

Rank Order - Most Influential Player

Directions: After reading the biographies of influential players from the Negro Leagues you will order them from 1-7 in terms of their overall influence on the positive influence on baseball, and the betterment of the conditions of Black players.

1 Satchel Paige: With a career that stretch five decades, Satchel Page was the oldest player to ever be drafted to the National or American Major Leagues. Being one of the first to break the color barrier, at 48 years old Paige was a dominant pitcher who was known for his experiential pitching style. He was the organizer of the Satchel Paige All-Stars, an all-star grouping put together from Negro League teams to face "Bob Fellers All-Stars." This culminated in the first barnstorming tour that was done via air, which showcased Mr. Jackie Robinson's talent and drew tens of thousands of fans to each stop.

2 Oscar Charleston: A great baseball player in his own right he has been described as "Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and Tris Speaker rolled into one." After finishing a starling playing career he went on to be a scout for Branch Rickey. Rickey was the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers - as such Charleston is credited with helping choose which places would be best suited to the task of integration.

3 Jackie Robinson: Drafted by the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, Jackie Robinson broke the color lines in the National Major League of Baseball - ushering in a new era of integrated ball. This era eventually led to the collapse of the Negro Leagues. Robinson was drafted into the military in 1942 after he had become the first athlete at UCLA to varsity in four sports. He ultimately was not offered his position on the Brooklyn Dodgers for his athletic ability alone though, it was also because he had agreed to resist being provoked by racial animus he was subjected to from hostile white crowds. Robinson spent the first years doing so, but continued to be vocal on issues of importance through the civil rights era,

4 Rube Foster: Dissatisfied with the conditions that Black athletes faced after being prohibited from playing in the American and National Major Leagues, Rube Foster organized the first Negro League of baseball teams. By forcing a group of managers to make their schedules together, and have shared interests he was able to reduce player poaching that had previously plagued the league. Foster, a player, and manager for the Chicago America Giants, also worked with a white businessman in Chicago to buy Schorling Field, the first stadium owned by a Black team. Prior to this, the teams had to rent time at segregated parks where they were not permitted to shower.

5 Josh Gibson - Known as the "black Babe Ruth," Gibson was a dominant catcher and power hitter. When major league baseball formally recognized the Negro League as a historical Major League, Gibson was rightfully crowned with having the second-highest batting average of all time and was the second player from the Negro League inducted into the hall of fame. Gibson played on the Homestead Grays who rose to dominance as the era of Rube Foster's Chicago American Giants came to a close, winning nine consecutive league titles from 1937-1945.

6 Cool Papa Bell: Cool Papa Bell is considered the fastest person to ever have played baseball professionally and played on three different champion teams. In 1933 he played with Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige on the Pittsburg Crawfords, a team that featured seven future Hall of Famers. Bell was one of many players who spent time playing in the leagues in Latin America, playing both in Cuba and Mexico. He went on to be a scout for the St. Louis Browns near the time end of the Negro Leagues' tenure.

7 Buck Leonard: A key member of the Homestead Greys dynasty that went on to dominate in the 1930s and 1940s Leonard played in 11 (a record) East-West-All-Star games. East-West-All-Star games the All-Star Game of the Negro Leagues and were held in Chicago's Comiskey Park 27 out of the 36 years it was held! Throughout his life, Leonard acted as an advocate for Civil Rights and was an "ambassador" for the Negro Leagues until he passed at 90 years old.

Initial Ranking & Notes

Small Group Ranking & Notes

Sources

Bell, Cool Papa. Baseball Hall of Fame. (2015). Baseballhall.org. <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/bell-cool-papa>

Brashler, William. The Story of Negro League Baseball. New York: Tickor & Field. 1994.

Charleston, Oscar. Baseball Hall of Fame. (2019). Baseballhall.org. <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/charleston-oscar>

Gibson, Josh. Baseball Hall of Fame. (2018). Baseballhall.org. <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/gibson-josh>

Foster, Rube. Baseball Hall of Fame. (2017). Baseballhall.org. <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/foster-rube>

Johnson, Varian. What were the Negro Leages?. New York: Penguin Workshiop. 2019.

Leonard, Buck. Baseball Hall of Fame. (2022). Baseballhall.org. <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/leonard-buck>

Paige, Satchel. Baseball Hall of Fame. (2015). Baseballhall.org. <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/paige-satchel>

Robinson, Jackie. Baseball Hall of Fame. (2015). Baseballhall.org. <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/robinson-jackie>