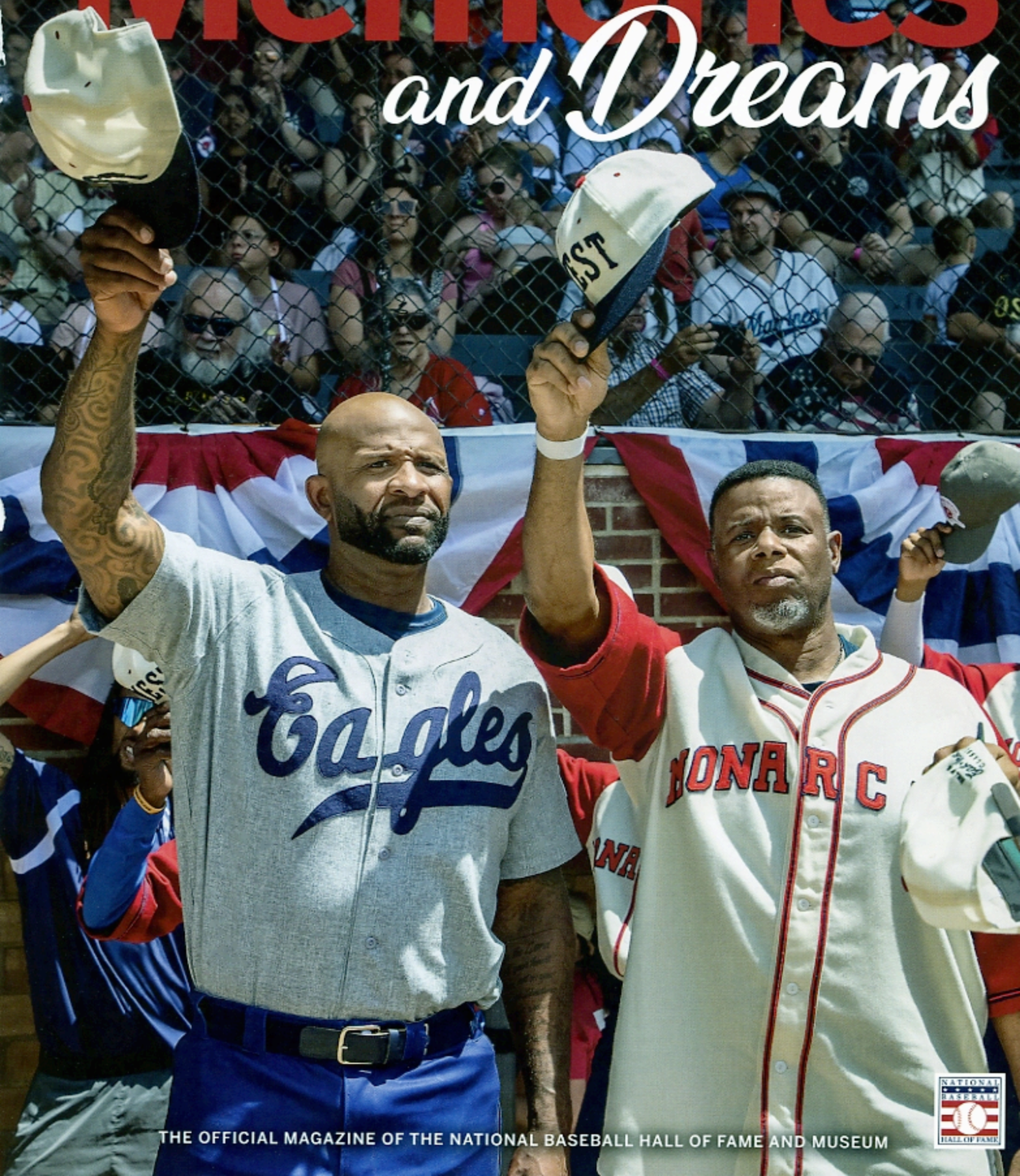


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Memories *and Dreams*



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



Living History

THE SOULS OF THE GAME, THE MUSEUM'S NEW EXHIBIT, EXPLORES THE BLACK BASEBALL EXPERIENCE THROUGH THOSE WHO LIVED IT.

WHEN JACKIE ROBINSON took his place at first base at Ebbets Field on the afternoon of April 15, 1947, an entire country changed.

"The moment shined so brightly that in many ways it has distracted us from the importance of what happened before and after that historic event," said Hall of Fame senior curator Tom Shieber. "Jackie Robinson's Dodgers debut is so monumental that it overwhelms many other stories — not only the broader story of Jackie's life, but the whole process of reintegration in particular and Black baseball history in general."

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum's *The Souls of the Game: Voices of Black Baseball* addresses the subject of Black baseball from a groundbreaking new perspective. The exhibit tells the story of the Black baseball experience through those who lived it — using quotes, storylines, artifacts and images. From the earliest pioneers of the 19th century to today's Major League Baseball stars, the exhibit gives voice to the men and women whose passion and talent for the game has burned bright for almost two centuries.

"As we developed the exhibit, our curatorial team decided to embrace the very compelling, rich and focused concept of the Black baseball experience. That is what this exhibit is all about," Shieber said.

The Souls of the Game, located on the Museum's second floor in the Yawkey Gallery, covers stories of early Black baseball, the Negro Leagues era, the complexities of reintegration, Jackie Robinson beyond his breaking the color line, post-reintegration progress and retrogress, and calls for change in today's game, while celebrating the achievements of so many great Black men and women in and around the game.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MERRILL FOR THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

The exhibit is part of a Museum-wide enrichment of Black baseball stories that will provide a more inclusive look at the game, shine a light on and correct misconceptions about Black baseball, and provide an authentic, cohesive narrative of African-American baseball history.

"We are not aware of any other museum exhibit that explores the topic of Black baseball through this particular lens," Shieber said.

THE SOULS OF THE GAME

VOICES OF
BLACK BASEBALL



from creating our own teams,
leagues, and ballparks.

YAWKEY GALLERY

THE SOULS OF THE GAME VOICES OF BLACK BASEBALL

In the beginning, Black baseball was stitched deeply into the fabric of the burgeoning national game. And for as long as there has been baseball, Black players, owners, fans, and countless others—the souls of the game—have repaired and strengthened that fabric. The Black baseball experience is more than the trajectory of a sport. It is a chronicle and celebration of the resilience, brilliance, and hopes of those who dared to envision a more inclusive world. It is the records set and greatness achieved. It is the enduring spirit of progress and the indelible mark left on the game and on the complex quilt of American life. In the end, the Black baseball experience is about dismantling barriers, challenging norms, and the relentless pursuit of excellence and equality.



The Museum's new exhibit, *The Souls of the Game: Voices of Black Baseball*, opened on May 25 and tells the story of the Black baseball experience through the voices of those who lived it.



Museum guests admire *The Souls of the Game* exhibit during a ribbon-cutting event on May 24 at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.



Adam Jones celebrates after winning the Home Run Derby prior to the Hall of Fame East-West Classic on May 25 at Doubleday Field in Cooperstown. A sellout crowd of 5,720 fans attended the Classic as the Museum celebrated the opening of *The Souls of the Game* exhibit.





Billye Aaron, Hank Aaron's widow, throws out the first pitch of the Hall of Fame East-West Classic while Ken Griffey Jr. looks on during pregame festivities on May 25 at Doubleday Field. Billye was in Cooperstown for the debut of the Museum's new statue honoring her late husband.

five well-respected historians — Gerald Early, Leslie Heaphy, Larry Lester, Rowan Ricardo Phillips and Rob Ruck — to join our curatorial team and lend their invaluable expertise. Together, we created this groundbreaking exhibit, and our entire staff just knocked it out of the park.”

The Souls of the Game features interactive elements as well as artifacts from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum's unparalleled collection and objects loaned to the Museum specifically for the exhibit. It's a story that has been more than a half decade in the making in Cooperstown.

Some of the artifacts — about 100 of which weren't previously on display in the Museum — used to tell stories in *The Souls of the Game* include:

- A scorecard from a game played by the Cuban Giants, the first professional all-Black baseball team, from 1896;
- Sol White's seminal 1907 book "History of Colored Base Ball";
- Speedy Negro Leagues legend Cool Papa Bell's shoes;
- Bats used by early Black baseball stars such as Pete Hill and Martin Dihigo;
- A baseball from the 1945 GI World Series in which Negro Leagues stars Leon Day and Willard Brown played on an integrated Army team;
- Hank Aaron's South Atlantic League championship ring from 1953, the year that he and four other players broke that league's color barrier;
- A 1940 UCLA yearbook featuring multi-sport athlete Jackie Robinson;
- Bats used by Hall of Famers Willie Mays, Hank Aaron and Eddie Murray;
- The 1996 World Series ring awarded to Yankees general manager Bob Watson;
- The Cleveland Indians jersey worn by Frank Robinson on Opening Day of 1975 when he became the first full-time Black manager in AL or NL history;
- Caps worn by Ken Griffey Jr. with the Mariners and Derek Jeter with Kalamazoo Central High School;
- A piece of black ribbon that connected players who knelt in support of social justice on Opening Day of 2020;
- The cleats worn by Joe Carter when he hit his World Series-winning home run in 1993;
- A trophy presented to Josh Gibson from his time playing in the Caribbean;
- The locker that belonged to Willie Mays and, later, his godson Barry Bonds at San Francisco's Candlestick Park.

The result is an exhibit that gives voice to one of the most important cultural revolutions in United States history.

"With its illuminating focus on the voices and lives of Black Americans who loved, played, organized around, supported and helped to evolve baseball from its earliest days and onward through every major development in American history, *The Souls of the Game* is more than an exhibit, it is an essential experience, one that represents a vital chamber of the beating heart of this great game," said Rowan Ricardo Phillips, a member of the curatorial team that guided the Museum through the process of creating the new exhibit. "The triumphs, tragedies, dreams achieved and dreams deferred on display will engage you, enlighten you, move you and, perhaps most importantly, encourage you to think in new ways about the stakes we share in baseball's past, present and future." 📖

Voice Lessons

FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS BRING PERSONAL STORIES TO LIFE IN *THE SOULS OF THE GAME*.

By Bill Francis

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum's new exhibit, *The Souls of the Game*, spotlights the long history of Black baseball. But its subtitle, *Voices of Black Baseball*, makes clear it's telling the story through those who lived it.

Located on the Museum's second floor in the Yawkey Gallery, *The Souls of the Game: Voices of Black Baseball*, which opened Memorial Day Weekend, covers stories of early Black baseball, the Negro Leagues era, the complexities of reintegration, Jackie Robinson, post-reintegration progress and retrogress, and calls for change in today's game while celebrating the newest superstars of the era.

But the exhibit's storytelling, told through a groundbreaking new perspective, uses quotes and interviews dating back to those trailblazers in the 19th century through current big league stars, giving voice to the men and women whose passion and talent for the game has burned bright as long as the sport has thrived in America.

"What was it like for a Black ballplayer in the 1880s?" said senior curator Tom Shieber. "What was the experience of a Negro Leagues team owner in the 1930s? How did Black big leaguers serve as mentors to younger players in the 1990s? How did the Black community support the Page Fence Giants, the Kansas City Monarchs or the Brooklyn Dodgers? What was the role of the Black press? We wanted to make sure the people who lived these experiences were given a voice."

Giving "voice" was always of utmost



LaTroy Hawkins scrolls through the interactive displays in *The Souls of the Game* exhibit, including one that features himself telling his story.

importance for the Hall of Fame team — from *The Souls of the Game*'s early development to its ultimate fruition. Providing these first-person accounts, whether they come from such legends as Rube Foster, Buck Leonard and Jackie Robinson, or contemporary figures Mookie Betts, Harold Reynolds, Derek Jeter and Jim Rice, show how these individuals were shaped by their own Black baseball experiences.

"What we'd always get back to is: 'What is the Black baseball experience here?'" Shieber said. "So, it's not going to be solely a history of the Negro Leagues. Are you going to get some history? Absolutely. Are you going to get some stories of great players, stories that are focused on their excellence? Absolutely. But it's all working toward an

end of giving voice to Black individuals through quotes and through perspectives."

The "voices" that paint the picture in *The Souls of the Game*, and in a sense work as tour guides, manifest themselves in a number of ways. Throughout the exhibit, printed quotes are used to amplify the artifacts and stories.

Among those heard from include players Bud Fowler, brothers Weldy and Fleet Walker, William Clarence Matthews, Pop Lloyd, Judy Johnson, Dave Malarcher, Buck Leonard, Max Manning, Cool Papa Bell, Bill Powell, Willie Wells, Buck O'Neil, Bill Yancey, Satchel Paige, Chet Brewer, Monte Irvin, Larry Doby, Lee Smith, Hank Aaron, John Roseboro, Don Newcombe, CC Sabathia, Andrew McCutchen, Derek Jeter and Ken Griffey Jr., Jackie Robinson and wife Rachel,

player/executive Rube Foster, team owner Effa Manley, journalists Wendell Smith and Julius J. Adams, umpire Bob Motley, musician Duke Ellington, civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph and actor Chadwick Boseman.

For example, accompanying a Keokuk Base Ball Club photo from 1885, an all-white team Fowler played for at the time, Fowler is quoted as saying, "My skin is against me. If I had not been quite so black, I might have caught on as a Spaniard or something of that kind. The race prejudice is so strong that my black skin barred me," while in an 1887 newspaper article reporting on baseball's color line, a quote from player Weldy Walker reads, "There should be some broader cause — such as lack of ability, behavior and intelligence — for barring a player, rather than his color."

At another display in the exhibit, near a photo of Jackie Robinson signing a contract with the Montreal Royals, is the quote: "I realize what I'm going into. I also realize how much it means to me, to my race and to baseball."

Aaron's championship ring from 1953, when he helped the Jacksonville Braves win the South Atlantic League, elicited this line: "At the end of the season, we still heard a few choice names being shouted at us from the stands, but not as often or as loudly as in the beginning. Little by little — one by one — the fans accepted us."

More recently, a Ken Griffey Jr. baseball card, one in which he's sporting a No. 42 jersey, is paired with the "Kid" recalling the day he first wore the iconic number back in 1997. "This was [Jackie Robinson's] day. He worked hard for each and every one of us. I had the chance to wear his number. Now I'll hang it on my wall. It's something I'll cherish forever."

According to Shieber, the exhibit not only includes the perspective from the Black baseball community, but solicited many individuals in the community as well as historians and advisors for assistance and guidance.

The Souls of the Game also includes three different large format video elements that feature nine individuals, three per station. Chosen as representatives of various eras, they include Sol White, Satchel Paige, Effa Manley, Wendell Smith, Jackie Robinson and Curt Flood.

Manley, who co-owned the Newark Eagles with her husband, has the narrator quoting her reaction to having the Brooklyn Dodgers sign her star pitcher Don Newcombe.

"We are intensely interested in colored ballplayers being given fair opportunities in 'Big League' baseball... However, we would be even more enthusiastic, if...you had...the courtesy of negotiating with us for the services of this valuable player."

Flood, who laid the groundwork for the free agency system that changed the business of baseball, wrote in a letter to Baseball's commissioner in 1969, "I do not feel I am a piece of property to be bought and sold irrespective of my wishes. I believe that any system which produces that result violates my basic rights as a citizen..." in response to the Cardinals' decision to trade him.

Another video element, this one interactive, has interviews with 30 individuals conducted specifically for *The Souls of the Game*. These include a menu where themes such as "Representation Matters," "Passing the Torch" and "Facing Racism" can be selected. Among those interviewed are Hall of Famers Fergie Jenkins, Derek Jeter, Tim Lincecum, Jim Rice and Lee Smith.

Jeter, asked about "Representation Matters," replied, "I think first and foremost, it was from a personal standpoint. Growing up biracial, it's an education, because when you're a kid and you constantly have people staring at you, you don't exactly know why. So, I think it's our parents sitting me and my sister down and letting us understand that we are of mixed race and sometimes you're going to get stares, you're going to get prejudice, you're going to get racism, or you're going to be faced with racism. And it's really an education for a young kid when they don't really know what's going on."

Asked about "Facing Racism," Smith said, "I remember — I'm not going to name the name of the school — I was going to a game, and I was the starting pitcher, and I'll never forget walking through the gate, and I look up in the tree, and they got a number 3, which was my number, with a Castor High School uniform on, hanging from the tree. So, I walked through there, and I said, 'Oh man, I guess that's what's going to happen to me after the game if we win.'"

"So, I go out there, I warm up in the

bullpen, and my team actually gets three runs in the first inning. So, I go out, and I hit the first three guys. And my coach comes out there and says, 'What up, man?' I'm like, 'I got it, Coach.'"

"I strike out the next three guys. We get out of the inning, the next inning we go out, we get, like, two more runs. Come out, I hit the first two guys. My coach says, 'Hey, man, are you going to hit the whole team?' I'm like, 'Yeah, I was thinking about it.' He said, 'Hey, they took you out of the tree, you can go ahead and pitch the game now.' So, I'm like, 'OK.'"

"And the weirdest thing about this, the very next year, the principal of that school tried to get me to transfer [there] to play baseball for them."

Regarding "Passing the Torch," Williams said: "I remember playing with some guys, I was like 16, 17 years old. And I was playing with guys like 25 and 30 years old. And when you make a mistake, they will grab you by the shirt or tell you, 'If you want to play the game of baseball, you can't play like that. That's not the way you play baseball.' So, they inspired me. So, I in turn inspired the other kids that came along after me. And you try to do that. You see guys playing the game and you go up and talk to them and let them know about — not only myself, but the Negro Leagues and a lot of guys that played in the Negro Leagues. My father played in the Negro Leagues and his friend used to play with the Chicago Giants. And we used to talk baseball all the time."

Asked what he'd like visitors to come away with after viewing *The Souls of the Game* exhibit, Shieber said his hope is they find it entertaining, engaging and educational.

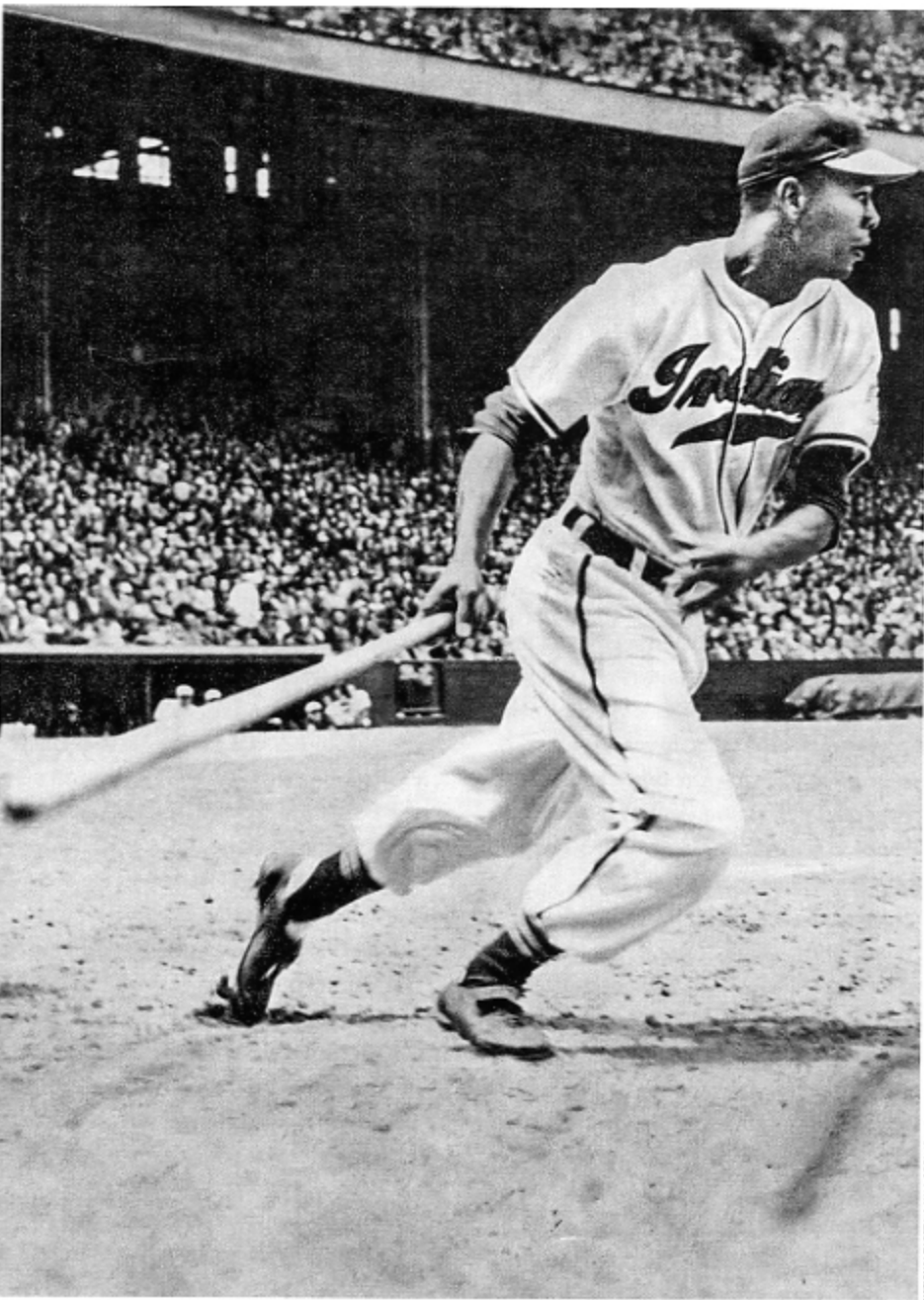
"But ultimately, when they leave the exhibit, I really hope they come away thinking, 'Wow. I would love to learn more about this.' Because an exhibit isn't an encyclopedia, an exhibit isn't a 400-page volume on a topic," he said. "It's sort of a whole bunch of little appetizers that give you a feel for the menu. But there's so much more behind it. There is so much more to learn, and I hope they get jazzed about what they saw and are enticed to want to learn more." ●

Bill Francis is the senior research and writing specialist at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

Culture Exchange

WITH EXCELLENCE ON AND OFF THE FIELD, BLACK STARS HELPED OPEN DOORS IN JAPAN TO FOREIGN PLAYERS.

By Jon Caroulis



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Just like their white counterparts, Black baseball stars of the 1920s found Japan to be an enticing destination in the early 20th century.

Those successful tours would eventually lead to a cultural understanding that promoted the game in both America and Japan.

According to Bill Staples Jr., a member of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) who serves as the chair of its Asian baseball committee, American baseball teams of all levels made dozens of trips to Japan before 1927, winning roughly 90 percent of games played during those tours.

The first and only all-Black American team to tour Japan were the Philadelphia Royal Giants (though they had little or no connection to Philadelphia), who were managed by Lon Goodwin.

Prior to giving his team the name "Philadelphia Royal Giants" for the 1925-26 California Winter League (CWL) season, Goodwin's club — which he founded in 1916 — was called the Los Angeles White Sox.

When the Giants played in the CWL (from November to February), they were comprised of top Negro Leagues talent from the east.

In 1927, they won the CWL championship and were invited to tour Japan by Kenichi Zenimura, who led a Japanese-American team from Fresno, Calif. But only three Royal Giants players made the trip: James Raleigh "Biz" Mackey (who played shortstop

Larry Doby and Don Newcombe (opposite page) were among the first big leaguers who extended their careers by playing in Japan. They were members of the Chunichi Dragons in 1962.



NATHAN BURGESS/HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

NEW MUSEUM EXHIBIT TO EXPLORE TRANSPACIFIC BASEBALL EXCHANGE

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum will explore the longstanding exchange of teams and players in a new exhibit entitled *Yakuyu/Baseball: The Transpacific Exchange of the Game between Japan and the United States*, scheduled to open in July 2025.

Equally important was how the Giants treated their opponents.

"There were many Japanese players who had discovered a new respect for baseball and increased self-esteem through their games against the Black players," wrote Staples and Kazuo Sayama in "Gentle Black Giants: A History of Negro Leaguers in Japan."

One Japanese player, Yasuo Shimazu, told Staples and Sayama: "Because the Royal Giants left a strong impression on us, we remembered them very well. It was not only because the team was made up of Black players — it was also because they were nice guys and talented players. Back then, I don't know why, but so many American teams came to Japan. There were many college teams and some semi-pro teams. We were not sure who these Royal Giants were. Everybody was speculating that it might be a semi-professional ball club, but they were professional. The powerful batting, strong arms...actually, they were beyond our imagination. I had a chance to talk to some of them. They said, 'Because we are Black, we cannot play in the whites-only major league. However, in the games against the major leaguers, we have played as well as them or better. We have a better record.' Looking back at it now, we gained confidence, even though we were greatly disappointed with our loss. But I should not dwell on my regrets. They were indeed professionals. They made the games fun."

The Giants were paid from a portion of the gate receipts. Sayama and Staples theorize the Giants entertained crowds after games by putting their skills on display, such as how far they could throw a ball or how fast they could circle the bases, to increase fan interest and attendance.

The Royal Giants traveled to Japan again in 1932, this time going 23-1-1. Goodwin, Mackey, Evans and Cooper all made the trip while the rest of the players were from other Negro Leagues teams and Cuba.

on the tour), outfielder Herbert "Rap" Dixon and first baseman Frank Duncan. Goodwin filled out his roster with other Negro Leagues players and amateur and college players. (A Japanese American named George Irie was in charge of scheduling games in Japan.)

In addition, the team featured pitchers Ajay Johnson, Andy Cooper, Alexander Evans and Eugene Tucker; catcher O'Neal Pullen; infielders Robert Fagan, Jesse Walker and John Riddle; and outfielders Joe Cade and Junior Green.

Despite Japan being a rather closed society at the time, the Black Americans "won the hearts and respect of Japanese fans and opposing players," Staples said.

The team arrived in Japan on March 29 and three days later played its first game. In total, the Giants played 22 games in Japan and five in Korea, going 26-0-1.

They won their first game against the Mita club of Keio University by a score of 2-0. The next day, the two teams played again, with the Giants prevailing, 10-6.

The Giants then played in front of large crowds for a two-game series in Osaka against the Diamond Club.

Fans and members of the media were awed by the Giants' skill in all phases of the game. The Japanese were also impressed by the defensive prowess of the Giants. ("Their throws were like arrows," said one Japanese player.)

Ted Knorr, another SABR member, credits Dixon with being the top performer during the 1927 tour — prompting the Emperor of Japan to award him a trophy.

"His (Dixon's) brother's granddaughter, India Dixon, told me the loving cup trophy presented to Rap by Emperor Hirohito was in the family for years...passing from cousin to cousin," Knorr said. "A friend, the late Leo 'Sike' Burnett, who played American Legion ball for Dixon, said Rap showed him the trophy...around 1940-43, and that...it was a small — perhaps six inches tall — statue of a baseball player encrusted in jewels."

Their lone loss came in the ninth inning when an umpire made a mistake, giving the Japanese squad the game's lone run for a 1-0 victory. The Japanese players agreed the umpire was incorrect in allowing the run, but appreciated how the Negro Leagues players did not complain.

During the Giants' 1927 tour, Goodwin wrote a letter to a Japanese magazine. It read:

*"Dear Japanese players and fans...
[Our] respect for you grew immensely
after being treated so well by the
Japanese people.*

*"We wish great success and a promising
future to Japanese baseball society, and
we also express thankfulness for their
hospitality and kindness from the bottom
of our hearts..."*

In 1934, an all-star team of American League players managed by Connie Mack and featuring Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Lefty Gomez, Charlie Gehringer, Jimmie Foxx and Al Simmons toured Japan. (The National League prohibited its players from participating.) They played 18 games in 12 cities and were undefeated. While the Americans won one game by a 6-5 score, other contests were decided by 13, 14 and even 16 runs. During a game that saw rainfall, someone held an umbrella over Ruth while he played first base. In another game, Gomez was retiring the Japanese with such ease that Simmons sat down on the ground.

Three years later, African-American educator, social scientist and author W.E.B. Du Bois visited Japan.

"His comments reflected the acceptance of African Americans in Japan — and the connection between Japanese Americans and Blacks here in the U.S.," Staples said. "Du Bois not only saw a shared struggle between people of Japanese ancestry and African Americans, in his mind, they were 'colored' brothers. After his trip to Asia... Du Bois said he viewed Japan as 'a country of colored people run by colored people for colored people.' He added that none of the Japanese people whom he spoke with classified themselves as white, but instead felt a brotherhood with 'Chinese, Indians and Negroes.'"

The same year as Du Bois' visit, James



Kenichi Zenimura, shown standing between Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth during a barnstorming tour, invited the Philadelphia Royal Giants Negro Leagues team to tour Japan in 1927.

Bonner became the first Black player to play professionally in Japan.

A native of Louisiana, Bonner's arrival was heralded in the Japanese media. He had played for Black squads in California and was recruited to join the Dai Tokyo club. In the United States, Bonner played several positions, including pitcher, and one Japanese newspaper raved how he struck out 22 batters in a game. Unfortunately, because of the smaller ball used in Japan, Bonner struggled as a pitcher, and despite hitting more than .400, he was cut from the squad after one month and never played in Japan again.

In the years following World War II, the New York Giants, Brooklyn Dodgers, St. Louis Cardinals and other teams toured Japan. For American ballplayers who were past their prime or couldn't make it onto a major league team, playing in Japan became an option.

Larry Doby and Don Newcombe, who had both played for the Negro National League's Newark Eagles, went to Japan in 1962 to play for the Chunichi Dragons. Each played one season. Appearing in 72 games, Doby hit .225 with 10 home runs and 35 RBI. With the Brooklyn Dodgers, Newcombe was one of the National League's dominant starters, winning both the Cy Young and MVP awards

in 1956, but pitched only one game for the Dragons. As a first baseman and outfielder, he batted .262 with 12 home runs and 43 RBI in 81 games.

George Altman had the distinction of playing in three very different leagues: The Negro Leagues, the National League and the Japanese League. He spent a few months with the Kansas City Monarchs in 1955, then, at the urging of manager Buck O'Neil, he signed with the Chicago Cubs. He played nine seasons there and was a three-time All-Star, but after being hampered by injuries, he was demoted to the Cubs' AAA team in Tacoma in 1967.

While there, Altman met Tsuneo Harada, a Japanese American who was the general manager for Tacoma. Harada asked Altman if he would consider playing in Japan.

Altman broke in with the Tokyo Orions in 1968 at the age of 35 (the team was renamed the Lotte Orions after being purchased by a Korean firm called Lotte). He played until he was 42. In eight seasons in Japan, he batted .310 with 205 home runs and 656 RBI, helping open the doors for other foreign players to succeed in Japan in the 1970s and beyond. ●

Jon Caroulis is a freelance writer from Jenkintown, Pa.

Baltimore's Best

ROY CAMPANELLA AND BIZ MACKEY WERE KEY TO THE ELITE GIANTS' DRIVE TO THE 1939 NEGRO LEAGUES WORLD SERIES TITLE.

By David Krell

Baltimore's baseball lineage ranks among the strongest of any metropolis.

In the 1890s, the Orioles won the National League pennant for three consecutive years, John McGraw led the NL in on-base percentage twice, and Willie Keeler set a National League record by hitting safely in 44 consecutive games. The Baseball Hall of Fame later inducted six Orioles from that era: Keeler, McGraw, Wilbert Robinson, Dan Brouthers, Hughie Jennings and Joe Kelley.

The International League's Orioles won the 1944 Junior World Series against the American Association's Louisville Colonels. Ten years later, Baltimore's second incarnation of the major league Orioles began when the St. Louis Browns transplanted to the city.

In 1966, Moe Drabowsky set the relief pitching record for strikeouts in a World Series game — 11 — in Game 1 of Baltimore's sweep of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Other Orioles highlights include Jim Palmer's three Cy Young Awards, Frank Robinson's 1966 American League Triple Crown and Eddie Murray's Rookie of the Year Award — on top of the team's three consecutive American League pennants from 1969 to 1971. And Baltimoreans point with pride to Brooks Robinson's AL MVP season in 1964, 16 consecutive Gold Glove Awards and his outstanding defense in the 1970 World Series that brought Baltimore a championship — as well as Cal Ripken Jr.'s Rookie of the Year and AL MVP seasons.

But long before the Orioles' modern AL history, the 1939 Elite Giants demonstrated excellence in the Charm City. Their 21-23 record belied a championship season, capped by winning the Negro National League playoffs over the Newark Eagles and Philadelphia Stars followed by capturing the Negro Leagues World Series against the Homestead Grays.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum opened that summer. And the Elite Giants featured a Cooperstown connection that would span generations.

Future Hall of Famer Roy Campanella was 17 years old in the summer of 1939, playing with and against stars who were twice his age in some

Roy Campanella debuted for the Elite Giants in 1937 at age 15. He played eight seasons for the team before joining the Dodgers organization, where he helped Brooklyn win five National League pennants and the 1955 World Series.



cases. While he had yet to become an offensive threat, his defensive prowess as the Baltimore backstop received a foundation of excellence thanks to 41-year-old Biz Mackey, another future Hall of Famer, who taught him the intricacies, challenges and solutions of the catcher position.

Campanella, a three-time All-Star with Baltimore, was later selected

to eight consecutive National League All-Star teams and won the NL MVP Award three times when he played for the Brooklyn Dodgers. It was Mackey, however, who set Campanella on the path to Cooperstown.

"In my opinion, Biz Mackey was the master of defense of all catchers," said Campanella, inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1969. "When I was a kid in Philadelphia, I saw both Mackey and Mickey Cochrane in their primes, but for real catching skills, I don't think Cochrane was the master of defense that Mackey was."

Mackey's skills and tutelage were so highly regarded, his Hall of Fame plaque showcases the phrases "a superb defensive catcher" and "mentored teenage catcher Roy Campanella." A veteran of the Negro National League since its formation in 1920, Mackey had his best offensive season in 1923 with the Hilldale Club, when he led the Negro Leagues in batting with a .423 average and topped the Eastern Colored League in hits, on-base percentage and slugging percentage.

His induction into the Hall of Fame in 2006 was part of an epic year when 16 other Negro Leagues icons earned plaques in Cooperstown, including Mule Suttles, Louis Santop and Willard Brown as well as executives Cumberland Posey, Alex Pompey, Effa Manley, J. L. Wilkinson and Sol White.

Mackey left Baltimore for the Newark Eagles midway through the 1939 season and became their manager one year later.

Campanella's biographer Neil Lanctot traced the Mackey-Campanella relationship to 1937, when the young catcher had been playing for the Bacharach Giants of Atlantic City.

"Mackey was hurt and [Baltimore] needed a catcher," wrote Lanctot in the 2011 book "Campy: The Two Lives of Roy Campanella." "The best guess is that someone tipped him off to Campanella, and he had a chance to see him during the brief period that Roy spent with the Bacharach."

Leaving the team after a few months to join the Elite Giants, at the time based in Washington, D.C., Campanella absorbed lessons as Mackey molded his student into a defensive force but abandoned mimicry as a teaching tool.

"Unlike some coaches, Mackey did not try to force his pupil to copy his style," Lanctot said. "There were different ways of catching. Mackey felt, and each receiver should use the form that worked best for him."

In his 1959 autobiography "It's Good to Be Alive," Campanella praised his teacher.

"He wasn't really so fast on his feet as he was quick," Campanella wrote of Mackey. "At blocking low balls, he was a master. But even more than that, Biz was a thrower like you seldom see today."

Further, Campanella needed instruction because his strength sometimes sent the ball into center field if he tried to throw out a runner on a steal attempt of second base. Mackey drilled him about how to throw the ball, block the plate and analyze the offense.

"There were times when Biz Mackey made me cry with his constant dogging," Campanella said. "But nobody ever had a better teacher."

Although Campanella started off his career more valuable on defense than offense, he had his moments in the batter's box. After the 1939 championship, he gave a bravura performance when the Elite Giants defeated the Homestead Grays, 10-5, in Philadelphia on Sept. 30. Baltimore's catcher contributed a quintet of runs in a 4-for-5 afternoon at Parkside Field. His output: Two singles, a double and a home run.

Campanella's defensive prowess testifies to Mackey's value as an instructor. From 1948-57 with the Dodgers, Campanella ranked among the best catchers in the Senior Circuit, placing seven times in the top three for throwing out runners trying to steal. Twice, he was No. 1.

He was also a force at the plate with Brooklyn, batting better than .300 in three seasons and leading the NL with 142 RBI in 1953.

But Campanella's playing career came to a premature halt when, in the middle of the night on Jan. 28, 1958, he was paralyzed after his car hit a telephone pole and overturned. The Dodgers, who moved to Los Angeles that spring, honored their former backstop with Roy Campanella Night at L.A.'s Memorial Coliseum on May 7, 1959, highlighted by an exhibition game against the Yankees to raise money for his medical care. More than 93,000 fans were in attendance and approximately \$60,000 was raised.

Mackey not only attended the game but a luncheon honoring Campanella at the Ish Evans Sportsmen's Club the day before. A picture of the duo in the *California Eagle* was accompanied by the headline "Teacher-Pupil" and a caption explaining that Mackey "taught the equally great 'Campy' the finer points of the game."

Campanella passed his knowledge forward when John Roseboro joined the Dodgers in 1957, but it wasn't limited to the field.

"He taught me how to handle fans politely, even when they became a bother," wrote Roseboro in his 1978 autobiography. "He taught me how to respond to the press properly, telling them the truth short of making a teammate look bad."

Mike Scioscia, who spent his entire career with the Dodgers (1980-92), also benefited from Campanella's tutelage.

"He was always on the field," said Scioscia in 2020. "He was an active coach. He was right next to me when we were doing drills. He would give insights — not only to me, but to any catcher who was there."

Campanella tutored Hall of Famer Mike Piazza as well. After the Dodgers legend passed away in 1993, Piazza recalled the experiences that the beloved catcher shared about racism.

"He told me that if you're always so concerned about the doors in life that are closing on you, you're never going to see the ones that are opening," Piazza said.

When Campanella conveyed his baseball wisdom to subsequent generations of ballplayers, he continued the educational process that began with Mackey, who passed away in 1965. Their legacies of excellence serve as a standard for backstops. ●

David Krell is a freelance writer from Jersey City, N.J.



Legendary Negro Leagues catcher Biz Mackey tutored Roy Campanella on the finer points of catching when both future Hall of Famers were with the Elite Giants of the Negro National League in the late 1930s.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



Writers Sam Lacy (left) and Wendell Smith (right) share a moment with pitcher Dan Bankhead, who became the second Black player to appear in an AL/NL World Series game when he pinch-ran for the Dodgers in Game 6 of the 1947 Fall Classic.

American Legion team in his hometown of Detroit, he spoke to Wish Egan, a talent evaluator for the Tigers. Egan told him he wished he could offer a contract, but he didn't have the authority to sign a Black player.

Egan wound up signing one of Smith's white teammates and the game's losing pitcher, who also was white. The incident profoundly impacted Smith. Not long afterward, he put away his glove and began pursuing a career as a sportswriter in hopes of removing the barriers that kept Blacks out of the white major leagues.

"It was then that I made the vow that I would dedicate myself and do something on behalf of Negro ballplayers," Smith said.

While growing up in Washington, D.C., just blocks from Griffith Stadium, home of the Senators and various Negro Leagues teams, Lacy also established himself as a pitcher with potential. One newspaper labeled him a "high school hurling ace" after he struck out the side against the Howard University freshman team in Armstrong Technical High's win.

Whereas Smith's push for integration was ignited by a bigoted rejection, the seed for Lacy's activism was planted while watching a white Senators coach throw a dirty, wet towel at his father that hit him in the face during the team's parade through the streets of D.C. prior to the 1924 World Series. Humiliated and angry over what he considered a racist act, Lacy's father — a huge fan of the team — stormed off and never attended another Senators game. Years later, the younger Lacy wrote about that appalling scene in a column and in his memoir, "Fighting for Fairness."

During the 1920s, '30s and '40s — an era before widespread availability of television and, much later, the internet — newspapers were the dominant disseminators of news. The Black press played an integral role in celebrating African-American achievements usually overlooked by the mainstream white press, while also championing the cause of equality. Journalists such as Fay Young, a *Chicago Defender* columnist known as the "Dean of Black Sportswriters," Joe Bostic (*The*

Pure Intentions

PIONEERING BLACK JOURNALISTS SAM LACY AND WENDELL SMITH WERE INFLUENTIAL TO THE GAME'S INTEGRATION.

By Scott Pitoniak

Wendell Smith and Sam Lacy didn't have to dodge fastballs aimed at their skulls or baserunners' spikes targeted for their shins, but the pioneering Black sportswriters did face numerous other challenges while crusading to integrate baseball.

Like the players for whom they advocated, they were forced to endure epithets, segregated lodgings, restaurants and restrooms, and the ostracism of white peers. Additionally, they encountered second-class-citizen treatment by baseball executives who barred them from press boxes and clubhouses and dismissed their persistent calls for desegregation.

Not surprisingly, there were times Smith, Lacy and their fellow Black scribes felt like giving up the fight, but the hardships and indignities ultimately steeled their resolve. Pounding typewriter keys rather than baseballs, they helped set the table for Jackie Robinson to break the color barrier in 1947.

"Wendell Smith and Sam Lacy were to sports what Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were to the civil rights movement," said

esteemed author and historian Larry Lester, who is a curatorial consultant for the Hall of Fame's Black Baseball Initiative. "They were intrepid activists. They spoke truth to power."

The first Black reporters to become members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America, Smith and Lacy also were the first African Americans honored with the BBWAA's Career Excellence Award — with Smith celebrated in 1994 and Lacy three years later.

"They were more than just sportswriting giants," said Bob Kendrick, president of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City. "They were ahead of the curve writing about social issues beyond the sports arena. And they did so long before that became commonplace in sports sections and other media."

Interestingly, both Smith and Lacy were accomplished pitchers who initially dreamed of playing baseball rather than writing about it. Smith, in fact, was so good he attracted the interest of a Major League Baseball scout. After throwing a shutout for his integrated

People's Voice) and Chester L. Washington (*Pittsburgh Courier*; *Los Angeles Sentinel*) were among the first to lobby for integration. Lacy and Smith soon joined them, propelling the cause through columns, letters to AL and NL owners and Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, and arranged tryouts for Negro Leagues players with a handful of clubs.

"Over time," Kendrick said, "Wendell and Sam kind of rose to the top. They became the most influential."

After becoming the *Washington Tribune* sports editor in the mid-1930s, Lacy began lobbying Senators owner Clark Griffith to sign star Negro Leagues players from the Homestead Grays, who were paying hefty rent to play games in Griffith Stadium. Griffith told Lacy the climate wasn't right, saying a lot of Southern ballplayers wouldn't want to play with or against Black players. He also argued that signing Grays stars such as Josh Gibson, Buck Leonard and Cool Papa Bell would kill the Negro Leagues.

"In reality, the Grays were a cash cow for Griffith," Kendrick said. "He didn't want to lose all that big-time rent money he was making off of them."

Irrked by Griffith's so-called concern about "putting 400 colored guys out of work," Lacy lambasted the owner in a scathing column, writing: "When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, he put 400,000 Black people out of jobs."

Smith was equally dogged, and in 1939, while writing for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, he interviewed 40 white MLB players and eight white managers and found that 75 percent of them said they would have no problem with baseball integration.

"The survey erased one of the owners' main excuses," Lester said. "The survey also gained support from several white writers and white newspapers. The *Sporting News* and wire services started publishing Wendell's articles."

The survey, along with Lacy's letter-writing campaign to Landis and the owners, resulted in a meeting with the commissioner and club representatives. But the gathering proved to be a sham. Lacy wasn't even invited. And although Landis told the handful of Black publishers at the meeting there was no rule, written or unwritten, preventing teams from signing Black players, segregation continued. It wasn't until 1947, three years after Landis'

death, that the barrier finally was broken. And Smith would play a big role in that, convincing Brooklyn Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey that Jackie Robinson was the best man to lead the way.

Rickey was so impressed with the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of Smith's recommendation he offered the writer a paid position with the Dodgers to room with Robinson. Though it violated journalistic ethics, Smith accepted and was allowed to



Sam Lacy (top) was named the 1997 winner of the BBWAA Career Excellence Award. **Wendell Smith's (bottom)** support of Jackie Robinson during his inaugural season with the Dodgers in 1947 helped Robinson navigate the uncharted waters of the reintegration of the game.

continue writing about Robinson for his newspaper. He became Robinson's confidant and collaborated with him on ghost-written columns and the ballplayer's first autobiography.

Shortly after Robinson signed a contract with Montreal, the Dodgers' top minor league affiliate, on Oct. 23, 1945, Lacy, who was then writing for the *Baltimore Afro-American*, was assigned to cover Jackie full-time. Other Black sportswriters soon joined them on what became known as the Robinson Beat. This traveling press corps encountered many of the same hurdles Robinson did.

During these harrowing times, the friendship between Smith and Lacy grew even stronger. Though journalism rivals, they were bonded by their pursuit of a cause far greater than newspaper scoops.

"We talked deep into the night in ghetto hotels, at his house in Pittsburgh and in my home in Washington, and at dimly lit ballparks where our paths would cross while covering Negro National League games," Lacy recalled. "And in lunchrooms in Harlem and in greasy spoon...joints of Memphis, St. Louis, Baltimore and Philadelphia."

Their efforts helped Robinson become the first Black player in the white major leagues since Moses Fleetwood Walker in 1884 and paved the way for other Negro Leagues stars.

Smith and Lacy continued advocating for equal rights long after Robinson's watershed debut. In addition to convincing MLB owners to put an end to segregated lodgings for players of color, they pushed for Black baseball's pioneers to be recognized in Cooperstown. In 1971, Smith and Lacy were among 10 men selected to be voting members of the Hall's Special Committee on the Negro Leagues. They pushed hard for Satchel Paige, who, in 1971, became the first Hall inductee who had spent the majority of his career in the Negro Leagues. Josh Gibson and Buck Leonard were inducted the following year.

Smith died at age 58 on Nov. 26, 1972, just weeks after filing Jackie Robinson's obituary. Lacy, meanwhile, lived another 31 years, passing away on May 8, 2003, at age 99. A few days before his death, he capped his seven-decade-long journalism career by hand-writing his final column from his hospital bed.

In addition to their recognition from the Hall of Fame, both received the prestigious Red Smith Award from the Associated Press Sports Editors. The University of Maryland created the Sam Lacy-Wendell Smith Award, presented annually to a sports journalist who has made significant contributions to racial and gender equity. Smith wound up having a Chicago elementary school named in his memory, and his collection of papers is part of the Hall of Fame's archives. ●

Scott Pitoniak is a nationally honored journalist and author residing in Penfield, N.Y. Among his 35 books is "Remembrances of Swings Past: A Lifetime of Baseball Stories."

Family Affair

CONNECTIONS RUN DEEP THROUGH SOME OF THE GREATEST PLAYERS IN BLACK BASEBALL HISTORY.

By Jose de Jesus Ortiz

Jerry Hairston Jr. was only 2 years old when his grandfather Sam Hairston first noticed how much he loved to be around baseball. The family was in Mexico, where Jerry Sr. was playing for the Naranjeros de Hermosillo while Sam was a coach.

One day at the ballpark, Sam grabbed his grandson and called his son Jerry Sr. over. Sam then summoned a photographer and made a prophetic declaration.

"My grandfather said, 'This is going to be the first three-generation Black family in Major League Baseball,'" Hairston Jr. said. "I loved being around the ballpark and around my dad. Whether it was defense, offense, practice, I just loved being around the game of baseball."

Sam Hairston reached the Negro Leagues in 1944 with the Cincinnati-Indianapolis Clowns and seven years later made his American League debut with the Chicago White Sox. His son John reached the majors with the Cubs in 1969 and Jerry Sr. followed in 1973 with the White Sox, beginning a 14-year career in the majors.

Jerry Sr. also had a pair of sons — Jerry Jr. and Scott — who played in the big leagues, thus making good on their grandfather's prediction.

As the National Baseball Hall of Fame celebrates the rich history of Black legends in baseball through *The Souls of the Game* exhibit, the family connections throughout that history read like an all-star roster.

Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr. and his father, Ken Sr., are perhaps baseball's most famous Black family. Bobby Bonds and his son Barry, MLB's all-time home run leader, also put their stamps on the history books, while Jesse Barfield, who spent 12 years in the majors, and his son Josh are yet another two-generation MLB family.

In addition to his father and grandfather, Hairston Jr. found inspiration as a youngster by watching Black stars such as Hall of Famers Harold Baines, Griffey Jr. and Frank Thomas, as well as Barry Bonds, Eric Davis, Ron Gant and David Justice.

"Seeing those players every day was important," said Hairston Jr., who along with his brother Scott played at the *Hall of Fame East-West Classic* on May 25 in Cooperstown. "I think it's vital for Black kids to see Mookie Betts, to see Aaron Judge."

"Seeing these guys thrive, they can say, 'I can be that player. I can pitch. I can be an outfielder.' I think it's so important for kids to see it."

Sam Hairston spent parts of five seasons in the Negro American



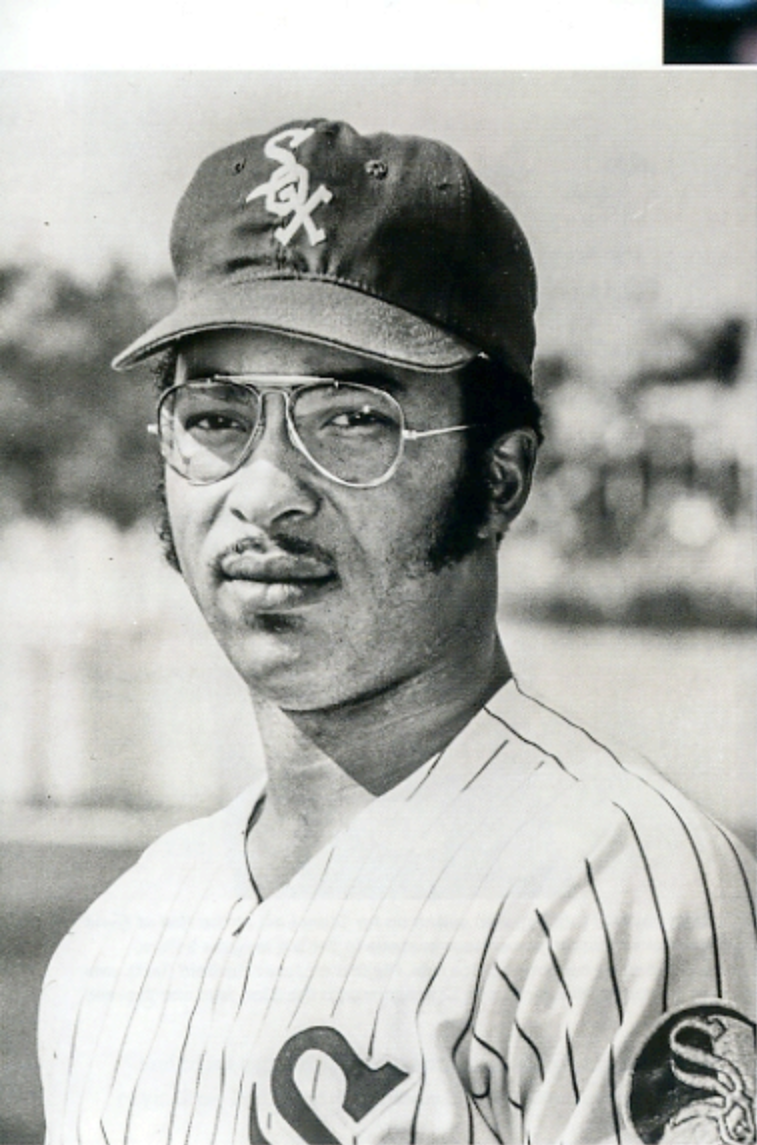
STYLING: NANCY HARRIS; HAIR: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; MAKEUP: JEFFREY M. HARRIS

League, earning All-Star honors in 1948. As a child, Jerry Jr. loved traveling to Birmingham, Ala., to visit his grandparents each Thanksgiving and would be captivated for hours at the dinner table listening to his grandfather tell stories of his days in the Negro Leagues and in Latin America for winter ball.

Sam Hairston would spin yarns of playing against Hall of Famer Satchel Paige and other legends. He told his family how Negro Leagues great Theodore Roosevelt "Double Duty" Radcliffe, a two-way player akin to Shohei Ohtani, was the one who converted him to a catcher from third base.

"He would talk about playing in Venezuela, Mexico, Cuba and the Negro Leagues," Hairston Jr. says of his grandfather. "I remember seeing him light up telling those stories. I wanted to have those experiences of playing the game around the country and in different countries."

Josh Barfield, who now serves as an assistant general manager with the White Sox, had a similar experience while growing up in Houston.



Jerry Hairston Jr. (opposite page) enjoyed a 16-year big league career and is a third-generation big leaguer following his grandfather Sam Hairston and father Jerry Hairston Sr. (above). Hairston Jr. and his brother, former big leaguer Scott Hairston (right), played in the Hall of Fame East-West Classic.

He loved to listen to his late great-uncle Albert Overton tell stories of playing in the Negro Leagues. Although Barfield was only 5 years old when Overton died, he vividly remembers those stories.

"Black players played such a big part of [baseball history]," said Barfield, who was also among the players at the *Hall of Fame East-West Classic*. "A lot of that has been forgotten. ... My great-uncle played in the Negro Leagues. He played for the (Little Rock) Grays, the (Philadelphia) Stars and for the (Cincinnati-Indianapolis) Clowns.

"Getting to hear as a young kid those stories about what they went through and talking about Jackie Robinson and guys like that, and then as a player I got to meet Buck O'Neil before he passed."

Josh Barfield grew up watching his father play in the big leagues. The elder Barfield, now 64, hit 241 home runs over 12 seasons and led the American League in homers in 1986 (40) while playing for the Toronto Blue Jays, the same year he earned an All-Star berth and the Silver Slugger Award. Barfield also won his first of two Gold Glove Awards that season.

The younger Barfield was born in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, on Dec. 17, 1982, while his father was playing winter ball there, and made



his big league debut in 2006 with the San Diego Padres. He spent parts of four seasons in the majors as a second baseman.

Now Barfield is one of the highest-ranking Black executives in an MLB front office. He was grateful for the opportunity to play in the *East-West Classic*, but, moreover, appreciates the Hall of Fame's commitment to celebrate the contributions of African Americans in baseball through *The Souls of the Game* exhibit.

"It wasn't long ago that a quarter of the guys in the big leagues when my dad was playing were African American," Josh said. "There was a whole league of really, really talented African-American players. Not only was it big at the time, but it was big business, too.

"They were packing out stadiums. Basketball and football and these other sports were an afterthought back then. So, I think it's important to let young Black kids not only know that there's opportunity there, but it's part of our culture."

Sam Hairston made White Sox history in 1951 when he became the franchise's first American-born Black player. His contributions to the game later continued as a scout and coach with the team, and he became fluent in Spanish following years of winter ball, skills that proved crucial as he helped Latino players adjust to life in the big leagues. He mentored generations of Black and Latino big leaguers and even housed some players early in their careers, among them Venezuelan Wilson Álvarez.

Hairston was the second dark-skinned player to play for the White Sox, following Hall of Famer Orestes "Minnie" Miñoso, and they supported each other during that 1951 season. For many Latin American big leaguers, especially those from Miñoso's native Cuba, the Cuban Comet is considered the Jackie Robinson of Latin American baseball players.

The *Hall of Fame East-West Classic* brought the Hairston and Miñoso



Josh Barfield (above), who suited up for Team East at the *Hall of Fame East-West Classic*, played four seasons in the big leagues before transitioning to a front office role. His father, Jesse Barfield (left), was an All-Star outfielder during 12 seasons with the Blue Jays and Yankees.

legacies full circle with Scott and Jerry Hairston Jr. and Cuban pitcher José Contreras participating, representing Latin American players who played in the Negro Leagues. Contreras, who helped the White Sox win the 2005 World Series, is a proud student of baseball history. He was so overcome with emotion the first time he met Miñoso that he cried.

Contreras has read books about the Negro Leagues, and he reveres Satchel Paige, Jackie Robinson and legends like Miñoso.

"It's a beautiful page of baseball history," Contreras said of the Negro Leagues. "I was Satchel Paige's No. 1 fan. I feel bad that I couldn't throw 90 miles-per-hour at age 50."

Through *The Souls of the Game* exhibit, players such as Contreras can celebrate their iconic heroes. They're proud to shine a light on the contributions of men like Sam Hairston and others who played in the Negro Leagues.

"As a kid growing up, I thought Negro Leagues baseball was backyard, barnstorming baseball," said former Indians, Brewers and Yankees ace CC Sabathia, who was a team captain at the *Hall of Fame East-West Classic*. "These guys were the best athletes in the game and in the world at the time. They were the LeBron James of that time."

From the great Josh Gibson, Monte Irvin and Cool Papa Bell to Robinson, Paige and Miñoso, the history of Black baseball is a rich one.

"Baseball is probably the most history-rich sport in this country," Josh Barfield said. "It's important to go out there and be able to put this uniform on and represent what Black baseball means."

It's a story that cannot be written without the Hairstons.

On the day that Sam Hairston made his prediction about Jerry Jr.

45 years ago, he marveled as his grandson hit his target each time. Throw after throw, the 2-year-old would deliver the ball perfectly to Jerry Sr.'s chest.

Sam Hairston was always thinking about legacy and imploring his sons and grandchildren to consider how they treated others. Family was paramount to Sam, just as it is for Jerry Sr., who recently celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary with his wife, Esperanza.

"In our case, I look at my father as being a person who was so dedicated to baseball and his family, that they just went hand in hand," Hairston Sr. said. "He had so much passion in both areas."

"When he would talk, I would just listen. What I gathered was that he was a long-term thinker. He always had that legacy in mind. That's the way he would speak."

Sam Hairston encouraged his kids to be humble and to remember that money and fame weren't the goal. Jerry Sr. recently read a quote declaring that "ability without humility is futility."

That line reminded him of the lessons his father instilled in his family, which has built a strong legacy of greatness and humility in baseball.

"He wanted to build something and set a standard for his family," Hairston Sr. said. "Baseball was the tool that he used. A person like that, whatever form it took, his end goal was to make his family an outstanding family based on wanting the best for them, wanting stability for them." ●

Jose de Jesus Ortiz is a former president of the Baseball Writers' Association of America and the executive director at Our Esquina Sports.

Follow the Leaders

PIONEERS LIKE JACKIE ROBINSON AND LARRY DOBY GAVE MY GENERATION THE CHANCE TO LIVE OUR DREAMS.

By Fergie Jenkins

When I first signed with the Phillies in 1962, I considered myself pretty lucky to have an opportunity to play pro baseball, especially being a Canadian.

But when I look back now, I know that the individuals who came before me gave me that opportunity to show I had the ability to play. Without players like Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby and Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella, I wouldn't have had the chance. More people need to know that.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum's new exhibit, *The Souls of the Game*, tells that story and so many more. I was honored to be a part of the advisory committee for the exhibit and to return to Cooperstown for the *Hall of Fame East-West Classic* during Memorial Day Weekend.

As one of the many Black players who began their pro careers in the 1960s, I had a path to follow — thanks to Jackie, Larry, Don, Roy and so many others. But the players from the 1960s also had to open doors. I played in Miami in the Florida State League, Chattanooga in the Southern League and in Little Rock, Ark., all before I got to Philadelphia. We were able to show the public that we had pretty good ability.

Then, when I was traded to the Cubs, I had the opportunity to room with Ernie Banks and to play with Billy Williams. If I hadn't, I don't think my career would have been as long or as successful. They helped me understand what it meant to be a big leaguer and how to carry myself.

Fast-forward to the end of my career, and I could now do the same things for players like Ray Burris and Lee Smith. That's what it's all about — passing along what you have learned to the next generation.

But being a Canadian, it was also a little different for me. I remember being in the minors and people asking me: "Why did you pick baseball over hockey?" Well, I got some good advice from a scout named Gene Dziadura. He told me I'd be a better pitcher than a hockey player. And I made the right choice.

Today, athletes have so many choices. I think that is why the number of minority athletes in America playing baseball has dropped in recent



Fergie Jenkins returns to Cooperstown often, such as in this photo from the inaugural Hall of Fame Classic in 2009. But during Memorial Day Weekend, he made a special trip for the debut of the Museum's *Souls of the Game* exhibit.

years. There are so many opportunities to play different sports and to make a good living: Basketball, tennis, football, golf... It might be a lot easier to play any of those sports compared to baseball. I had to spend two-and-a-half years in the minor leagues to learn the Philadelphia program. And look at a guy like Maury Wills, who spent eight or nine years in the minors with the Dodgers before coming up to the majors.

In other sports, you can become a star right away. It doesn't work that way in baseball, even with the best players. But I think we're heading in the right direction in getting the best athletes interested in our game once again. And *The Souls of the Game* exhibit is going to help with that — because it's going to tell the story about the players who made everything we have today possible.

When you understand the history and what the early players experienced, you can understand how truly fortunate those of us who came after them are.

I know this exhibit and the Museum's Black Baseball Initiative will be a game-changer. 📌

Fergie Jenkins is a member of the Museum's Black Baseball Initiative Advisory Committee and was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1991 after winning 284 games over 19 big league seasons.