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## A League of Their Own

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### Article

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**RED BANK, New Jersey** (Achieve3000, May 5, 2021). From 1920 into the 1950s, summer Sundays in parts of Kansas City revolved around Black baseball games. Families dressed in their best. Crowds by the thousands gravitated to the stadium. Fans watched their Kansas City Monarchs play the Chicago American Giants, the Homestead Grays, or the Newark Eagles. It was more than a joyful day out at the ballgame. It was a celebration.

That scene captures the excitement of the "Negro Leagues," as they were known at the time. In that era, segregation policies blocked Black citizens from enjoying many aspects of American life. This included Major League Baseball. Black baseball teams were a source of fun and community pride.

Chicago-based Andrew "Rube" Foster had the grand vision to launch the Negro National League. It started in 1920 with eight teams. In 1933, the New Negro National League was founded, followed by the Negro American League. The financial fortunes of the Negro Leagues would ebb and flow over the next three decades. But their popularity and high-level of play stayed strong.

Between World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945), baseball's place as America's national pastime was indisputable. The segregated Major Leagues fielded Hall of Fame legends like Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and Dazzy Vance.

By all accounts, Black baseball teams matched that talent. They had stars such as slugging catcher Josh Gibson, speedster Cool Papa Bell, smooth-fielding first baseman Buck O'Neil, and the unstoppable Satchel Paige with his 100+ miles-per-hour fastball. Baseball historians maintain that the only thing that kept these Black all-stars from burning up the big leagues was segregation. The big leagues also did not acknowledge or preserve the records of Black teams and players. And unfortunately, accounts of some of their on-field feats were lost.

The year 1947 brought a groundbreaking shift, not just for baseball but American society at large. The Brooklyn Dodgers recruited the outstanding Jackie Robinson, integrating the Major Leagues. In 1948, the Cleveland Indians added Larry Doby and Satchel Paige. The pair helped Cleveland win the World Series that year. The color line was broken at last. It was a monumental victory for Black Americans.

For Black baseball teams, though, that triumph proved to be the beginning of the end. Major League clubs continued to sign the best young Black players, snapping up the likes of Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, and Hank Aaron. The Negro Leagues ended up folding for good in 1961. Fans could now cheer on Black players as Major League stars. At the same time, Black Americans lost teams that had been cornerstones in their communities.

In 2020, Major League Baseball made a big announcement. Negro League players from 1920–1948 would finally get the recognition they deserve. Their batting averages, pitching records, and other stats will take their rightful place as part of Major League history.



Photo Credit: AP Photo/Matty Zimmerman, File

*In this photo from 1942, Kansas City Monarchs pitcher Leroy Satchel Paige warms up before a Negro League game.*

"All of us who love baseball have long known that the Negro Leagues produced many of our game's best players," League Commissioner Rob Manfred said. "We are now grateful to count the players of the Negro Leagues where they belong: as Major Leaguers within the official historical record."

### **Dictionary**

**ebb** (*verb*) to decline

**financial** (*adjective*) having to do with money

**integrate** (*verb*) to bring people of all races together, instead of separating them in public places

**monumental** (*adjective*) awe-inspiring; outstanding

**segregation** (*noun*) the act of keeping people of different races apart, usually by law

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## Activity

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### PART 1

#### Question 1

Which of these is **most** important to include in a summary of this Article?

- (A) Black baseball teams were launched by Chicago-based Andrew "Rube" Foster in 1920.
- (B) Black baseball teams produced some great players and were a source of community pride.
- (C) Some of the accounts of the on-field feats of Negro League Baseball players were lost.
- (D) Some of the Negro League teams included the Newark Eagles and the Homestead Grays.

#### Question 2

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *monumental*?

- (A) mature
- (B) methodical
- (C) mechanical
- (D) minor

#### Question 3

The Article states:

**Families dressed in their best. Crowds by the thousands gravitated to the stadium. Fans watched their Kansas City Monarchs play the Chicago American Giants, the Homestead Grays, or the Newark Eagles. It was more than a joyful day out at the ballgame. It was a celebration.**

The author's purpose for writing this passage was to \_\_\_\_\_.

- (A) demonstrate that Black baseball team players matched the talent of players in the Major Leagues
- (B) establish the significance of the Negro Leagues in Black communities and create a cheerful tone
- (C) highlight the most popular teams of the Negro Leagues and create an argumentative tone
- (D) argue that segregation once kept Black citizens from sharing happier features of American life

#### Question 4

According to the Article, which of these is an accurate comparison between the Negro Leagues and the Major Leagues?

- Ⓐ Some of the pitching records of both Negro League and Major League players were lost due to poor recordkeeping.
- Ⓑ Some of the teams in both the Negro Leagues and the Major Leagues were organized by Andrew "Rube" Foster.
- Ⓒ The Negro League players' records were preserved in the same way as those of Major League players.
- Ⓓ The slugging abilities and on-field feats of Negro League players matched those of Major League players.

#### Question 5

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that the Negro Leagues were important to Black Americans?

- Ⓐ In that era, segregation policies blocked Black citizens from enjoying many aspects of American life.... Black baseball teams were a source of fun and community pride.
- Ⓑ Chicago-based Andrew "Rube" Foster had the grand vision to launch the Negro National League.
- Ⓒ Baseball historians maintain that the only thing that kept these Black all-stars from burning up the big leagues was segregation.
- Ⓓ Major League clubs continued to sign the best young Black players, snapping up the likes of Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, and Hank Aaron.

#### Question 6

According to the Article, why was integrating Major League Baseball a bittersweet victory?

- Ⓐ As Black players got more recognition, they did not want to play in the Negro Leagues.
- Ⓑ As more Black players joined Major League teams, the Negro Leagues folded for good.
- Ⓒ As more Black players got recognition in the Major Leagues, Negro League stats were lost.
- Ⓓ As Black players joined Major League teams, Negro League fans stopped watching baseball.

#### Question 7

The Article states:

**The year 1947 brought a groundbreaking shift, not just for baseball but American society at large. The Brooklyn Dodgers *recruited* the outstanding Jackie Robinson, integrating the Major Leagues. In 1948, the Cleveland Indians added Larry Doby and Satchel Paige. The pair helped Cleveland win the World Series that year.**

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *recruited*?

- Ⓐ selected
- Ⓑ dismissed
- Ⓒ distressed
- Ⓓ reassured

#### Question 8

According to the Article, which of these events happened *last*?

*This question asks about when events happened. It does not ask where in the Article the events appear. Reread the Article for clues, such as dates.*

- Ⓐ Negro League players' stats were considered part of Major League history.
- Ⓑ The Negro National League was founded by Andrew "Rube" Foster.
- Ⓒ Satchel Paige joined the Cleveland Indians and helped them win the World Series.
- Ⓓ The Brooklyn Dodgers recruited Jackie Robinson to play for their team.