

John "Buck" O'Neil

This biography was taken from the Negro League Baseball Musuem's web site.

John Jordan "Buck" O'Neil Biography

The charismatic Buck O'Neil is truly an American hero. His eloquence, grace and genuine love for people have captured the hearts and imaginations of kindred spirits world wide. His illustrious baseball career spans seven decades and has helped make him a foremost authority and the game's greatest ambassador. (7)

O'Neil was born November 13, 1911 in Carrabelle, Florida. His father, who played for local teams, introduced him to baseball at an early age. He was nicknamed "Buck" after the co-owner of the Miami Giants, Buck O'Neal. A segregated America denied O'Neil the chance to play Major League baseball so he showcased his skills with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Leagues. He joined the Monarchs in 1938, was named player/manager for the club in 1948 and continued his association with the team through the end of the 1955 season.

O'Neil had a career batting average of .288 including four .300-plus seasons at the plate. In 1946 the talented first baseman led the league in hitting with a .353 average and followed that in 1947 with a career best .358 mark. He posted averages of .345 and .330 in 1940 and '49 respectively.

He played in three Negro American League All-Star games and in two Negro American League World Series. In addition to his career with the Monarchs, O'Neil teamed with the legendary Satchel Paige during the height of Negro League barnstorming in 1930's and 40's to play countless exhibition games.

Following his Monarch career, O'Neil moved on to Major League Baseball as a scout with the Chicago Cubs. He was named the Major's first black coach by the Cubs in 1962 and is credited with signing Hall of Fame baseball players Banks and Lou Brock to their first pro contracts. He has worked as a Kansas City Royals scout since 1988 and was named "Midwest Scout of the Year" in 1998.

O'Neil rose to national prominence with his compelling narration of the Negro Leagues as part of Ken Burns' PBS baseball documentary. Since then, he has been the source of countless national interviews including appearances on "Late Night with David Letterman," and "Late, Late Show with Tom Snyder."

Today, O'Neil serves as Board Chairman of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum (NLBM) in Kansas City, Missouri. was a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame Veterans Committee (Cooperstown, New York) until 2001 and continues to lead the charge for deserving Negro Leaguers to be inducted. Through his tireless crusade, America is awakening to the incredible story of the Negro Leagues and the NLBM as the world's only museum dedicated to preserving Negro Leagues history.