

New Orleans African-American Baseball Legacy



Baseball player sliding into home plate with umpire signaling “safe.”

NORDSB-004 NOPL

The history of black baseball teams in the city can be traced almost as far back as the Civil War. In the twentieth century, New Orleans made major contributions to the history of the Negro League. Although the league’s players of African descent were tremendously talented, they could only show their talents in segregated, all-black venues. Teams like the New Orleans Creoles, the New Orleans Pinchbacks—named in honor of the first black governor of the United States—the New Orleans Black Pelicans, the Crescent Stars, the Algiers Giants, the Caulfield Ads, and the Jax Red Sox were among the many teams that would entertain the black community.

African American neighborhoods in New Orleans fielded teams of their own, and competition was fierce. Morris Jeff, the director of the segregated black division of the New Orleans Recreation Department, would hold regular baseball clinics so that young boys could learn the game.



**Baseball clinic at Pelican Stadium led by the New Orleans Creoles team members, 1947.
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Baseball has been integrated for 70 years, but the legacy of the Negro League players can still be seen in the city today. In the Pontchartrain Park neighborhood, a middle-class black section of Gentilly, the Major League Baseball Urban Youth Academy holds practice at Wesley Barrow Stadium, a field named in honor of a famous local Negro League player. The influence of Negro League baseball players in the city of New Orleans can be heard among African-Americans baseball enthusiasts to this day.

Activity:

The names of many Negro Southern League ball clubs paid tribute to memorable Louisiana African Americans such as P. B. S. Pinchback or celebrated local culture, like the Crescent Stars and Black Pelicans. Imagine creating a baseball league for your neighborhood consisting of six teams.

Use your imagination, do a little research, and create names for your teams. You could name teams after important African American members of your community (the community could be the state, the city, the neighborhood, your school, your church, etc). Write a sentence or two about each person, explaining why you chose to honor her or him.

You can also name teams for a symbol that represents your community or some other thing, such as gumbo, that's a special part of our culture. Write a short explanation of the reason behind each of these team names, too.