, who joined Newark for the '46 season fresh from World War II service, climbed the pitcher's mound with the Eagles leading 2-1. The inning was a tense one. Standing at center stage of 19,000-seat Ruppert Stadium, Lewis kicked and fired toward home. Fans gasped at the crack of the bat. A split second later, Lewis's head turned to watch the ball sail ominously toward the outfield gap.

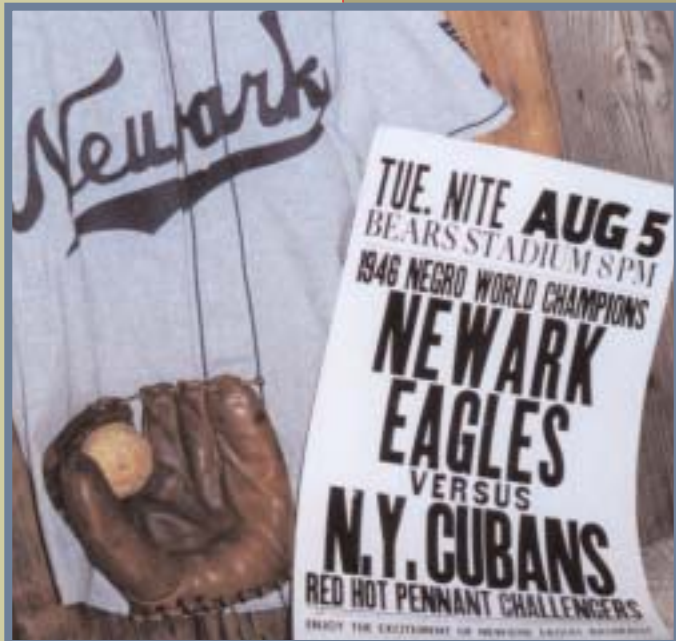
Center fielder Jimmy Wilkes, nicknamed "Seabiscuit" after the fleet-footed racehorse, took off in chase and miraculously cut off what should have



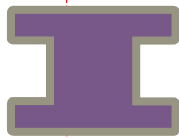
been a sure double. He pulled the ball from his glove, turned and threw, nailing the batter as he slid into second base. Breathing a sigh of relief as the play unfolded was Eagle manager Biz Mackey, an old war-horse of the game who, 28 years earlier, began a career as both a talented catcher and savvy field general.

After Wilkes bailed the Eagles out of that jam the tension built again as two more Monarchs reached base before a pop fly settled in Larry Doby's glove for the third out, sealing the championship for Newark.

And as Doby's mitt snapped shut, so did an era.



The '46 Championship: Crowning Glory



In many ways, the Eagles championship represented the culmination of a long, proud history of Negro League baseball in Newark. That era saw four teams – the Browns, Stars, Dodgers and Eagles – represent the city and showcase the remarkable talents of hundreds of athletes excluded from the major leagues by virtue of their skin color.

The Eagles were the only team of the group to win a title, and it was the crowning achievement of the team's 13-year stint in Newark, a stint in which the club was established both as a consistent contender and city institution. Newark's African American community had a love affair with the team on par with Brooklyn's love for the Dodgers, wrote one author. The Eagles' opponents often moved their home games to Newark just to take advantage of the big crowds.

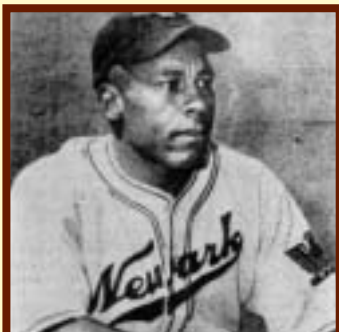
In a sport that has traditionally been fueled by "who was better?" debates among its fans, the '46 Eagles will long figure in any hot stove discussion of baseball's all-time franchises.

The '46 Eagles showcased a collection of players that rivaled any ever assembled. At first base was Lennie Pearson, owner of a gaudy .393 average in the series. Up the middle was Pearson's high school friend, shortstop Monte Irvin, who led the Negro National League in runs batted in that year. He would go on to win a World Series ring with the '51 New York Giants. His double play partner, Larry Doby, would be the first African American to play in the American League, where he won two home run titles.

The pitching staff included Leon Day, who marked his return from two years of war service by pitching a no-hitter on opening day that season. Another war veteran in the group, Max Manning, used a deceptive sidearm delivery to rack up an 11-1 record in '46.

Three members of the '46 team – Day, Doby and Irvin – would go on to be enshrined with the sport's all-time greats in the Baseball Hall of Fame. There they would be joined by two other Eagles: Ray Dandridge, regarded as one of the best third basemen in any league, and shortstop Willie Wells, who anchored the team's "Million Dollar Infield" in the late '30s. Even the team's co-owner and business manager, Effa Manley, would be remembered as an extraordinary pioneer in the male-dominated world of baseball.

RAY DANDRIDGE 3B



Newark Eagles 1936-'39; 1942; 1944
Bats: R Throws: R

Began career with Detroit Stars in 1933...Lifetime .355 hitter in the Negro National League...Three-time Negro National League All-Star...A hero with the Veracruz Diablos in the Mexican League, where he had a record 32-game hitting streak...Served as a recreation supervisor in Newark after his playing career ended... Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1987.



The 1946 Newark Eagles

The '46 Championship: The Beginning of the End



As the Newark Eagles reached the mountaintop in 1946, in motion were events that would close out the era of Negro League baseball in Newark. In April of that year, just a few miles across the Newark Bay at Jersey City's Roosevelt Stadium, Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in organized baseball. He did it in his first minor league game as a member of the Montreal Royals, a Brooklyn Dodger farm team.

Robinson's debut meant the end of the nearly 60-year ban on African Americans in organized ball – and the beginning of the end of the Negro Leagues. 1946 also marked the minor league debuts of such former Negro League stars as Roy Campanella and Don Newcombe. In 1947, just three months after Robinson took the field, the Eagles' Larry Doby joined the Cleveland Indians as the first African American in the American League. By the following year, the Negro National League folded, the Eagles were sold and the franchise

What's in a Name?

The colorful personalities and stupendous on-the-field feats of the Negro Leaguers were often reflected in their unique nicknames.

Ted Radcliffe earned three all-star team berths as a pitcher and another three as a catcher. When he caught Satchel Paige in the first game of a double header and took the mound to pitch the second game, famed sports-writer Damon Runyon gave him the nickname that would stick for his career: **“Double Duty.”**

Norman Stearnes, dubbed **“Turkey”** for his arm-flapping baserunning style, led the Negro National League in home runs six times using an unusual batting stance. William Dismukes – **“Dizzy”** – was a dapper dresser whose trick sidearm pitches made batters' heads spin. David Thomas' slick fielding at first base made him a natural for the nickname **“Showboat.”** Jud Wilson was a devastating hitter called **“Boojum”** after the sound his line drives made when they hit outfield walls.



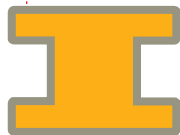
packed off to Houston, where it would survive until 1950 as a member of the Negro American League. No longer regarded as a “major” league, the Negro American circuit would fade away over the next decade as crowds and interest dwindled.

American society is a fast-moving and forward-looking society. So much from our past is remembered only in moments of nostalgia. But not the Negro Leagues.

Negro League baseball – especially baseball in Newark – leaves behind so much that is priceless: athletic feats that transcend their place in time...unique characters who embodied traits worth emulating in any era...lessons in pride and perseverance in the face of harsh injustice.

The value of hearing the Negro League baseball story may have been summed up best by Effa Manley, who said later in her life, “I constantly look at my scrapbook. That scrapbook is fascinating. People say ‘don’t live in the past.’ But I guess it depends on how interesting your past is.”

Origins



It was called a “gentleman’s agreement,” but there wasn’t anything gentlemanly about it. From baseball’s infancy in the 1880s until Jackie Robinson’s first appearance with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, major league team owners had, by this agreement, closed the sport to generations of players. Judged for their skin color, not by their immense talent, these players nevertheless took to the diamond in legendary all-Black professional circuits known in the lore of the game as the Negro Leagues.

Read any history of the Negro Leagues and the eventual integration of professional baseball in America, and you will return again and again to New Jersey. The game’s history comes full circle right here in the Garden State and Newark figures prominently in many of its notable moments.

The first all-African American professional team was the Trenton Cuban Giants, which was composed of employees at a Long Island hotel whose domination of White teams in the area caught the eye of Trenton businessman Walter Cook. Billed as “Cubans” in the belief that White crowds would rather pay to watch Latino players, Cook sent the Cuban Giants out as a barnstorming team in 1885. They toured the East Coast in a private railcar, taking on White clubs so successfully that they were acclaimed as “world colored champions” in 1887 and 1888.

A pitcher named Bud Fowler integrated “organized” pro baseball – the major and minor leagues – in 1878. By the 1880s the International League, one notch below the majors, featured a sprinkling of Black players. The Newark Little Giants fielded an all-Black pitcher-catcher combo of George Stovey, whose league record of 35 wins in a season still stands, and a man who briefly integrated major league baseball more than half a century before Jackie Robinson.

Moses Fleetwood Walker was the son of an Ohio doctor and a star athlete at Oberlin College. In 1883, he was signed as a catcher by the minor league Toledo Blue Stockings. He was kept on by the team the following year when it joined the American Association, then considered a major league. For 41 games that season, Fleet Walker was a big leaguer. He was joined briefly by his brother, Welday, who appeared in the outfield for five games when the club was hit by a rash of injuries. The Walkers were the last African Americans to hold the distinction for 64 years.

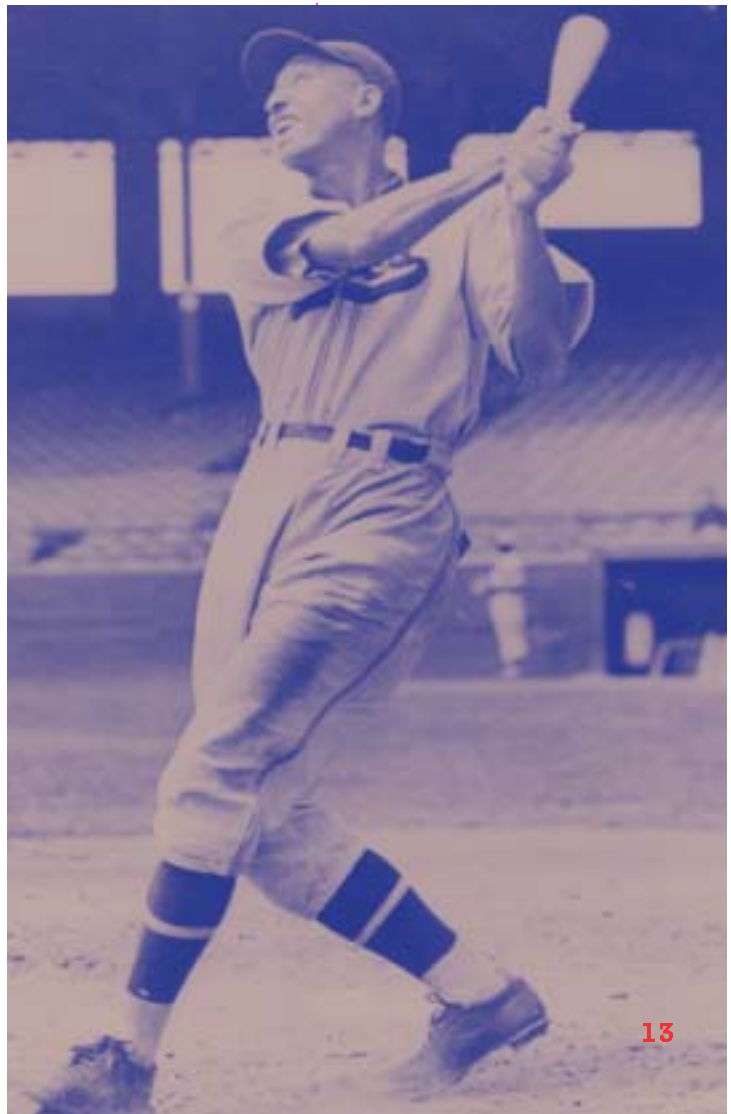
Three years later Walker would find himself in the eye of the storm that led to the first formal ban on African American players in organized baseball. Black players of that age were never fully accepted. In 1887 mounting racial animosity among White players in the International League culminated at a July 14 exhibition game scheduled between the Newark Little Giants and the Chicago White Stockings of the National League. The White Stockings were managed by Cap Anson, whose bigotry was well known both during and after his career. Four years earlier, Anson tried unsuccessfully to exclude Walker from a game between Chicago and Toledo. On this July day things would be different.

Anson announced his refusal to field his team unless George Stovey and Fleet Walker were banned. Anson got his wish. That same day, the league’s owners voted to deny any future contracts to African Americans. By 1888, only one African American was left in the International League. By the following year, the league was exclusively segregated. A few players hung on in smaller minor leagues over the next decade, but when pitcher-outfielder Bert Jones was forced out of the Kansas State League in 1898, the 50-year segregation of organized baseball had begun in earnest.

Dick Seay

Some names reflected a players’ appearance. At 5’9” and 145 pounds, the name **“Pee Wee”** suited Thomas Butts, a great defensive shortstop with the Baltimore Elite Giants. And the thick eyeglasses of Eagles pitcher Max Manning gave him the title of **“Dr. Cyclops”** – an intimidating name for hitters considering he stood only 60 feet away armed with a hard fastball.

Some names didn’t fit at all. Clarence **“Fats”** Jenkins was a thin, 5’7” outfielder who got the name from a heavy older brother!



Barnstorming

By the 1890s, African Americans had to play on independent barnstorming teams, many of which appeared in the Garden State. You could call this barnstorming era, which lasted until 1920, the “Age of Giants.” There were the Chicago Giants, Chicago Leland Giants, Chicago Union Giants, the Harrisburg Colored Giants, the Philadelphia Giants, Brooklyn Royal Giants and the Kansas City Giants. The Cuban X Giants, the top team of the 1890s, were founded in 1897 with players who defected from the original Cuban Giants. The Lincoln Giants, based in New York, dominated Black baseball for a decade. In their first season, 1911, they boasted a 108-12 record. The Page Fence Giants operated out of Adrian, Michigan, and were sponsored by the Page Woven Wire Fence Company. The team traveled throughout the U.S. and Canada in a special rail coach bearing the company’s logo, which was parked outside town as the team

paraded to the ballpark in uniform riding bicycles. The team’s co-founder, Bud Fowler, was a showman whose other club, the All-American Black Tourists, would show up at the ballpark in opera hats carrying silk umbrellas.

The teams of the barnstorming era, like fireflies, flickered into prominence, glowed briefly and faded from view. Players often jumped to other teams to take advantage of better pay and opportunities. It made for a tenuous living both for promoters and players alike. It took a man who saw the economic failings of the barnstorming system to come up with an alternative that changed the face of Black baseball.

Eagles catcher,
Everett Marcel



The Early Leagues

I

f baseball can claim anyone close to a “Renaissance man,” it was Andrew “Rube” Foster. The Texas native earned his nickname when, as a 21-year-old pitcher with the Chicago Union Giants, he defeated the major league Hall of Famer Rube Wadell in a barnstorming match. His smarts on the mound, combined with a deadly screwball, led to his posting a 54-1 record with the 1903 Cuban X-Giants and a 51-4 record in 1905 with the Philadelphia Giants. In 1907 he began a career as a player/manager and went on to assemble one of the great juggernauts of the era, the Chicago American Giants. Between 1910 and 1922, the team recorded 12 championships on the barnstorming circuit.

Having encountered problems with an East Coast promoter while booking games for the American Giants, Foster seized on the idea of forming a Black league as a way around such difficulties. He also saw a league as a way of promoting economic opportunity for African American players and owners. His objective, he said, was “to create a profession that would equal the earning capacity of other professions.”

The Negro National League launched in 1920 with Foster at the helm as president and treasurer. Members of the eight-team league honored one another’s player contracts, which brought a measure of stability to Black baseball. It also brought some innovation. The Kansas City Monarchs became the first pro team to play regular night games – five years before the major leagues – when owner J.L. Wilkinson bought a \$50,000 portable lighting system.

The league – and the concept behind it – proved successful. So much so that it was copied within three years.

In 1923, Ed Bolden launched the Eastern Colored League. Described as a small, shy man, Bolden was a Philadelphia postal worker whose modesty hid his business acumen. He owned the most popular Black barnstorming team in town, the Hilldale Daisies, which starred Spotswood Poles, who Paul Robeson said was one of the greatest Black athletes of all time. Bolden’s league included the Daisies, winner of the first three championships, and five other teams on the East Coast. The following year, Bolden and Rube Foster joined forces to put on a show of shows: the first Negro World Series in which the Negro National League’s Kansas City Monarchs defeated Hilldale in 10 games.

MONTE IRVIN SS - OF



Newark Eagles 1940-42; 1946
Bats: R Throws: R

Won 16 varsity letters and all-state honors in four sports at East Orange High School ... Joined Eagles as a teenager... Won two Negro National League batting titles... Hit 3 home runs vs. Kansas City in 1946 Negro World Series... Broke into major leagues in 1950 with N.Y. Giants... Led National League with 121 runs batted in during 1951 season... Hit .458 in the 1951 World Series... Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973.

“The Negro Leagues served a great purpose by entertaining the downtrodden people who came to see them. At that time, we didn’t have too many heroes.”

– Newark Eagles star Monte Irvin



"Pop" Lloyd and Bacharach
Giants on Atlantic City
Boardwalk. Oil by
John Wolfe, 1999.

It was the Eastern Colored League that introduced Black baseball to New Jersey for the first time. The Atlantic City Bacharach Giants, named for the town's mayor, Harry Bacharach, were one of the league's premier clubs, winning back-to-back championships in 1926 and '27. The biggest Giant of them all was John Henry "Pop" Lloyd, a Hall of Famer regarded as the best shortstop, Black or White, of the era. In his first season as player/manager of the Bacharach Giants, Lloyd switched to second base to make room at short for a younger Dick Lundy, nicknamed "King Richard" for his exceptional hitting and fielding skills. Another Bacharach Giant, Red Grier, put his name in the record books by pitching a no-hitter in the 1926 Negro League World Series.

Through the Eastern Colored League Newark got its first brief taste of Negro League baseball. The Newark Stars took the field in 1926 and collected only one win before disbanding during the season. But Newarkers would not have to wait too long before Black baseball made its return.

Upheaval

S

tarting in 1927, the two organized Negro Leagues entered a period of uncertainty. That year, the burdens of running a league and a team overcame Ed Bolden and he sustained a nervous breakdown. In his absence, the Eastern Colored League fell, the victim of disarray and financial problems, and disbanded the following year.

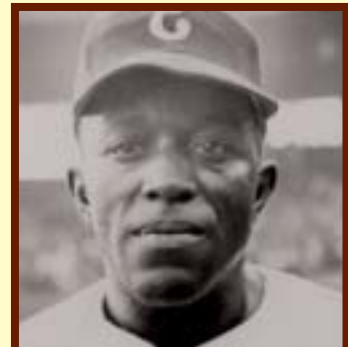
The new American Negro League tried to fill the vacuum left by the loss of Bolden's circuit, but it folded after only a season. This happened in 1929 – the year of the Stock Market Crash, an event that would cause nationwide economic chaos, signal the start of the Great Depression and strongly impact Black baseball.

After the 1931 season, the Negro National League folded. Up to that point it had been the most stable circuit, but it could not overcome the effects of the Depression, especially without Rube Foster. He died in 1930, having been out of the picture since 1926 when, like Ed Bolden, the strains of leadership caused a mental breakdown.

Another attempt in 1932 to form a replacement circuit, the new East-West League, failed by June. But the league gave Newarkers another brief sample of Negro League baseball in the form of the Newark Browns. The team was led by player/manager John Beckwith, a hulking slugger who once recorded an amazing .546 batting average with the Lincoln Giants.

In the wake of the Great Depression, it would take another top businessman in the Foster-Bolden tradition to put together a league that would last.

LEON DAY P-2B-OF



Newark Eagles 1936-39;
1941-43; 1946 Bats: R Throws: R

Owned 95 mph fastball and wicked curve... Seven-time East-West All-Star... Holds strikeout records in Negro National League, East-West All-Star Game and Puerto Rican League... Went 13-0 in 1937... Played second base and outfield on days he didn't pitch... Excellent hitter and baserunner... Recorded .469 batting average with Eagles in 1946... Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1995.

The Comeback

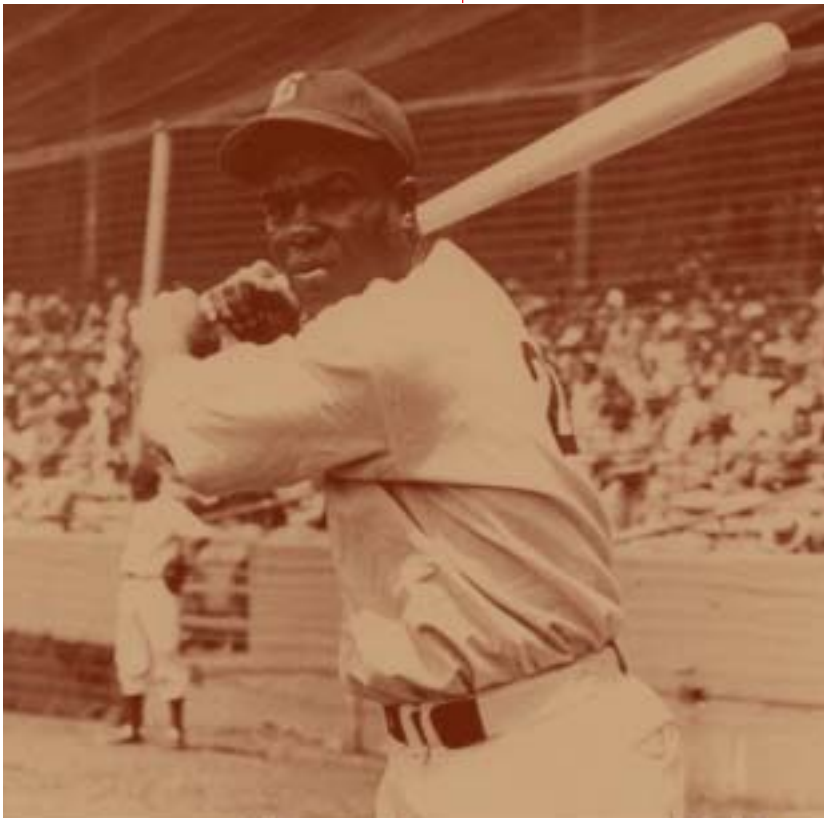
G

us Greenlee, whose 6'3", 210-pound frame earned him the nickname "Big Red," was a big figure in Pittsburgh's Black community. He was a businessman, boxing entrepreneur and owner of a popular nightclub that quenched the public's thirst during Prohibition. Greenlee bought the barnstorming Pittsburgh Crawfords for political reasons in 1930, but his desire for success in everything he touched led him to stock the club with top talent. He signed "The Black Babe Ruth," Josh Gibson, who was credited with more than 900

**“Age is a question
of mind over matter.**

**If you don’t mind,
it don’t matter”**

– Satchel Paige,
who, at 59, was the
oldest man to ever
pitch in a major
league game.



Len Pearson

home runs in his career and was reputed to have hit a ball completely out of old Yankee Stadium. For another Greenlee acquisition, the immortal pitcher Satchel Paige, Pittsburgh was an early stop on a baseball odyssey that would span more than 40 years and land him in the Baseball Hall of Fame alongside Gibson.

Greenlee’s money-is-no-object style – and his outrage over his team being denied use of the dressing rooms at the city’s White-owned ballparks – led him to build his own stadium. He sank \$100,000, a fantastic sum during the Depression, into Greenlee Field, an impressive brick and steel structure that was the first ballpark built and owned by an African American. His next job was to build a league equally as impressive.

In 1933 Greenlee organized a new Negro National League featuring the Crawfords, Columbus Bluebirds, Detroit Stars and

Indianapolis ABCs. That same year, he staged the first annual East-West All-Star game before a crowd of more than 20,000 at Chicago’s Comiskey Park. The game proved to be Negro League baseball’s most popular – and profitable – event, upstaging even the Negro League World Series.

The next season Newark returned to the Black baseball scene to stay as the Newark Dodgers, previously an independent team, entered the Negro National League. The club had a losing season in 1934 and finished at the bottom of the standings in 1935, but there were glimmers of hope. The Dodgers were led by Dick Lundy, who was winding down an all-star playing career and had turned his talents to managing. In 1933 Lundy’s eye was caught by a young infielder named Ray Dandridge, a rookie with the Detroit Stars. The following season Lundy signed Dandridge, who rewarded him with a .436 batting average and a spot on the East-West All-Star squad. Nicknamed “Hooks” after his penchant for snagging everything hit his way at third, Dandridge would be a key player on the Newark teams that would follow, teams that would live on in baseball lore.



Ruppert Stadium

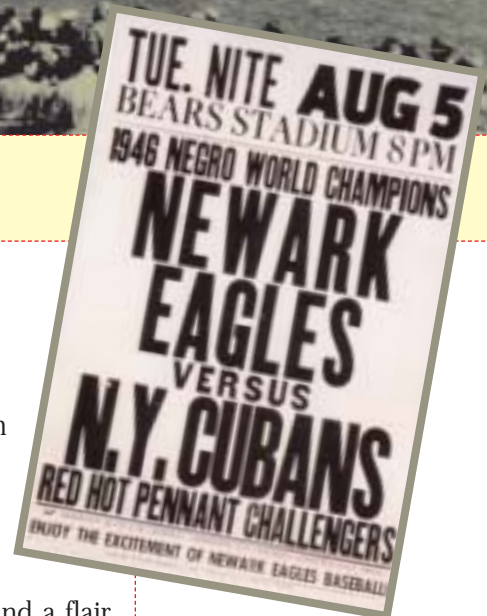
The Newark Eagles Soar



Another team that finished near the bottom of the standings in 1935, the Brooklyn Eagles, were owned by numbers banker Abraham Manley. Three years earlier, at the 1932 World Series in Yankee Stadium, he met a young divorcee named Effa Bishop and they would marry by the following June. The two shared a love of baseball and a flair for business – a combination that led the Manleys to see possibilities in the prospect of buying the Browns and combining the moribund Newark and Brooklyn franchises.

The new team, christened the Newark Eagles, opened the 1936 season with Dick Lundy still at the helm and Ray Dandridge at third base. Joining “Hooks” was shortstop Willie Wells, whose fielding skills prompted frustrated hitters in the Mexican League to dub him “El Diablo” – The Devil. First base was manned by Mule Suttles, who wielded a 50-ounce bat some likened to a wagon tongue and was celebrated for his tape measure home runs. By the next year they would be joined by Dick Seay, a nimble second baseman renowned for his glove work and ability to turn the double play. Together, this group would be celebrated as Newark’s “Million Dollar Infield.”

The Eagles played at Ruppert Stadium, located in Newark’s East Ward in the empty meadows off of Wilson Avenue. They shared the park with the main tenant, the Newark Bears, a New York Yankees farm club owned by New York beer baron Colonel Jacob Ruppert. The Bears stocked the Yankee dynasty teams of the ‘30s and ‘40s and showcased





The 1936 Newark Eagles(top) and the 1936 Newark Bears (facing page):
Two teams that shared the same city but never faced off on the diamond

**“[The] ballpark
was as much a part
of growing up in
this town as acne
and graduation.”**

—Newark sportswriter
Jerry Izenberg on
Ruppert Stadium

such future Bronx Bombers as Yogi Berra and King Kong Keller. The 1937 Bears won the International League pennant by 25 1/2 games, took the Little World Series and are now regarded as the greatest minor league team ever to play. Together, these teams would own Newark.

The Eagles prospered under the leadership of the Manleys, who set up residence at 71 Crawford Street. “It was generally acknowledged that the Eagles were the best organized, best run and strongest of the old Negro League teams,” said Newark historian Charles Cummings. “Under the Manleys, the team played a regular schedule, was paid on time, wore good uniforms, was transported on a modern bus and was a generally all-around dependable organization.”

Effa Manley served as the Eagles’ business manager. It was an unprecedented role for a woman in that era, never mind a woman in professional sports. Abe served both as vice president and treasurer of the Negro National League and ran the baseball end of things for the Eagles, although Effa occasionally dabbled in field operations. One story has the extremely attractive Effa managing the team from the box seats and crossing her legs to signal for a bunt. It was said that one player was so excited watching her legs that he took his attention off the game, was hit in the head with a ball and knocked unconscious.

From 1936 through their final season in 1948 the Eagles filled the Ruppert Stadium diamond with athleticism and charisma. Terris McDuffie was a flamboyant pitcher who showboated after a strikeout, much to the crowd’s delight, and wore a jacket embroidered with the words “The Great McDuffie” embroidered on the back. He backed up his bravado with 19 wins in his first season with Newark. Another Eagles hurler, Don Newcombe, joined the team as a 19-year-old rookie out of Madison, New Jersey. He was later among the first African Americans to make the major leagues, where he won a Cy Young Award, National League Most Valuable Player honors and 149 career games.

Outfielder Jimmy Crutchfield was a team player who did all the small things that led to wins: run, bunt, hit and run, and field. It was in the fielding category that he especially excelled, occasionally



catching fly balls behind his back as a crowd pleaser. Even Biz Mackey, the man who managed the Eagles to their 1946 championship, shined on the field for Newark. At age 48 he batted .307 for the Eagles and even made an appearance in the East-West All-Star Game at age 50!

John Davis, who liked to drive the team bus, made a name as a fan favorite whose feats included a game-winning double in the game that clinched the 1946 Negro World Series. Jimmy Hill was a left-handed pitcher with a fastball that seemed unlikely given his 5'5", 134-pound size.

Catcher Charlie Parks did two stints as the team's backup catcher sandwiched around World War II service (where he was awarded three Bronze Stars). Another Eagles backstop, Leon Ruffin, was a defensive whiz with a cannon arm. Switch-hitting Pat Patterson, a four-time East-West All-Star, started at third base for the '46 Eagles and hit .321 en route to the World Series title.

James Brown did double-duty for the Eagles as both a pitcher and an outfielder, excelling at both spots. There was Lennie Hooker, a right-handed pitcher with a baffling arsenal of off-speed pitches and a knuckleball. Outfielder Fred Wilson made a name as a hard hitter who refused to duck out of the way of beanballs, demanding that pitchers instead improve their control. Felix Evans, a Morehouse College graduate, brought a big overhand curveball he called a "mountain drop" to Newark for a season.

In the Eagles' heyday, Newark's African American population was growing dramatically. Drawn by industrial jobs, almost 22,000 Blacks had arrived in the city between 1920 and 1930. They needed heroes of their own and in the team's best season, 1946, 120,000 came to see the Eagles play at Ruppert Stadium. Off the field, the Eagles became part of a vibrant African American cultural scene that was blooming in Newark. The Grand Hotel at 78 West Market Street served as the team's headquarters. It was a place where players retired after games for dinner and to take in a show featuring some of the jazz greats of the era, including Count Basie and Fletcher Henderson.

WILLIE WELLS SS



Newark Eagles 1936-39; 1942; 1945
Bats: R Throws: R

Best all-around shortstop of 30s & 40s... Career spanned 25 years... Lifetime .334 hitter... Set single-season Negro Leagues record with 27 homers in 88 games for St. Louis Stars in 1926... Use of miner's helmet to protect against beanballs made him first to use batting helmet... Tutored Jackie Robinson in turning double plays... Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1997.

"Just pitch and pray"

- Advice given by Leo

Durocher to Chicago Cubs

pitcher Big Jim Weaver on

how to pitch to Mule Suttles

during an exhibition game

between major leaguers and

Negro League players.

The Golden Years

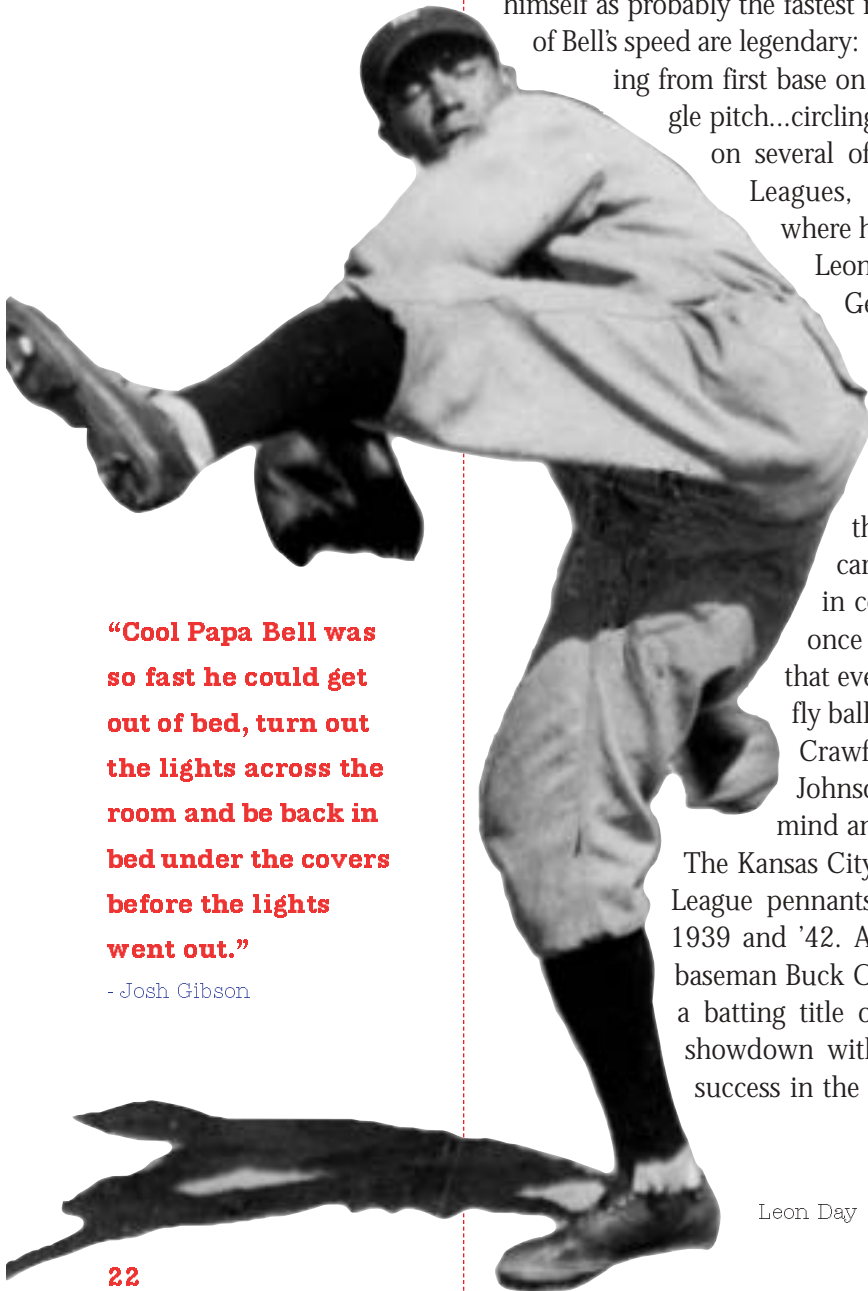
IN

ineteen thirty-seven marked the birth of the Negro American League, which brought the Black baseball teams of the Midwest and South together in an organized circuit. Together with the Negro National League it became part of the galaxy of stars that populated the Negro Leagues over six decades.

The great players of the Negro Leagues take on legendary proportions. Over a 25-year career, James “Cool Papa” Bell established himself as probably the fastest man to ever play pro baseball. Stories of Bell’s speed are legendary: 175 stolen bases in 200 games...scoring from first base on a bunt...stealing two bases on a single pitch...circling the bases in 12 seconds. Bell played on several of the dominant teams in the Negro Leagues, including the Homestead Grays, where he teamed with Josh Gibson and Buck Leonard, a first baseman compared to Lou Gehrig and a perennial hitting machine.

Another of the top teams of Negro League, Gus Greenlee’s Pittsburgh Crawfords, were led by barrel-chested player-manager Oscar Charleston. He manned first base for those Crawfords, but earlier in his career he revolutionized defensive play in center field. His teammate Ben Taylor once called him “the greatest outfielder that ever lived” and dubbed his judgment of fly balls “uncanny.” The team captain on the Crawfords, third baseman William “Judy” Johnson, had sure hands, a sharp baseball mind and consistent .300+ average.

The Kansas City Monarchs won six Negro American League pennants, including four in a row between 1939 and ’42. A key to the team’s success was first baseman Buck O’Neill, a three-time all-star who won a batting title on his way to the ’46 World Series showdown with Newark. O’Neill would go on to success in the major leagues, where he became the



“Cool Papa Bell was so fast he could get out of bed, turn out the lights across the room and be back in bed under the covers before the lights went out.”

- Josh Gibson

Leon Day



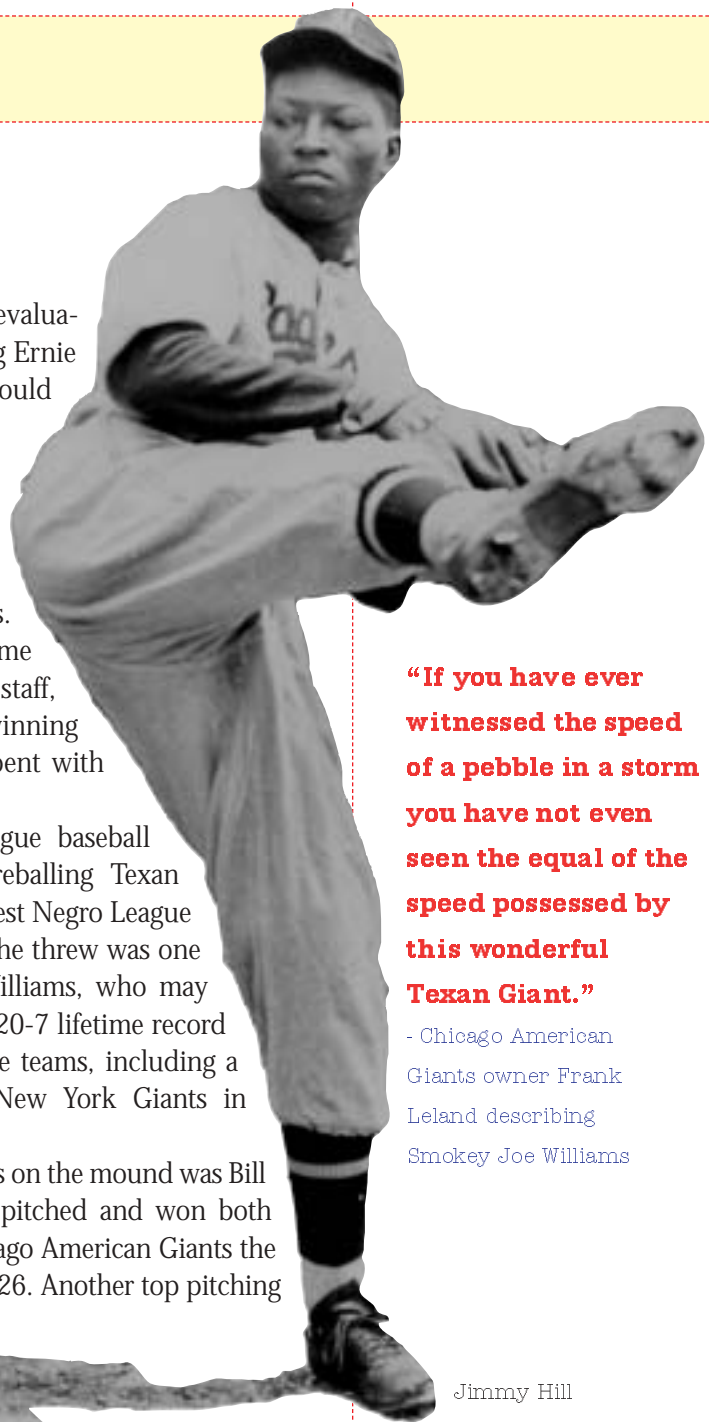
first Black coach. He was also a shrewd evaluator of talent as a big league scout, signing Ernie Banks and Lou Brock, both of whom would go on to enjoy Hall of Fame careers.

Kansas City's baseball royalty included "Bullet" Joe Rogan, who began his Negro League career at age 30, threw an amazing fastball and a confusing array of palmballs, spitballs and forkballs. Rogan tutored a pitcher who later became the ace of the Kansas City pitching staff, Hilton Smith, who was credited with winning 20 games in each of the 12 years he spent with the Monarchs.

The 'who's who' of Negro League baseball includes "Smokey" Joe Williams, a fireballing Texan regarded, with Satchel Paige, as the greatest Negro League pitcher. Among the dozens of no-hitters he threw was one in which he recorded 25 strikeouts. Williams, who may have been the fastest pitcher ever, had a 20-7 lifetime record in exhibitions against white major league teams, including a 20-strikeout performance against the New York Giants in 1917.

One of Williams's contemporaries on the mound was Bill Foster, Rube Foster's half brother, who pitched and won both games of a doubleheader to give his Chicago American Giants the old Negro National League pennant in 1926. Another top pitching performer of the era, John Donaldson, was described by Pop Lloyd as the best pitcher he ever faced.

Among the other notable stars of the '20s was Oliver "Ghost" Marcel, often regarded as the top third baseman in Negro League history. And Sam Bankhead proved to be the epitome of an all-around player. He was named to the East-West All-Star team seven times at five different positions!



"If you have ever witnessed the speed of a pebble in a storm you have not even seen the equal of the speed possessed by this wonderful Texan Giant."

- Chicago American Giants owner Frank Leland describing Smokey Joe Williams

Jimmy Hill

A Kaleidoscope of Talent

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he major leagues' unwavering refusal to open its ranks to people of color extended not only to African Americans but also to Latino players whose skin color could not be passed off to White crowds.

On the Eagles roster for the team's inaugural season in 1936 was Javier Perez, a native of Cuba and a popular, versatile infielder. He was the latest in a long line of Latino professionals in the Garden State, a line dating back as far as 1913 when a team called the Long Branch Cubans played minor league baseball on the Jersey Shore. New Jersey could also lay some claim to one of the most successful Latino teams of all time – the New York Cuban Giants, which won the 1947 Negro League World Series. Between 1940 and 1950, the team's part-time home field was East Orange's Grove Street Oval.

The crowds gathering there and at Newark's Ruppert Stadium saw some of that fabled era's legendary Latino players. Pitcher Martin Dihigo, "El Maestro," is the only player enshrined in the baseball halls of fame of four different countries: the United States, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela. Cuba's "Minnie" Miñoso went on to hit .300 eight times in the major leagues and played with the Chicago White Sox in four different decades. Panamanian Pat Scantlebury, the last player to go directly from the Negro Leagues to the majors, threw a baffling spitball that Cleveland Indian great Bob Feller said looked "like a pigeon coming out of a barn." Luis Marquez of Puerto Rico won the 1947 Negro National League batting title with a .417 average and finished with a lifetime mark of .371. Luis Tiant, Sr. had a pickoff move so deceptive that one batter swung for strike three while Tiant was throwing to first!

These players, along with African Americans from the Negro Leagues, often played year-round, moving to the Caribbean leagues for the winter months. Here, they could supplement their income and play before appreciative crowds in the more racially enlightened societies of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Venezuela.

Players from the White major leagues often barnstormed in these nations during their off-season and received a tantalizing glimpse of the talent that existed. On a 1921 barnstorming tour, Babe Ruth was struck

EFFA MANLEY OWNER



Newark Eagles 1935-48

Strong-willed business manager... Fought for compensation from major league owners who signed Eagles after baseball's integration... Was socially active, serving as treasurer of Newark NAACP and holding Ruppert Stadium fund-raisers to support anti-lynching efforts in the South... Kept a scrapbook of baseball memorabilia that now resides in the Baseball Hall of Fame... Her grave reads "She Loved Baseball."

"Babe Didrickson was good, but we had a girl that played in our league [Toni Stone] who could really play."

- Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe



Negro Leagues exhibit at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

out three times by Cuban Hall of Fame pitcher Jose Mendez. During that same tour, another Cuban Hall of Famer, Cristobal Torriente, slugged three home runs. "Tell Torriente and Mendez that if they could play with me in the major leagues," Ruth said afterward, "we would win the pennant by July and go fishing for the rest of the season."

The remarkable diversity that existed in the Negro Leagues even extended to women. Marcenia Lyle Alberga, better known as Toni Stone, came to the Indianapolis Clowns after four seasons with the New Orleans Creoles, a barnstorming team. Here, she became the first woman to play in the Negro American League. Handling second base duties for the Indianapolis Clowns in 1953 and Kansas City Monarchs in 1954, Stone's biggest moment came when she recorded a hit off of the great Satchel Paige. When Stone left the Clowns, she was succeeded by Connie Morgan, who joined the team at the age of 19 after hitting .368 in five seasons with the North Philadelphia Honey Drippers, a women's team. The Clowns of that era also included right-handed pitcher Mamie "Peanuts" Johnson, a Long Branch, New Jersey native who even played football in high school. Today, Johnson lives in the Washington, DC, area and she recounts her experiences at baseball and educational events.



ABE MANLEY OWNER



Newark Eagles 1935-48

Born in North Carolina, later moved to Camden...Like Gus Greenlee and other East Coast owners, made his fortune in numbers rackets...Member of upper-class African American society in Harlem, where his neighbors included W.E.B. DuBois, Roy Wilkins, Walter White & Thurgood Marshall...Was close to Eagles players & often played cards in team clubhouse... Laid to rest in Fairmount Cemetery, Newark.



Reflection

**“Waste no tears on
me. I didn't come
along too early. I was
right on time.”**

– Buck O'Neill
on the pride of
playing in the
Negro Leagues

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n a game that is driven by clichés, one of the most popular clichés among sportswriters and academics has been to describe baseball in almost mystical tones, as if nine innings should be spent kneeling and the greats of the game discussed in hushed reverence. Baseball isn't life and death – it's a game. But if any part of baseball lore can be seen as having greater significance in the everyday lives of Americans, it is the story of the Negro Leagues.

Today, more than half a century since Negro League baseball in Newark faded into the swirling sands of time, that story is remembered for its proud legacy of steadfast determination. “You suffered,” said former New York Cubans player Felix Delgado. “But you worked hard and you convinced people to come and see you play.” By not giving up, by not bowing to the prevalent racism of their day, the players of the Negro Leagues marked time until April 1947 when Jackie Robinson took the field in a Brooklyn Dodgers uniform and broke the color barrier in baseball. In the process they played some beautiful baseball.



Bears & Eagles Riverfront Stadium, Newark, New Jersey

Newarkers saw firsthand the fruits of that legacy on a July night in 1999 when pro baseball returned to the Newark. The new Newark Bears were opening a state-of-the-art, 6,200-seat ballpark, Bears and Eagles Riverfront Stadium. The minor league team is a member of the independent Atlantic League, which stocks its rosters with former major and minor leaguers seeking a route back to the big leagues. In the process, they're getting a second chance, much like the City of Newark is enjoying a second chance to introduce a new generation to a game that left the city such a proud sports history.

The stadium, whose brick façade reflects the city's working-class roots, features a mural depicting the great Newark Eagles players in an area on the third base side called "The Eagles Nest." The players on that mural overlooking the field must have liked what they saw that July night as an integrated team – a global assembly of White, African American, Latino and Caribbean players – took the field.

And maybe – just maybe – they cracked a smile when the Bears won the game as a dramatic 10th inning, walk-off home run sailed into the darkness and fireworks exploded over the field.

Baseball lived again in Newark.



LARRY DOBY 2B

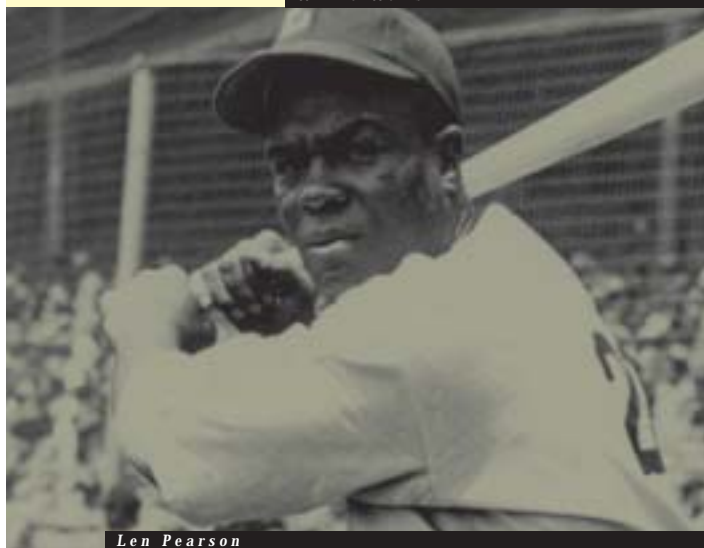


Newark Eagles 1942-43; 1946-47
Bats: R Throws: R

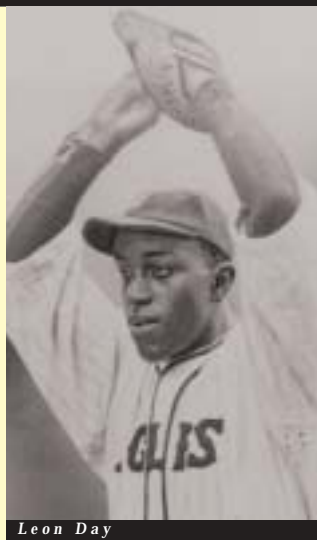
All-state athlete at Paterson's East Side High School...Hit .341 with Eagles in 1946 and finished second in Negro National League home run race...Became second African American in major leagues with 1947 Cleveland Indians...Hit .301 in first full season in majors...Won World Series with Cleveland Indians in 1948...Six-time major league All-Star & two-time East-West All-Star...Elected to Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998.



Willie Wells



Len Pearson



Leon Day

Negro League All-Time All-Stars

A 1952 *Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper poll of Black sportswriters & players chose this all-time All-Star team of Negro League players:

First Team: (1B) Buck Leonard, (2B) Jackie Robinson, (SS) Pop Lloyd, (3B) Oliver Marcell, (OF) Monte Irvin, (OF) Oscar Charleston, (OF) Cristobal Torriente, (C) Josh Gibson, (C) Biz Mackey, (P) Joe Williams, (P) Satchel Paige, (P) Bullet Rogan, (P) John Dondaldson, (P) Bill Foster, (Utility) Martin Dihigo, (Utility) Sam Bankhead, (Mgr) Rube Foster, (Coach) Dizzy Dismukes, (Coach) Danny McClellan.

Second Team: (1B) Ben Taylor, (2B) Bingo DeMoss, (SS) Willie Wells, (3B) Judy Johnson, (OF) Pete Hill, (OF) Cool Papa Bell, (OF) Chino Smith, (C) Roy Campanella, (C) Bruce Petway, (P) Dave Brown, (P) Dick Redding, (P) Nip Winters, (P) Dizzy Dismukes, (P) Don Newcombe, (Utility) John Beckwith, (Utility) Newt Allen, (Mgr) Gum Posey, (Coach) C.I. Taylor, (Coach) Dave Malarcher.

Third Team: (1B) Jud Wilson, (2B) Bill Monroe, (SS) Dick Lundy, (3B) Jud Wilson, (OF) Rap Dixon, (OF) Larry Doby, (OF) Fats Jenkins, (C) Double Duty Radcliffe, (C) Louis Santop, (P) Slim Jones, (P) Bill Holland, (P) Phil Cockrell, (P) Webster McDonald, (P) Bill Byrd, (Utility) Emmett Bowman, (Utility) Dick Wallace, (Mgr) Ed Bolden.

Fourth Team: (1B) Ed Douglas, (2B) George Scales, (SS) Doby Moore, (3B) Ray Dandridge, (OF) Jimmy Lyons, (OF) Mule Suttles, (OF) Spotswood Poles, (C) Frank Duncan, (C) Bill Perkins, (P) Double Duty Radcliffe, (P) Frank Wackware, (P) Danny McClellan, (P) Leon Day, (P) Bill Jackman, (Utility) Rev Cannady, (Utility) Jose Mendez, (Mgr) Vic Harris.

Fifth Team: (1B) George Carr, (2B) Bunny Downs, (SS) Pelayo Chacon, (3B) Dave Malarcher, (OF) Frank Duncan, (OF) Turkey Stearnes, (OF) Jelly Gardner, (C) Doc Wiley, (C) Speck Webster, (P) Stringbean Williams, (P) Ray Brown, (P) Rats Henderson, (P) Luis Tiant, (P) Leroy Matlock.

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Written and designed by
The Writing Company, Newark, NJ

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“Waste no tears on me. I didn't come along too early. I was right on time.”

- Buck O'Neill on the pride of playing in the Negro Leagues