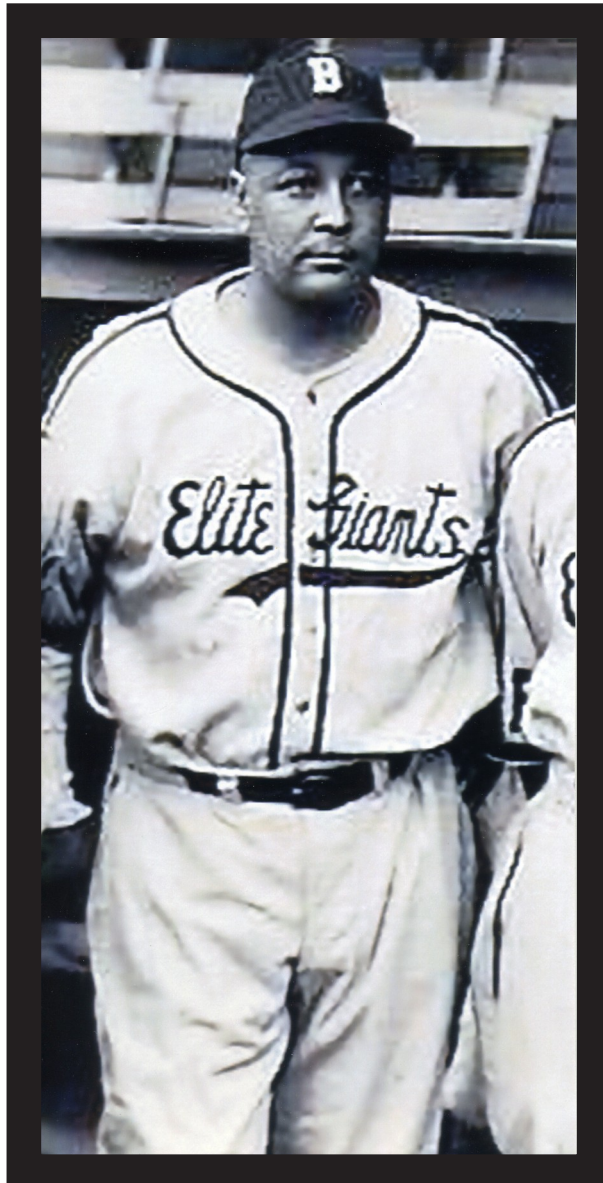


Forgotten Heroes:

Bill Byrd



by

Center for Negro League Baseball Research

Dr. Layton Revel

**East-West All Star Game
East All Star Team
1939**

During his Negro League career, Bill Byrd was selected to play in eight (8) East-West All Star games. Bill played in the 1936, 1939 (two games), 1941, 1944, 1945 and 1946 (two games) East West All Star classics.



**East-West All Star Game
Comiskey Park
Chicago, IL
1939**

(Back row left to right – **Walter “Buck” Leonard**, **Willie Wells**, Jose M. Fernandez, Sammy T. Hughes, George “Tubby” Scales, George “Mule” Suttles, Pat Patterson, **Josh Gibson**, Burnis “Wild Bill” Wright and Roy Partlow. Front row left to right – **Bill Byrd**, **Leon Day**, Bill Holland, Cando Lopez, Homer “Goose” Curry and Roy “Red” Parnell.)

William “Bill” Byrd was born on July 15, 1907 in Canton, Georgia. At some point when Bill was still a child, his family moved to Columbus (OH). He spent his formative years in Columbus and attended East High School in Columbus where he was a star athlete.

Bill stood six feet one inch tall and weighed 210 pounds during his playing career. He threw right handed and was a switch hitter at the plate. During his career he was primarily a starting pitcher whose size made him a dominant presence on the mound. Bill was a very good hitter who also played in the outfield and pinch hit on a regular basis.

Byrd was considered one of the best pitchers of his day during his Negro League career. Bill’s repertory of pitches included a better than average fast ball, various versions of a knuckle ball, slider, sinker and a big roundhouse looping curve ball. He was also one of the last pitchers to legally throw a spitball in the Negro Leagues. He had learned the pitch from Roosevelt Davis while they were playing for the Columbus Blue Birds in 1933. According to Bill he chewed slippery elm bark to help his spit ball as he put it “do tricks.” When he was asked to comment about his ability to throw a spitball, he was quoted as follows:

“A lot of pitchers tried it,” Byrd said. “But few could control it. I saw a bunch of guys throw the ball into the stands. I prided myself on pitching the spitter. I’d think about the catcher. I always kept it where the catcher could handle it. I didn’t believe in bouncing the ball into the dirt.”

Late in his career he used a series of what some would call “junk” pitches (spit ball, variety of knuckle balls and a nasty looping curve ball) to maintain his effectiveness and it worked. In his last two full years in Negro League baseball he was over 40 years old. Relying on what some called the use of “junk” pitches Bill Byrd posted exemplary won-loss records of 11-4 (.733) in 1948 and 12-3 (.800) in 1949.

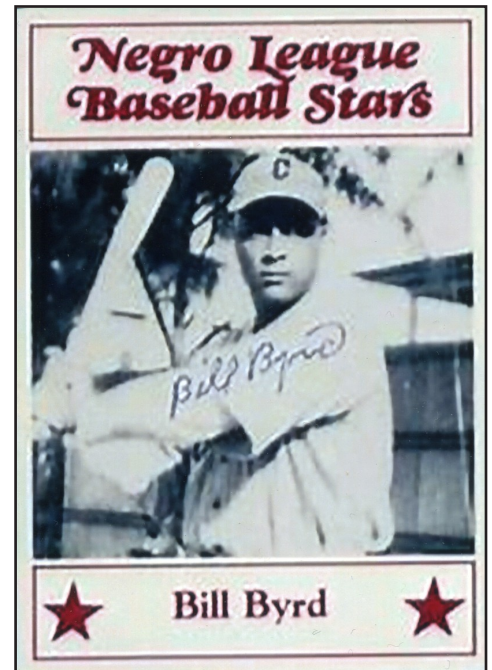
He was considered a workhorse with incredible stamina. During his career he once pitched both ends of a doubleheader for the Baltimore Elite Giants.

One of Byrd’s nicknames was “Daddy” because of his mentoring skills with young players. When he played in Latin America he was called “El Maestro” (The Master).

Bill Byrd played Negro League baseball from 1932 to 1950. During his career he was most often the ace of the pitching staff of the team he played for and was also considered one of the best pitchers in the “league.”

Early Baseball Career

Bill Byrd grew up on his family’s farm in Canton. According to legend Bill honed his baseball skills by throwing rocks and hitting rocks with a tree limb that he had fashioned into a baseball bat. As he got older he played for local sand lot teams before trying out for the Columbus Turfs in 1932.



Negro League Career

Bill Byrd began his Negro League career in 1932 when he was signed by the Columbus Turfs of the Negro Southern League. Unfortunately, he was entering professional baseball at a very difficult time in American history. There were 15 million people in the United States who were unemployed. The country was mired in a major depression and the hard times effected baseball just like it had done to every other facet of the economy. It was not uncommon for owners to stop paying salaries, rosters to be reduced and many teams to go broke on the road.

The Columbus Turfs were managed by A.H. Howie and played their home games at Neil Park in Columbus. During the 1932 season the Columbus team was called the “Columbus Turfs,” “Columbus Turf Stars,” “Columbus Turf Club” and “Columbus Stars.”

Besides pitcher Bill Byrd, the Turfs roster also included Satchel Paige (P), Dennis Gilchrist (C), C.B. “Clarence” Griffin (OF), John Kerner (OF), Alphonso “Duke” Lattimore (C), Sam Warmack (OF) and Roy Williams (P) during the 1932 season.

Columbus appears to have entered the Negro Southern League in July as a replacement for the Louisville Black Caps who had dropped out of the “league.” The Turfs played their first Negro Southern League home game at Neil Park on July 16th. No newspaper coverage for this game has yet to be located. It is also unclear how long Columbus remained in the “league.”

When the Negro National League folded prior to the start of the 1932 baseball season, the Negro Southern League was considered by default as the “Major League” of black baseball.

The final “official” standings for the 1932 Negro Southern League season were as follows:

Team	Games	Won-Loss	Pct.
Cole’s Chicago American Giants	41	34-7	.829
Monroe Monarchs	40	33-7	.825
Nashville Elite Giants	39	24-15	.615
Montgomery Grey Sox	40	22-18	.550
Memphis Red Sox	46	24-22	.522
Little Rock Black Travelers	6	3-3	.500
Louisville Black Caps	30	13-17	.433
Indianapolis ABCs	33	14-19	.424
Birmingham Black Barons	19	8-11	.421
Atlanta Black Crackers	8	1-7	.125
Cleveland Cubs	5	0-5	.000
Columbus Turfs	(No records found)		
Kansas City Monarchs (Associate Member)	14	9-5	.643

According to research by William Plott who wrote the book on the definitive history of the Negro Southern League the Alcoa Aluminum Sluggers, Knoxville Giants, Lexington Hard Hitters and Little Rock Grays also played briefly in the 1932 Negro Southern League. No records for these teams have been located.

It is important to note that both the Chicago American Giants and Monroe Monarchs claimed the 1932 Negro Southern League title. Cole’s Chicago American Giants (winners of the first half of the season) beat the Nashville Elite Giants (winners of the second half of the season) in an eight (8) game Negro Southern League play-off series. The Monroe Monarchs who disputed Chicago’s claim for the title won the Negro Dixie Series that they played against the Austin Black Senators of the Negro Texas League.

Bill Byrd Becomes a Blue Bird

Prior to the start of the 1933 season, the Negro National League was resurrected and Columbus formed a “new” team under the ownership of W.J. Peebles called the “Columbus Blue Birds” to play in the new version of the Negro National League. William “Dizzy” Dismukes was the team’s manager and the Blue Birds played their home games at Neil Park on Cleveland Avenue in Columbus (OH). Reportedly, the Columbus Blue Birds also played home games in Akron (OH) and Cleveland (OH).



Columbus Blue Birds (1933)

(Back row left to right – Dennis Gilcrest, Ameal Brooks, Dewey Creacy, Joe Scott, Bill McClain, Leroy Morney, Roosevelt Davis and **Wilson “Frog” Redus**. Seated left to right – C.B. Griffin, Don Jarman, **Bill Byrd**, **William “Dizzy” Dismukes**, Kermit Dial, Alphonso Lattimore and Roy Williams.

Herman “Jabbo” Andrews (OF), Ameal Brooks (C), Clarence Griffin (OF), Leroy Morney (SS), Wilson “Frog” Redus (OF) and Dick Seay (2B) were the top hitters for Columbus during the 1933 season. In the twenty-two (22) box scores that have been found with Jabbo Andrews in the line-up for the Blue Birds, he went 33 for 90 for a .398 batting average with a .651 slugging percentage. Andrews along with Josh Gibson (Pittsburgh Crawfords), Oscar Charleston (Pittsburgh Crawfords) and Turkey Stearns (Chicago American Giants) were considered the top four (4) hitters in the Negro National League in 1933.

The Blue Birds’ starting pitching rotation and their records in “league” play during the 1933 Negro National League season were: Roy Williams (5-2 w/4.68 ERA), Bill Byrd (3-8 w/ 4 complete games and 4.26 ERA), Roosevelt Davis (2-2 w/ 2.66 ERA) and Kermit Dial (1-1 w/ 8.18 ERA). Even though he posted a poor won-loss record and high earned run average, Byrd still threw eight (8) complete games. Bertrum Hunter, Spoon Carter, Donald Jarmon, Bill McClain, George Mitchell and Zack Spencer also pitched for Columbus in 1933.

The team management of the Columbus Blue Birds suffered through a disappointing season in 1933. The Blue Birds ended the regular Negro National League season with a dismal record of 16-28 (.364) and were 15 ½ games behind the Cole’s Chicago American Giants (40-21-1) who narrowly won the “league” title over the Pittsburgh Crawfords (37-21-2). According to Negro

Baltimore Sox Take Defeat

BALTIMORE, Md., June 2—The Columbus Blue Birds defeated the Baltimore Black Sox in both ends of a doubleheader, here, Sunday. The first game, 6 to 4 eleven innings and the second, 6 to 4, ten innings. A pitching duel between Byrd for the Blue Birds and Williams for the Sox. The Birds scored one in their half of the third on Dial's triple and Briffins double. Andrews poked a long home run over the rightfield fence for a Bird run in the fourth. The Sox scored a run in their half of the fourth and went into the lead by scoring three runs in the fifth. The Birds knotted the count in their half of the seventh and remained so until the 11th when successive singles by Andrews, Brooks and Dial scored two runs.

Columbus—	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
Gilchrist, ss	0	2	0	0	0
Crosby, 3b	0	0	1	5	0
Redus, rf	0	0	2	1	0
Scott, 1b	0	0	22	0	0
Andrews, cf	2	2	3	0	0
Brooks, c	2	2	2	1	0
Byrd, p	0	0	1	3	0
Dial, 2b	1	2	1	3	1
Griffin, lf	1	2	1	0	0
Totals	6	10	33	19	1

Baltimore—	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
Washington, cf	0	0	0	0	0
Simpson, 3b	0	0	0	0	0
Holliday	1	0	5	0	0
Seay, 2b	1	2	3	6	1
H. Williams, 3b	1	2	0	1	0
Johnson, rf	0	0	0	0	0
Burnett, 1b-cf	0	0	12	0	0
Cooper, ss	0	1	4	2	0
Eggleston, c	0	0	7	1	0
R. Williams, p	1	1	2	2	0
*Hubbard	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	4	6	33	12	1

*Batted for Washington in 10th.
 Columbus ... 001 100 200 02-6
 B. Black Sox 000 130 000 00-4
 Two-base hits—Seay, R. Williams, Brooks, Griffin 2. Three-base hits—H. Williams, Dial. Home runs—Andrews.

Bill Byrd
 Columbus Blue Birds
 Byrd Goes 11 Innings for Win

Plaindealer
 Kansas City, KS
 06-02-33

League researcher John Holway, Columbus had a season record of 22-28 (.444) when both "league" and "non-league" games are added together.

The Columbus Blue Birds lasted only one season and folded before the end of the year.

Byrd Lands in Cleveland

With Columbus not fielding a team for the 1934 Negro National League season, Bill Byrd joined several of his Blue Bird teammates (Ameal Brooks, Roosevelt Davis, Kermit Dial, Dennis Gilchrist, Clarence Griffin, Wilson "Frog" Redus and Roy Williams) to sign with the Cleveland Red Sox who were the newest member of the Negro National League. The team was owned by Prentice Byrd (no relationship to Bill Byrd) and Dr. E.L. Langrum. Cleveland was managed by Bobby Williams and played their home games at League Park which was also the home of the Cleveland Indians of the American League. This marked the first time in the history of League Park that the Indians shared their home ball park with a black team.

The top hitters for the Cleveland Red Sox in 1934 were Bill Byrd (P/OF), Jelly Jackson (SS), Pat Patterson (2B) and Leroy Taylor (OF). Seventeen (17) box scores for "league" games have been found with Bill Byrd in Cleveland's starting lineup during the 1934 season. In these 17 games Bill got 15 hits in 43 "official" at bats for a .349 batting average and a .465 slugging percentage.

Bill Byrd started more games than any other pitcher for the Red Sox during the season. In 11 "league" games, Byrd posted a won-loss record of 2-8 (.200) with a miserable 6.90 ERA. Cleveland had a pitching staff that in the past had been proven winners but none of them came through in 1934. In the 21 box scores that have been found for Cleveland playing "league" games, the Red Sox posted a horrible team earned run average of 6.84 ERA. During the 1934 season Cleveland used at least ten (10) pitchers. Roosevelt Davis, Kermit Dial, Johnnie Bob Dixon, Tom Glover, Hosley "Scrip" Lee, Willie Powell, Jimmy Reese, Roy Roberts and Roy Williams also pitched for the Red Sox in 1934.

Game coverage in the newspapers was marginal at best for the team during the season. This lack of information about Cleveland's performance on the field can be attributed to team management's poor communication with the media. The Cleveland Call and Post continually criticized team management during the season about not providing the newspaper with information about their games. This in turn affected attendance at the ball park because fans were not kept informed with details about the Red Sox's season.

Cleveland finished the season with the worst team batting average and was next to last as the most effective pitching staff in the Negro National League for the 1934 season.

The Cleveland Red Sox had a horrible season in 1934. They finished last in the final Negro National League standings with an embarrassing record of only 3-22 (.120). Some sources report the Red Sox with a record of 4-25 (.138) in games against both “league” and “non-league” teams. One Negro League researcher credits the Cleveland Red Sox with a record of 8-17 (.320). Player/manager Webster McDonald led the Philadelphia Stars (36-18-2) to the “league” championship.

Unhappy with the “league’s” scheduling practices, reportedly the Cleveland Red Sox left the “league” in September and played the rest of their season on an independent basis. The Cleveland Red Sox folded after the 1934 season.

Bill Byrd’s start in professional Negro League baseball had been very frustrating. He was three years into his career and had played for three different teams all of which had folded before the end of the season. In addition his performance on the mound had been disappointing.

**Detroit Elite Giants
Ready For Opening
Of Baseball Season**

The Detroit Gaints, representing Detroit in the Negro National League, should be one of the hardest hitting clubs in the league this year.

In the outfield Manager Jim Taylor has Roy Parnell, Bernie Wright and Zollie Wright, thre hard hitting fly shasers.. Parnell is well known to the local fans as a potent hitter. As a member of the Birmingham Black Barons, Parnell broke up many a games at he Mack Avenue arena with home runs over the left field fence.

Tribune Independent of Michigan

Detroit, MI
03-13-35

Bill Byrd Returns to Columbus

Prior to the start of the 1935 Negro National League season, Bill Byrd was signed by Tom Wilson to pitch for his Elite Giants baseball team. Wilson’s team had played in Nashville during the 1934 season but dwindling attendance which led to financial issues forced Wilson to look for a new home for his team. When evaluating potential cities in which to relocate, Tom Wilson decided to try to capitalize on the larger markets of a northern city. After much consideration Wilson moved the team to Detroit and they became the “Detroit Elite Giants.”

Unfortunately, Wilson’s stay in Detroit did not last long. The primary reason for the Elite Giants leaving Detroit was that Wilson could not secure a lease on Hamtramck Field. Without a suitable home field it was impossible for the team to stay in Detroit. The Elite Giants ended up settling in Columbus (OH) for the 1935 season.

The 1935 Columbus Elite Giants played in the Negro National League and were managed by James “Candy Jim” Taylor. Wilson’s Columbus Elite Giants called Neil Park in Columbus their home field for the 1935 season.

The Elite Giants had a very strong hitting line-up that included Leroy Morney (.387), Zollie Wright (.375), Bill Byrd (.367), Sammy Hughes (.337), Roy “Red” Parnell (.333) and Burnis “Wild Bill” Wright (.293). Columbus compiled an impressive team batting average of .296 in “league” games during the season.



Columbus Elite Giants (1935)

(Back row left to right – **Sammy Hughes**, Andy Porter, **Burnis “Wild Bill” Wright**, Jesse “Hoss” Walker, Bob Griffith, Sam Thompson, Henry “Red” Wright, Tom Glover and Jim West. Front row kneeling left to right – **Bill Byrd**, Jim Willis, Leroy Morney, Paul Hardy, **James “Candy Jim” Taylor**, Zollie Wright, Felton Snow, Nish Williams and **Roy “Red” Parnell**.)

Jim “Cannonball” Willis (5-1 w/ 2.68 ERA) was the ace of the Elite Giants’ starting pitching rotation that also included Andy Porter (3-1), Sam Thompson (2-2), Bob Griffith (3-4) and Bill Byrd (2-2 w/4.91 ERA). Henry “Red” Wright (2-1), Sam Thompson (1-4), Tom Glover (0-1), Bud Mitchell (0-0) and “Candy Jim” Taylor (0-0) also pitched for the Elite Giants in 1935. The Columbus Elite Giants finished the season with the third best pitching staff in the Negro National League for the 1935 season.



Columbus Elite Giants (1935)
Pitching Staff

(left to right – Henry “Red” Wright, Jim “Cannonball” Willis, Andy “Pullman” Porter, Robert Griffith, Sad Sam Thompson, **Bill Byrd** and Thomas “Lefty” Glover.)

Besides being part of the starting pitching rotation, Bill Byrd also played numerous games in the outfield and pinch hit during the season.

The Elite Giants led by “Candy Jim” Taylor had a very successful season in 1935. According to the Seamheads research team, they finished the season in third place in the final Negro National League standings with a record of 27-22-2 (.551). They were 11 games behind the Pittsburgh Crawfords (49-22-3) who won the title by 10 ½ games over the New York Cubans (29-23-5).

The research team of Larry Lester and Dick Clark credit the 1935 Columbus Elite Giants with a “league” record of 28-21 (.571) and in second place in the final “league” standings. The final Negro National League standings for the 1935 season according to the research of Lester and Clark was as follows:

Negro National League (1935)

	Games	Record	Pct.
Pittsburgh Crawfords	57	42-15	.737
Columbus Elite Giants	49	28-21	.571
New York Cubans	53	29-24	.547
Philadelphia Stars	57	29-28	.509
Brooklyn Eagles	61	29-32	.475
Homestead Grays	54	23-31	.426
Cole’s Chicago American Giants	57	22-35	.386
Newark Dodgers	59	17-42	.288

Elite Giants Move to Washington

After only one season in Columbus, Tom Wilson had his team back on the road again. Before the start of the 1936 season, the Elite Giants relocated to Washington, D.C. which was supposed to be a hot bed for black baseball. Wilson’s Elite Giants called Major League ball park Griffith Stadium as their home field. Candy Jim Taylor returned to manage the team for the 1936 season.

The Washington Elite Giants had an extremely strong team in 1936. They had the third highest batting average in the “league” during the season. The starting line-up and their season batting averages for the Elite Giants were as follows:

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Jim West	.340	OF	Wild Bill Wright	.358
2B	Sammy Hughes	.315		Goose Curry	.300
SS	Hoss Walker	.302		Zollie Wright	.300
3B	Jimmy Binder	.300			
C	Raleigh “Biz” Mackey	.294	P	Bill Byrd	.321

The 1936 season would prove to be the year that Bill Byrd would begin to show the “real” talent he possessed as a starting pitcher. It was also in 1936 that he became the ace of the Elite Giants’ pitching staff. His complete pitching statistics in Negro National League games only during the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1936	Washington	17	99.0	9	4	106	36	43	24	3.27

Bill Byrd led the Negro National League in wins during the 1936 season. He also had five (5) complete games and two (2) shut outs during the 1936 season. According Negro League author James Riley, Bill Byrd had a 20-7 (.741) won-loss record when both “league” and “non-league” games are added together.

The highlight of the 1936 season for Bill Byrd was a one-hitter he pitched on June 5th at Greenlee Field in Pittsburgh (PA) against the Pittsburgh Crawfords. The lone hit that the Crawfords got was a bunt single by Harry Williams that some how got past the usually sure handed Jim West at first base. In support of Bill Byrd’s brilliant pitching performance the Elite Giants hitters scored six runs in the sixth inning and seven runs in the ninth inning on their way to a 16-0 victory.



Bill Byrd
Elite Giants

Other members of the Elite Giants starting rotation in 1936 were Bob Griffith (6-3 w/ 3.24 ERA), Jim Willis (4-5 w/ 2.45 ERA) and Andy Porter (3-3 w/ 5.75 ERA). Goose Curry, Philip “Lefty” Holmes, Red Howard, Al Johnson, Frank Stewart, Nish Williams, Lefty Wilson and Young (first name unknown) also pitched for Washington during the season. The Elite Giants had one of the top two pitching staffs in the “league” during the season.

For his strong pitching on the mound and excellent hitting at the plate, Bill Byrd was selected to represent Washington on the East squad in the 1936 East-West All Star game. The game was played on August 23rd at Comiskey Park in Chicago. Byrd pitched three innings, struck out four and gave up one unearned run. A crowd of 26,400 were on hand to witness the East easily win the game by a score of 10 to 2.

According to the Seamheads research team, the Washington Elite Giants finished the regular season with a record of 28-31-1 (.475). Even though they ended the season with a losing record, they are credited with winning the first half of the Negro National League season with a record of 14-10 (.583). The Pittsburgh Crawfords (43-31-2) won the second half of the season with a record of 20-9 (.690). There were no play-offs during the 1936 seasons. The Pittsburgh Crawfords were considered the Negro National League champions for the 1936 season. Washington was 7 ½ games behind Pittsburgh and in fourth place in the final cumulative “league” standings.

Byrd Returns to Washington

Bill Byrd returned to the Washington Elite Giants for their 1937 Negro National League season. This marked the first time in his career that he had been with the same team in the same city for two consecutive seasons.

The Elite Giants were also referred to as the “Nashville Elite Giants” in newspaper coverage during their spring training before the 1937 season.

Washington was managed by veteran Negro League player/manager Raleigh “Biz” Mackey who also caught for the team. The Elite Giants played half of their home games in Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. and the other half of their games in Baltimore’s Oriole Stadium.

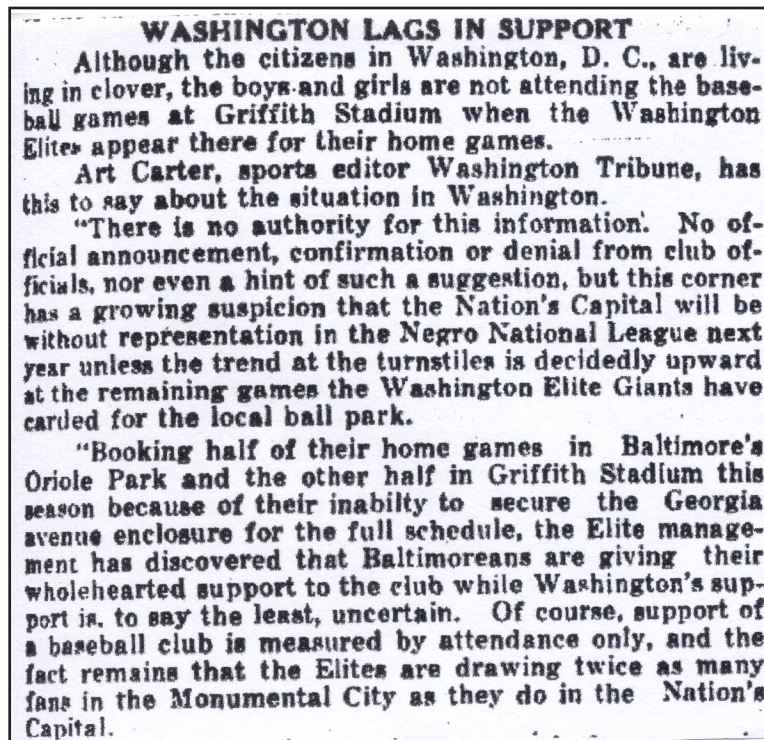
The Washington Elite Giants had an excellent hitting team during the 1937 season. Box scores have been found for thirty-two (32) “league” games for the Elite Giants for 1937. In these thirty-two (32) games the Elite Giants posted an impressive team batting average of .294 with a .440 slugging percentage. Both of which were the second best in the Negro National League in 1937. The Elite Giants’ starting line-up and their season batting averages in “league” games were as follows:

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Jim West	.390	OF	Burnis Wright	.389
2B	Sammy Hughes	.329	OF	Henry Kimbro	.290
SS	Jesse Walker	.226	OF	Zollie Wright	.270
3B	Leroy Morney	.258			
C	Raleigh Mackey	.271	P	Bill Byrd	.324

Unfortunately for Tom Wilson the pitching staff didn’t deliver on the same level as the hitters. Over the course of the season manager Biz Mackey used at least eleven (11) different pitchers.

After an excellent season on the mound in 1936, Bill Byrd returned to the Elite Giants as the ace of their pitching staff for the 1937 Negro National League season. He compiled a 5-1 won-loss record with a 3.81 ERA in Negro National League games. When games against “non-league” are added to “league” games, Bill had a record of 9-6 (.600). Besides Byrd, Biz Mackey’s starting pitching rotation included Tom Glover (3-1 w/ 3.05 ERA), Jimmy Diraux (2-2 w/ 3.89 ERA), Willie Williams (2-2 w/ 4.70 ERA) and Andy Porter (1-6 w/ 4.68 ERA). Bob Griffith (2-1), Jonas Gaines (0-2), Sammy Hughes (0-0), Felton Snow (0-0), Arnold Waites (0-0) and Jim Willis (0-0) also pitched for Washington in 1937.

The majority of owner Tom Wilson’s problems during the season were not on the field but at the box office. Even splitting the Elite Giants home games between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore did not help. According to a newspaper article that appeared in the Detroit Tribune on August 7th, when the Washington Elite Giants played in Baltimore they consistently drew twice as many fans as in the Nation’s capitol. Washington, D.C. was not proving to be the hot bed of black baseball as Tom Wilson was led to believe.



Detroit Tribune
Detroit, MI
08-07-37

According to a newspaper article that appeared in the Jersey Journal of Jersey City (NJ) on October 1st the Washington Elite Giants were credited with winning the first half championship of the Negro National League.

There is conflicting research on the Washington Elite Giants final won-loss record for the 1937 Negro National League season. The following three research groups (Seamheads, Larry Lester & Dick Clark and John Holway) report the following won-loss records and final “league” standings of the 1937 Washington Elite Giants.

Research Group	Won-Lost Record	“League” Finish
Lester and Clark	27-17 (.614)	3 rd place
John Holway	27-17 (.614)	3 rd place
Seamheads	22-37-3 (.373)	7 th Place

Elite Giants Move to Baltimore

These articles covering the Elite Giants move to Baltimore appeared in the Afro-American.

MAY TRANSFER ELITE GIANTS FROM WASHINGTON TO BALTO.

By STAFF CORRESPONDENT
PITTSBURGH—It is almost a certainty that the Elite Giants, for the last two years representatives of Washington, D.C., in the Negro National League, will be transferred to Baltimore this season.

This was brought out at the annual meeting of the NNL here Saturday and confirmed by Tom Wilson, owner of the club.

Only "Hitch" Remains

"Only a slight hitch remains to be ironed out," said the colorful Wilson in commenting on the transfer. "Last year we lost

money with the club operating from Washington. I sincerely feel Baltimore far superior to Washington as a baseball town."

Fellow club owners agreed. It seems the "hitch" Wilson mentioned involves approval by the Oriole Park management in Baltimore, to lease the park for regular games. Heretofore, Douglass Smith has been chief promoter of games between colored teams at Oriole Park.

Owner Wilson is reluctant toward hooking up with Smith in promoting the games this year and desires the right to book in-

dependently.

"I'm confident we will iron these matters out all right," said Wilson, "and Baltimore will more than likely be the home of the Elite Giants beginning this year. It's been a long time since Baltimore has had a regular league team and I feel the people there need one and will support one."

Owner James Semler, of the New York Black Yankees, hinted that his club may switch from New York City to Brooklyn this year but hesitated in making a definite assertion.

February 05, 1938

Elite Giants Quit League

WASHINGTON

This week it was learned the club officials have discontinued rental of the former club house at 2028 Georgia Ave., Northwest.

A For Rent sign now hangs on the premises, directly across from Griffith Stadium, which was formerly used as the Elites' offices.

It was also learned that Douglass O. Smith, erstwhile local representative of the Elites and promoter, has moved his headquarters to Baltimore.

Definite assurance that the Elite Giants, professional baseball team which represented Washington in the National League for the past two seasons would not carry the colors of the capital in the loop next year is believed to have been established.

BALTIMORE—The Baltimore Elite Giants, who for the last two years have represented Washington, D.C., in the Negro National League, will open their spring training Saturday at Nashville.

The Giants will use Bugle Field as its home playing field. Conscientious efforts were made to rent Oriole Park, home of Baltimore's International League white club, but to no avail.

Several reasons were advanced for the park official's refusal, one being that the residents living close to the park objected to night ball games with its accompanying noise and fanfare.

The Elites will have two rookie pitchers and a rookie infielder working with the regular bunch. The club will play its first exhibition game with the Memphis Red Sox in Memphis, April 10.

On April 17, the Crawfords will form the opposition in Monroe, La. Other games will be: April 24, Philadelphia Stars in Chattanooga, Tenn.; May 1, Philadelphia Stars in Nashville; May 8, Crawfords in Louisville;

On May 14, the club opens its regular NNL season in Philadelphia. Baltimore fans

will get their first chance to see their home club on May 15, when the Giants open at Bugle Field with the Philly Stars.

The Giants will have 20 players in training this week-end. George Scales, formerly with the New York Black Yankees, will manage the team.



These Giants, who were on last year's team, will be found among the present crop: Biz Mackey, Roy Campanella, catchers; Chet Brewer West, first base; Hughes, second base; Walker, shortstop; Snow, third base; Kimbro, B. Wright, Summers, outfielders; Porter, Byrd, Direux, Glover, Gaines, Griffith, W. Williams, and Chet Brewer, pitchers.

Summers is a youngster 20 years old, who hails from Los Angeles and played with the Elites in the winter league during the past winter out in California. He will start as a regular outfielder instead of Z. Wright.

He has an excellent throwing arm and is a god hitter.

Tom Wilson is president of the Giants, Vernon Green, vice-president-secretary, and George Scales, manager.

October 16, 1937

April 2, 1938

ACE COLORED NINES BATTLE TOMORROW

Pittsburgh and Baltimore Clubs,
Sporting Topliners, Play
Double-Header Here.

Two of the out-standing colored professional baseball teams in the country, the Pittsburgh Crawfords and the Baltimore Elite Giants, will meet in a double-header at Griffith Stadium tomorrow.

These clubs were the winners in the recent 4-team double-header held at the stadium between the Crawfords and the New York Yankees and between the Elites and the Philadelphia Stars.

The Crawfords have in their line-up a number of the leading stars in colored baseball, among them George Giles, Chester Williams and Sammy Bankhead. Among the top-liners with the Giants are Biz Mackey, Ed Dureux and Barney Wright.

Evening Star

Washington, D.C.

08-20-38

In Baltimore the Elite Giants leased Bugle Field from Joe Cambria as their home ball park for the 1938 season. Bugle Field had a grandstand without a roof and held 6,000 fans. Wilson did not move all of his baseball operation to Baltimore. He made the York Hotel which was located at Madison and Dolphin streets in his hometown of Nashville as the team's operational headquarters. Another significant change that Tom Wilson made to the team was replacing Biz Mackey as manager with George "Tubby" Scales. Wilson selected Richard Powell who worked for the Social Security Administration to be in charge of marketing and promotions. It was Powell who became the driving force of getting Baltimore fans into the ball park. The final member of Wilson's "new" management team for the Baltimore Elite Giants was Vernon Green who was hired as the team's business manager.



Tom Wilson
Baltimore Elite Giants
Owner

According to the Seamheads research team the Elite Giants finished the season 19 ½ games behind the Homestead Grays (41-17-1) who won the Negro National League title. Washington's last place finish for the 1937 season as reported by the Seamheads research team is somewhat perplexing because the Elite Giants compiled the second best team batting average (.294) and had the fourth most effective pitching staff in the "league" in 1937.

Elite Giants Move to Baltimore

After two financially unsuccessful seasons in Washington, D.C. Tom Wilson moved his team to Baltimore, Maryland for the 1938 Negro National League season. This made the fifth move (Nashville, Detroit, Columbus, Washington, D.C. and Baltimore) that the Elite Giants had made since the team entered the Negro National League in 1933. Growing support from the African American business community was one of the major reasons that Tom Wilson selected Baltimore as the new home for his team. In addition Wilson found tremendous support from the Frontiers Club and other Baltimore area civic organizations.

Overall the Baltimore Elite Giants had a solid hitting team and were able to drive in runs when it counted. Sammy Hughes (.348), Jim West (.322), Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright (.298), Raleigh "Biz" Mackey (.297) and Jesse "Hoss" Walker (.280) were the top hitters for the Elite Giants in 1938. The Elite Giants were considered to have had the second or third best hitting team in the Negro National League during the 1938 season.

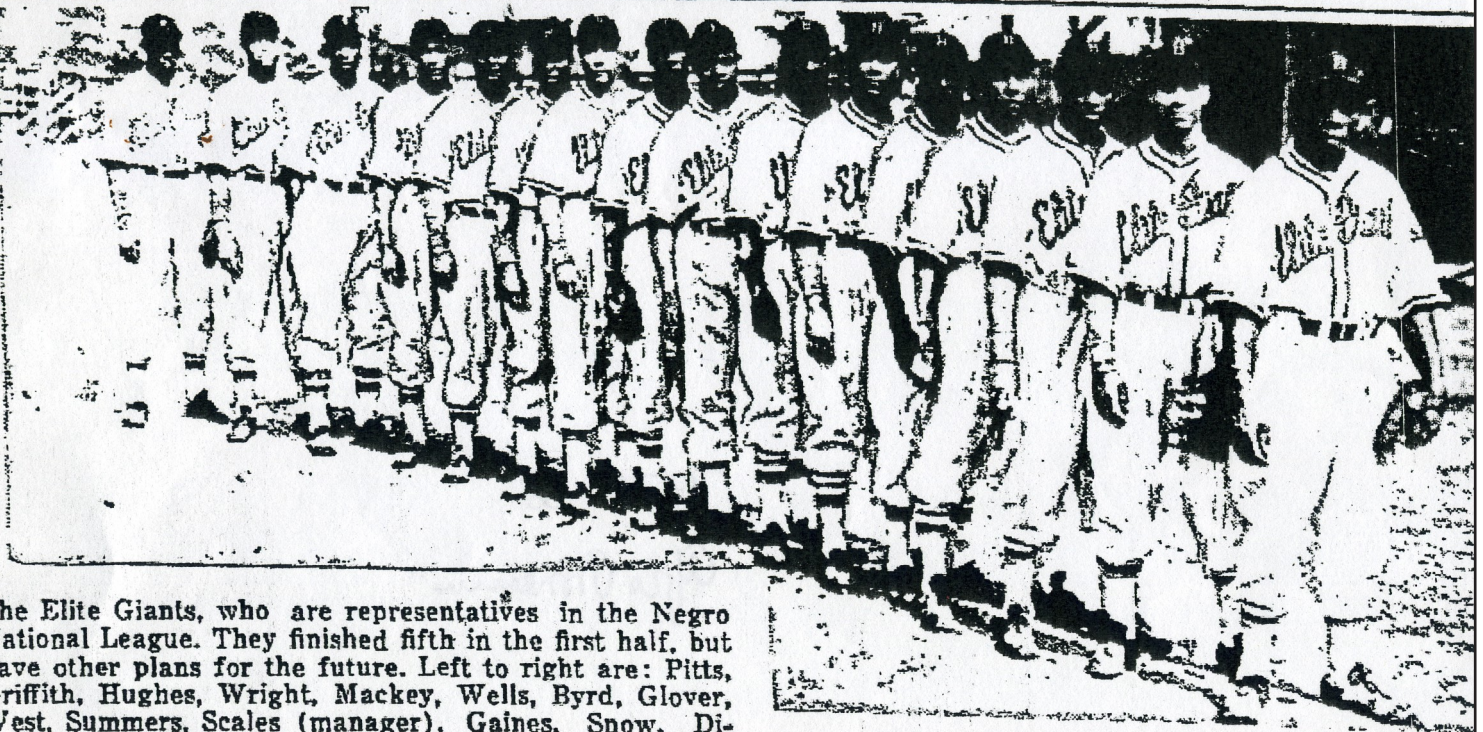
One major factor in the Elite Giants being so successful in 1938 was their pitching staff. The biggest reason for this was that Bill Byrd rebounded from his mediocre performance in 1937 to establish himself as the ace of George Scales' pitching staff and one of the best pitchers in the Negro National League. In eleven (11) box scores that have been found for Bill Byrd as the starting pitcher for the Baltimore Elite Giants in "league" games, he went 9-2 (.818) with nine (9) complete games.

Bill Byrd's complete pitching statistics for the 1938 Negro National League season were:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1938	Baltimore	11	96.0	9	2	91	33	18	6	3.09

Also in the starting rotation for Baltimore were Bob Griffith (7-4), Andy Porter (5-1) and Jimmy Diraux (2-1). Other players who pitched for the Elite Giants in 1938 were Tom Glover (1-2), Phelps (first name unknown) (1-0), Jonas Gaines (0-2), George Scales (0-0) and Willie Williams (0-0). The Seamheads research team ranks the 1938 Baltimore Elite Giants as having the second or third best pitching staff in the "league." They had the second lowest earned run average (3.96 ERA) and allowed the third lowest opponent batting average (.262) in Negro National League games for the season.

THESE ELITES EYE SECOND HALF NNL PENNANT



The Elite Giants, who are representatives in the Negro National League. They finished fifth in the first half, but have other plans for the future. Left to right are: Pitts, Griffith, Hughes, Wright, Mackey, Wells, Byrd, Glover, West, Summers, Scales (manager), Gaines, Snow, Diraux, Campanella and Kimbro.

Baltimore Elite Giants (1938)

Afro-American
07-23-38

One of the highlights of the 1938 season for the Baltimore Elite Giants was playing in a four team Negro National League doubleheader. The teams that participated in the event were the Baltimore Elite Giants who played the Philadelphia Stars and the New York Black Yankees who took on the Pittsburgh Crawfords. The doubleheader was played in Washington, D.C. in late June. This was the first time that the Negro League baseball classic had been played outside New York City. The Elite Giants and Crawfords were victorious. These two teams met in late August back at Griffith Stadium for a double header. Baltimore took the first game by a score of 18-1 and Pittsburgh came back to take the second game by a 5-3 margin.

NEGRO TWIN BILL HERE

**New York, Pittsburgh, Baltimore,
Philly Nines Here Sunday.**

For the first time the classic double-header of the Negro National Baseball League will be seen outside New York as Washington plays host to the big twin bill next Sunday at Griffith Stadium

Four of the league's leading teams will see action as the New York Black Yankees meet the Pittsburgh Crawfords and the Philadelphia Stars face the Baltimore Elite Giants. The first game will start at 2 p.m. Last time in New York this attraction drew 38,000 spectators.

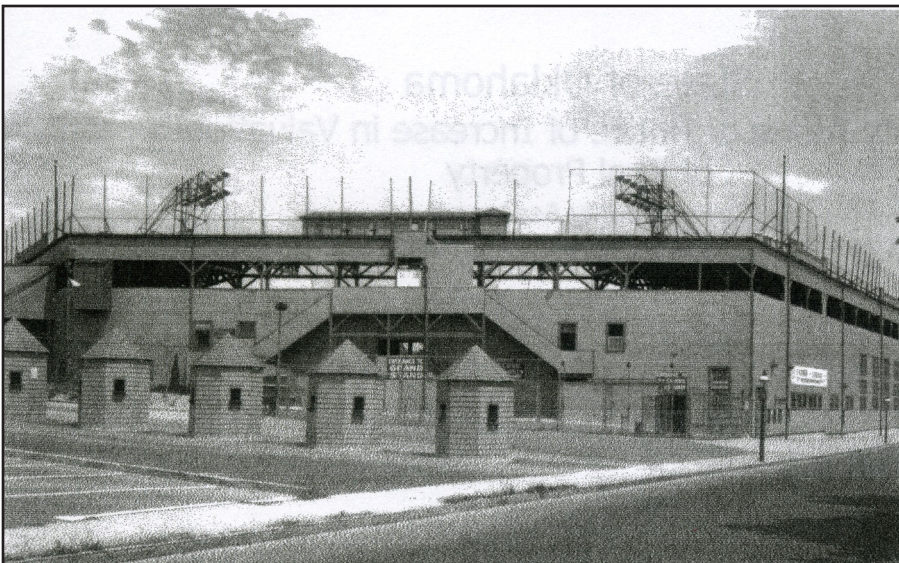
**Negro National League
Doubleheader**

**Baltimore vs Philadelphia
New York vs Pittsburgh**

**Evening Star
Washington, D.C.
07-25-38**

The combination of a new city with a new fan base, a new manager, solid hitting and a strong pitching staff resulted in a significant turnaround for the team. According to the research of the Seamheads group, the Elite Giants went from last place in 1937 to second place in the final 1938 Negro National League standings. Baltimore finished the season with a record of 21-17-3 (.553) and were 9 ½ games behind the Homestead Grays (34-11) who won the “league” championship. According to the research of Larry Lester and Dick Clark the Baltimore Elite Giants finished the season with a record of 23-9 (.719) and finished in second place behind the Homestead Grays (27-10).

Before the start of the 1939 season, Tom Wilson hired Felton Snow as the Baltimore Elite Giants’ player/manager. Wilson also secured a lease and moved the team to Oriole Park in Baltimore to serve as the team’s home field. Before the regular season got underway, Wilson made three key personnel changes. They were trading Biz Mackey to the Newark Eagles, promoting James “Red” Moore to take over at first base and naming Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts as the starting shortstop.



Oriole Park

**Home of the Baltimore
Elite Giants**

The Baltimore Elite Giants had the Negro National League's second best team batting average with a .296 batting average with a .396 slugging percentage during the 1939 season. Bill Hoskins (.382), Sammy Hughes (.378), Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright (.365), Henry Kimbro (.313) and Felton Snow (.291) led Baltimore in hitting.

Bill Byrd was the ace of the pitching staff with a record of 10-3 (.769) with 10 complete games in 13 starts against Negro National League opponents. When both "league" and "non-league" games are added together Bill Byrd is credited with a record of 17-6 (.739) for the 1939 season. Bill Byrd's complete pitching statistics for "league" games during the 1939 season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1939	Baltimore	17	111.2	10	3	126	39	42	24	3.14

Bill Byrd's ten (10) complete games led the Negro National League during the 1939 season.

Other members of the starting rotation for the Elite Giants were Jonas Gaines, Willie Hubert and Tom Glover. Emery "Ace" Adams, Bob Griffith, Bill Harvey, Johnny Johnson, Lefty Phillips, Andy Porter and Jim Willis also pitched for Baltimore during the season. The Seamheads research team credit the Baltimore Elite Giants as having the third most effective pitching staff in the Negro National League with a 4.38 earned run average.

In 1939 there were two East-West All Star games played. The first game was played on August 6th at Chicago's Comiskey Park. With a crowd of 40,000 fans in the stands, Bill Byrd was on the mound as the starting pitcher for the East. Byrd went three innings and did not allow a run to be scored. The West won the game by a score of 4-2. The second East-West All Star game was played on August 27th at Yankee Stadium in New York City with only 17,000 fans in attendance. Byrd pitched six innings and was credited with the win. The highlight of the game was a bases loaded triple by Josh Gibson in the eighth inning. The East won the game by a score of 10-2. For Bill the highlight of the two East-West All Star games was that he started both of them.

According to the Seamheads research team, the Baltimore Elite Giants ended the season with a disappointing record of 19-23 (.452) and were in fifth place in the final 1939 Negro National League standings. They were 9 ½ games behind the "league" champion Homestead Grays who went 34-19-1 (.642). According to the Seamheads research team the Elite Giants were 24-24 (.500) in games against all levels of competition. The research team of Larry Lester and Dick Clark credit the 1939 Elite Giants with a Negro National League record of 25-21 (.543) and in third place in the final "league" standings.

The Baltimore Elite Giants' poor won-loss record and fifth place standings as reported by the Seamheads research team is somewhat confusing because according to Seamheads the Elite Giants had the second best hitting team and the third most effective pitching staff in the "league."

Jacob Ruppert Memorial Cup Tournament

During the 1939 season a four team "championship" play-off series called the "Jacob Ruppert Memorial Cup Tournament" was held. The tournament was the brain child of Edward Barrow who was the president of the New York Yankees. Barrow held the event to honor the memory of Col. Jacob Ruppert who had been the owner of the New York Yankees and had passed away during the previous season. Barrow even donated an impressive trophy that was to be awarded to the winner of the four team Negro National League play-off.

The tournament was originally to have featured five doubleheaders to be played at Yankee Stadium over the summer of 1939. The format of the tournament was changed before the series even got underway. The teams selected for the series were the top four teams in the Negro National League. The teams included in the tournament were the Baltimore Elite Giants, Homestead Grays, Newark Eagles and Philadelphia Stars. Before the start of the tournament, Baltimore brought in five players from the Indianapolis ABCs to bolster their roster. These players were Oscar Boone (C), Thomas "Pee Wee" Butts (SS), Eddie Dixon (P), Felix Evans (P)

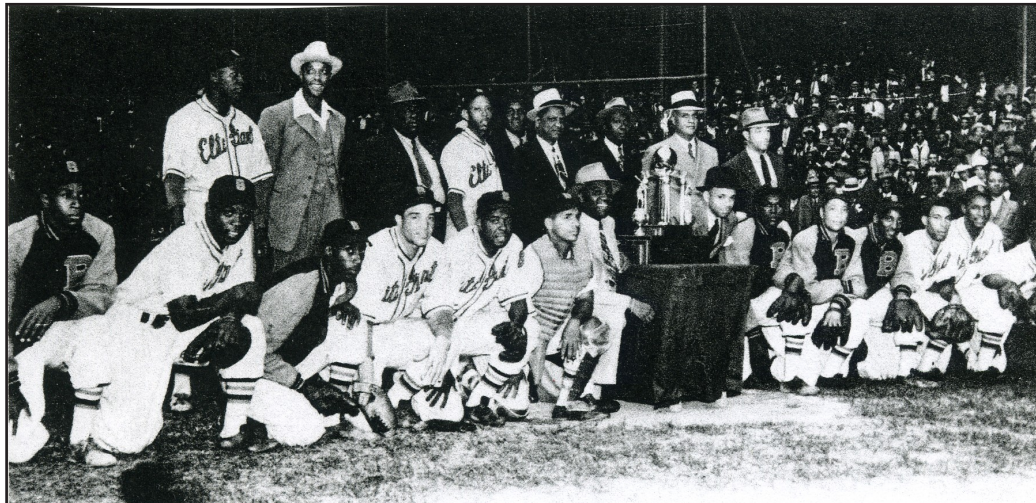
and James “Red” Moore (1B). To make room on their roster for the new players the Elite Giants sold Jim West to the Philadelphia Stars and sent Raleigh “Biz” Mackey to the Newark Eagles. With departure of Mackey who was their starting catcher, Roy Campanella was promoted to first string and Oscar Boone became the back-up.

The Homestead Grays defeated the Philadelphia Stars and the Baltimore Elite Giants defeated the Newark Eagles in the first round. The highlight of the first round for Baltimore was the last two games of the series that were played as a doubleheader at Oriole Park in Baltimore on September 10th. The Elite Giants collected twenty-three (23) hits including a homerun by Bill Byrd in the final two games.

The Homestead Grays and Baltimore Elite Giants advanced to the finals. Baltimore defeated Homestead by winning three games to one (one game ended in a tie) for Homestead to claim the title and trophy cup. Baltimore hitters took control of the series in game two and consistently gave Homestead pitchers fits trying to get them out. The leading hitters for the Elite Giants in the tournament were Bill Hoskins (.467 – 14 for 30), Sammy Hughes (.448 – 13 for 29), Henry Kimbro (.444 – 16 for 36), Wild Bill Wright (.382 – 13 for 34) and Roy Campanella (.310 – 9 for 29). The Baltimore Elite Giants were led by the pitching of Jonas Gaines (2-0) and Bill Byrd (1-1). A summary of the final series between Baltimore and Homestead is as follows:

Game	Date	Location	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher
1	Sept. 16 th	Philadelphia	Homestead	2-1	Roy Partlow
2	Sept. 17 th	Baltimore	Baltimore	7-5	Jonas Gaines
3	Sept. 17 th	Baltimore	Tie	1-1	-
4	Sept. 23 rd	Philadelphia	Homestead	2-1	-
5	Sept. 23 rd	Philadelphia	Baltimore	10-5	Bill Byrd
6	Sept. 24 th	New York City	Baltimore	2-0	Jonas Gaines

The final game of the tournament was played at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx. Willie Hubert relieved Jonas Gaines in the seventh and shut out the Grays in the last two innings to give Baltimore the title. Entertainer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson presented the trophy to Tom Wilson.



**Baltimore Elite Giants
Jacob Ruppert Memorial Cup Tournament Champions
(1939)**

(Standing left to right – Bill Hoskins, **Sammie Hughes**, Vernon Green, Felton Snow, Doug Smith, **Tom Wilson**, James “Soldier Boy” Semler and **Alex Pompez**. Kneeling left to right – Jonas Gaines, **Henry Kimbro**, Tom Glover, Red Moore, Jesse “Hoss” Walker, **Roy Campanella**, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Chester Washington, Bubber Hubert, **Bill Byrd**, Emery “Ace” Adams, Boogie Wolf, **Burnis “Wild Bill” Wright** and Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts.)

ELITES WIN TITLE

The Baltimore Elite Giants won the Negro National League baseball championship by defeating the Pittsburgh Homestead Grays, 2 to

0, at Yankee Stadium yesterday. In a seven-inning game which followed a picked team from the Elites and Grays played a 1-1 tie with a combination of minor league players.

Baltimore Elite Giants Win Ruppert Cup Title

Jersey Journal
Jersey City, NJ
09-25-39

Reportedly, the 1939 season was a huge success for Negro League baseball from a financial perspective. According to newspaper reports Negro League team owners had their best season financially in the history of black baseball. This success was attributed to fabulous weather conditions during the season which resulted in fewer rain outs, receipts from all star and exhibition games, but most importantly from fan support at the box office for the high level of baseball that team owners put on the field.

Owners Of Teams In Negro National League Enjoyed Best Year In Campaign Just Closed

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—The 1939 baseball season is officially over. There are still playing exhibition games with various all-star clubs, and all-star team on the Negro National league is playing for a week in Cuba, and the Elite Giants are making their annual trek to the Pacific coast.

Cuba and Puerto Rico have proved a haven for some of our players who wished to continue playing throughout the winter.

Detroit Tribune
Detroit, MI
10-21-39

In October of 1939 the Baltimore Elite Giants played a series of weekend games against a team called the "Major League All Stars." Featured on the Major League All Stars were Doc Cramer, Frankie Hayes, Dee Miles and Mickey Vernon. A box score from a double header on October 8th shows the Major League All Stars won both games by the scores of 3-1 and 2-0.

Byrd Plays in Puerto Rico

After playing post season baseball with the Baltimore Elite Giants, Bill Byrd traveled to Puerto Rico to play with the Santurce Cangrejeros (Crabbers) in the inaugural season of the Puerto Rican Winter League. League rules in Puerto Rico allowed each team to have three import players on their roster. Going into the 1939-40 winter season Santurce team owner, Pedro Zorrilla, signed Bill Byrd, Josh Gibson and Dick Seay to play for his team. Dick Seay served as the team's player-manager until Josh Gibson arrived on the island and then Gibson managed the team.



**Santurce (1938-39)
Puerto Rican Winter League**

(Standing left to right – Raul Acosta, Monchile Concepcion, Enrique Gonzalez, Wichie Calderon, Ed Nichols, **Bill Byrd**, **Josh Gibson**, Tingo Daviu, Raul Cabrera and Dick Seay. Kneeling left to right – Guillermo Angulo, Manolin Rosario, Manuel Ramirez, Oscar Mangual, Pookie Muniz, Nenco Villa, Ramon Carrion and Hello Concepcion.)

The fifty-six (56) game season started on October 1st with a double header against Aguadilla. Bill Byrd started the second game of the double header and picked up the win. Santurce's season ended on April 7th of 1940 with a game against Aguadilla.

Bill Byrd was the ace of the Cangrejeros' pitching staff. He went 15-10 (.600) with an impressive 1.97 earned run average (ERA). Bill also struck out 158 batters in 229 innings pitched. Byrd finished second to Satchel Paige (19) in wins. He was third in the "league" in strike outs right behind Satchel Paige (208) and Leon Day (186). Even with an earned run average under two runs a game, Byrd was only fourth in the final "league" standings for earned run average. The ERA leaders for the Puerto Rican Winter League season were Silvio Garcia (1.32), Roy Partlow (1.49), Satchel Paige (1.93) and Bill Byrd (1.97).

When the season ended, Bill Byrd established Santurce records for games started (26), complete games (24), innings pitched (229) and wins (15) during the season. Perhaps the most remarkable statistic accomplished by Byrd was 24 complete games in 26 starts.

On January 7, 1940 Bill Byrd (Santurce) and Leon Day (Aguadilla) met for one of the most historic games in Puerto Rican baseball history. Aguadilla got a run off Byrd in the first inning and Santurce tied it up 1-1 in the fourth. Then Byrd and Day hooked up to pitch shut out ball for the next 14 innings. The most remarkable aspect of the game and what made it historic was that over the final 14 innings of the game neither Bill Byrd nor Leon Day allowed a single hit the rest of the game. The game was called after 18 innings with the tied score of 1-1.

Negro League legend Josh Gibson was the Cangrejeros' leading hitter with a .380 batting average and a "league" leading six (6) home runs.

When he wasn't pitching Bill Byrd was playing in centerfield for Santurce.



**Santurce (1938-39)
Puerto Rican Winter League**

(Bill Byrd, Josh Gibson , Dick Seay and Bat Boy Pookie Muniz)

The following eight teams played in the 1939-40 Puerto Rican Winter League: Guayama Brujos (39-17), San Juan Senadores (38-18), Ponce Leones (33-23), Santurce Cangrejeros (26-29), Caguas Criollos (23-33), Humacao Grises (22-33), Aguadilla Sharks (21-54) and the Mayaguez Indios (20-35). Even with Bill Byrd and Josh Gibson in the line-up, Santurce only had a mediocre season. Santurce ended the season in fourth place in the final "league" standings. They were 12 ½ games behind the Guayama Brujos (Witches) who were the Puerto Rican League champions. Guayama also won the "league" play-off series.

Byrd Travels to Venezuela

During his 1939-40 winter league season with the Santurce Cangrejeros of the Puerto Rican Winter League, Bill Byrd caught the attention of the owners of the Maracaibo team of the Venezuelan League. In 1940 the Centauros de Maracaibo played in the La Asociacion Venezolana de Baseball along with teams representing Gavilanes and Pastora. The previous season Maracaibo had come in last place in the final "league" standings of the Campeonato de Primera Division del Estado Zulia 1938-39 with a record of 5-11-2 (.313) and team owners were determined not to let that happen again. Their solution was to sign several Negro League players to bolster their roster.

When his season was over in Puerto Rico, Bill Byrd signed with Maracaibo and went to Venezuela to play the 1940 season for the Centauros de Maracaibo team. Maracaibo team owners also signed Negro League players Josh Gibson and Roy Partlow to play for the Centauros.

Very little information is available about Bill Byrd's season in Venezuela in 1940. Some of the things that have been found related to the season are as follows:

- Venezuelan baseball seasons were very short, generally 13 to 15 games. Most of the "league" games were played in April and May.
- It appears that teams did play exhibition games before and after the regular season.
- Both Bill Byrd and Josh Gibson played in 13 "league" games for the Centauros. Gibson led the "league" in homeruns with four (4) and Bill Byrd hit one (1) homerun during the season. In addition Josh Gibson batted .351 and had ten (10) runs batted in for the season.
- Latin stars Luis Aparico, Sr. and Pedro "Perucho" Cepeda also played for the Centauros in 1940.
- Other Negro League players who played in Venezuela in 1940 were Satchel Paige, Ray Dandridge, Leon Day, Barney Morris, Harry Williams, Dan Wilson, Juan "Tetelo" Vargas, Carlos Blanco, Silvio Garcia, Manuel "Cocaina" Garcia, Javier "Blue" Perez and Pelayo Chacon.

To date only one box score has been found for Bill Byrd playing in Venezuela in 1940. This was a "non-league" game played against Team Venezuela who played in the Campeonato de Baseball de Primera Division de 1940. Venezuela was an extremely strong team that featured Manuel "Cocaina" Garcia, Silvio Garcia and Javier "Blue" Perez. Byrd limited Venezuela to just five hits, one run and struck out four batters on his way to a 10-1 victory. Josh Gibson was the hitting star of the game with two homeruns.

BOX SCORE						
CENTAUROS (De Maracalbo)						
	Ab	C	H	O	A	E
Fausto Fuenmayor, cf	5	2	2	4	1	0
Antonio Fuenmayor, rf	4	2	2	0	0	0
Joshua Gibson, c	5	2	3	3	1	0
Pedro Cepeda, 2b	5	2	1	1	6	0
Billy Byrd, p	5	0	0	1	2	0
Roy Partlow, lf	5	0	0	1	2	0
José A. Casanova, 3b	0	2	0	1	0	0
Antonio Briñez, 1b	3	1	2	14	0	0
Luis Aparicio O., ss	5	1	1	3	1	0
Totales	42	10	14	27	12	0
VENEZUELA						
	Ab	C	H	O	A	E
J. "Huesito" Vargas, cf	4	0	0	1	1	0
Daniel Canónico, 3b, p	4	0	0	0	2	0
Javier Pérez, 2b	3	0	1	2	2	0
Silvio García, p, 3b	4	1	1	0	2	0
M. "Cocaina" García, lf, rf	3	0	1	3	0	1
Fernández, rf, lf	3	0	0	1	0	1
Manuel A. Malpica, c	3	0	1	10	0	0
Juan A. Requena, 1b	3	0	1	7	1	1
Francisco Istúriz, ss	3	0	0	3	2	0
Totales	30	1	5	27	10	3
Anotación por entradas:						
Centauros	000	103	330	10	14	0
Venezuela	000	010	000	1	5	3
Sumario:						
Home runs: Gibson (2).						
Three base hits: F. Fuenmayor, Aparicio.						
Two base hits: S. García.						
Hits a los pitcher: a Byrd 5 en 9 innings, a S. García 9 en 7; a Canónico 5 en 2.						
Struck outs: Byrd 4; S. García 8; Canónico 2.						
Bases por bolas: Byrd 2; S. García 2; Canónico 1.						
Bases robadas: F. Fuenmayor, Casanova.						
Carreras limpias: F. Fuenmayor (2), Gibson (2), Briñez, Aparicio, S. García.						
Empujadores: Gibson (5), F. Fuenmayor, Casanova, Aparicio, A. Fuenmayor, Malpica.						
Double plays: Byrd a Briñez.						
Pitcher ganador: Byrd.						
Pitcher perdedor: S. García.						
Quedados en base: Centauros 8; Venezuela 4.						
Umpires: Srs. Pacheco, Maury y Olivo.						
Tiempo del juego: 2 horas, 14 minutos.						
Anotador: Baby Chiqui.						
Caracas, 11 de mayo de 1940.						

When Bill Byrd returned to the United States after the season, he was interviewed by the Baltimore News American and asked why he had chosen to go to South America to play ball. Byrd's response was as follows:

"They treat you better down there. They pay your way down. Get you an apartment and pay you pretty well.....They roll out the red carpet for you."

According to Negro League baseball researcher John Holway, he has found a game that Bill Byrd pitched for the Baltimore Elite Giants in 1940. Holway says that Byrd won the game but gives no details of the date or team that Byrd pitched against. From this researcher's perspective this seems highly unlikely because it appears Bill went to Venezuela after finishing his season in Puerto Rico and it probably couldn't have been at the end of the season because all the players that jumped their Negro League teams in 1940 were banned by "league" officials.

In an interesting side note to the Baltimore Elite Giants 1940 Negro National League season was that the team also lost Tom Glover and Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright who also went south of the border to play ball for the season. Glover and Wright played ball in Mexico during the 1940 season.

Even without several of their star players (Bill Byrd, Tom Glover and Wild Bill Wright), the Baltimore Elite Giants still had a very good season in 1940. The Elite Giants finished the regular season with a record of 54-30 (.643) and finished the season in second place in the final “league” standings behind the Homestead Grays (42-13).

Byrd Returns to Puerto Rico

Before the start of the 1940-41 Puerto Rican Winter League season, the owners of the Caguas Criollos were determined to challenge for the “league” title. To achieve this goal, they signed Bill Byrd to anchor their pitching staff. The team also signed several other Negro League players (Roy Campanella, Buster Clarkson and Lennie Pearson). The Criollos also had Latin stars Luis Cabrera and Luis Olmo on their roster.

Byrd responded to the confidence that team owners had in him by leading the “league” in wins with 15 victories and a 2.38 ERA which was second best in the “league.”



Caguas Criollos
Puerto Rican Winter League

(Roy Campanella – back row fifth from right and Bill Byrd – back row fourth from right)

The final Puerto Rican Winter League standings for the 1940-41 season were as follows:

Team	Won-Loss Record	Pct.	Games Behind
Caguas Criollos	27-15	.643	-
Guayama Witches	24-18	.571	3
San Juan Senadores	22-20	.523	5
Santurce Cangrejeros	21-21	.500	6
Aguadilla Sharks	19-22	.463	7 ½
Humacao Grises	19-22	.463	7 ½
Ponce Leones	19-23	.452	8
Mayaguez Indios	16-26	.381	11

Caguas also won the Puerto Rican Winter League play-off series beating Santurce four games to three. The hero of the play-off series was Bill Byrd who on less than twenty-four (24) hours rest pitched the final game against Santurce. Caguas won the title game by a score of 6-2. Byrd had two wins in the play-offs.

For his outstanding play during the season and play-offs, Bill Byrd was selected to the Puerto Rican Winter League All-Star team.

Byrd Returns to Baltimore

After one season in South America and the winter in Puerto Rico, Bill Byrd returned to the United States with the intention of signing with the Baltimore Elite Giants for their 1941 Negro National League season. The major problem was that he was banned from the “league.” Fortunately, this issue would be resolved before the start of the season. In February of 1941 the Negro National League owners met in Chicago at the Grand Hotel to discuss the future of the players who were banned for jumping their teams to play in Latin America. After lengthy discussions the owners voted and they were at a stalemate with a 6-6 tie vote. The owners compromised by having the banned players pay a fine of \$100 to be reinstated. Byrd paid his fine and signed with Baltimore.



Baltimore Elite Giants (1941)
Negro National League

(Bill Byrd – back row third from left)

The Baltimore Elite Giants conducted their spring training for the 1941 season at Algiers Park in Algiers (LA) which was right across the river from New Orleans. During spring training, the Elite Giants played several games in New Orleans at Pelican Stadium.

The 1941 Baltimore Elite Giants were managed by Felton Snow and played their home games at both Bugle Field and Oriole Park.

During the season Felton Snow got both excellent hitting and pitching. Baltimore had the best hitting team in the “league” with a .275 team batting average and the second most effective pitching staff with a 3.43 ERA.

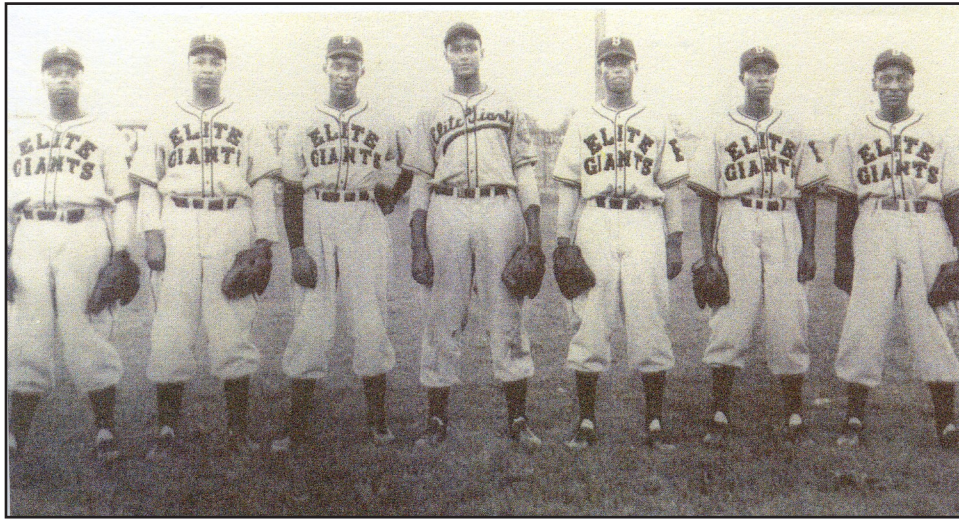
Bill Byrd made a spectacular return to baseball in the United States. In one of his first games back he was called on to pitch in a game against the Homestead Grays. When he entered the game there were two men on base with nobody out. Bill struck out the side. For the season, Bill Byrd posted an unbelievable 2.02 ERA and collected 8 wins in “league” games. Byrd (8-3) and Roy Williams (7-3) gave the Elite Giants a great one-two punch on the mound. Bill Byrd’s complete pitching statistics for the 1941 Negro National League season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1941	Baltimore	13	89.0	8	3	72	20	45	25	2.02

He also had 8 complete games with 2 shut outs in 11 starts. Negro League researcher and author John Holway credits Bill Byrd with a won-loss record of 15-5 (.750) for the 1941 season. Holway's record for Byrd includes both "league" and "non-league" games.

One of the highlights of the season for Bill Byrd came on July 14th in a game against the Memphis Red Sox at Bugle Field in Baltimore. In the third inning Bill struck out the side on nine consecutive pitches. He also had a no hitter through the eighth inning. Byrd won the game by a score of 3-2.

Other members of Felton Snow's Elite Giants' starting rotation during the season were Emery "Ace" Adams (5-3 w/ 2.87 ERA), Jonas Gaines (4-2 w/ 2.90 ERA) and Jesse Brown (2-2). Bill Barnes (2-3), Bob Griffith (2-1), Felton Snow (1-0) and Homer "Goose" Curry (0-1) also pitched for Baltimore during the season.



Baltimore Elite Giants Pitching Staff (1941)

(Left to right – Roy Williams, **Bill Byrd**, Jimmy Barnes, Robert Griffith, Jesse Barnes, Jonas Gaines and Ace Adams)

The top hitters for the Elite Giants in 1941 were Bill Hoskins (.367), Roy Campanella (.345), Charlie Biot (.305), Johnny Washington (.301) and George Scales (.282).

After a four year absence, Bill Byrd was selected to play in the 1941 East-West All Star game. The game was played on July 27th at Comiskey Park in Chicago. A tremendous crowd of 50,256 fans crowded in the stadium. Bill Byrd only pitched one inning and did not give up a run. The East won the game by a score of 8-3.

In early August of 1941 the Baltimore Elite Giants traveled to Detroit to play the Homestead Grays in a doubleheader at Briggs Stadium. According to an article that appeared in the Detroit Tribune the doubleheader drew a crowd of 27,949 which according to the newspaper was the second largest crowd ever to see two Negro League teams play during the regular season. In addition only the East-West All Star game attracted more fans.

Felton Snow led the Baltimore Elite Giants to an outstanding season in 1941. They finished the season in second place in the Negro National League with a record of 34-22 (.607). As good as Baltimore's record was, they still finished 8 ½ games behind the Homestead Grays (51-22-2) who walked away with the "league" title. According to the Seamheads research team, the Baltimore Elite Giants had an overall record of 40-24 (.625) against all levels of competition.

Byrd's Last Season in Puerto Rico

After Baltimore's regular season, Bill Byrd returned to Puerto Rico to play for Caguas for their 1941-42 winter league season. Joining Byrd on the Criollos roster were star players Roy Campanella, Sammy Cespedes who led the team in hitting with a .364 batting average, Luis Olmo and Lennie Pearson.

Bill Byrd was the ace of the pitching staff. He picked up 10 wins and registered 94 strikeouts for the winter season in Puerto Rico.

Caguas' performance during the season was very disappointing. They were the defending Puerto Rican Winter League champions and never really got on track during the season. They finished the regular season with a record of 21-23 (.477) and tied for fifth place with Santurce. Ponce won the "league" title with a very good won-loss record of 30-13 (.698).

For his performance during the winter season, Bill Byrd was selected to play for the North squad in the Puerto Rican All Star game double header. Also playing for the North team were Negro Leaguers Willard Brown, Roy Campanella, Ray Dandridge, Monte Irvin and Josh Gibson. Barney Brown and Leon Day played for the South team.

World War II Impacts the Negro Leagues

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and drew the United States into World War II. When the United States entered the War there was immediately a question as to how the military draft would impact team rosters in both Major/Minor League and Negro League baseball.

For Bill Byrd this would not be a problem because he was considered too old to serve in the military. Other Negro League players who were considered too old for the draft were Dave Barnhill, Eugene Bremer, Ray Dandridge, Josh Gibson, Walter "Buck" Leonard, Lester Lockett, Satchel Paige, Hilton Smith and Jim West.



Baltimore Elite Giants

(Left to right – Granville Lyons, Thomas "Pee Wee" Butts, Bill Hoskins, **Bill Byrd**, Charles Carter and **Sammy Hughes**.)

Bill Byrd Puts Up another Solid Season

The 1942 Baltimore Elite Giants were managed by Felton Snow and played their home games at Bugle Field in Baltimore.

Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright (.317), Bill Hoskins (314), Roy Campanella (.295) and Henry Kimbro (.276) led the team in hitting. Bill Byrd helped his pitching cause by hitting .339 for the season. From the fifty (50) box scores that have been found for the Elites 1942 season they compiled a mediocre team batting average of .258.

BASEBALL
TONIGHT at 8:30
MOOERS FIELD
ELITE GIANTS
of Baltimore
Winners of First Half Pennant
vs.
CUBAN STARS
of New York
Seats Reserved for White Patrons

Richmond Times Dispatch

Richmond, VA

07-17-42

During the season Baltimore suffered a devastating blow when Tom Wilson and Roy Campanella got into a bitter dispute over a \$ 250 fine that Wilson had levied against Roy. The dispute could not be resolved and Campanella left the Elite Giants to play the remainder of the 1942 season in Mexico for the Monterrey Sultanes. To make matters even worse, Campanella returned to Mexico in 1943 and this time took Thomas "Pee Wee" Butts who was the team's starting shortstop with him.

Defensively, the outfield of Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright, Henry Kimbro and Bill Hoskins was considered the best outfield in black baseball.

Fortunately for manager Felton Snow he had an excellent pitching staff in 1942. Bill Byrd was the ace of Baltimore's pitching staff with a 15-4 (.789) won-loss record, seven (7) complete games and 2.91 earned run average (ERA) in "league" games. He led the Negro National League in wins for the 1942 season.

Bill Byrd's complete pitching statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1942	Baltimore	19	99.0	15	4	87	32	53	23	2.91

The Elite Giants' pitching staff also included Tom Glover (5-3), Jonas Gaines (4-4 w/ a 2.35 ERA), Bill Harvey (4-3), Bill Barnes (3-2), Andy Porter (2-0 w/ 2.33 ERA), Emery "Ace" Adams (2-3) and Jesse Brown (1-2 w/ 2.53 ERA). The Baltimore Elite Giants had a team ERA of 3.70 which was the second best in the Negro National League in 1942.

Researchers disagree significantly on the Baltimore Elite Giants won-loss record for the 1942 season. The Seamheads research team credit Baltimore with a record of 36-26 (.581) and finishing the season in second place nine (9) games behind the Homestead Grays (47-19-3). Research by the team of Larry Lester and Dick Clark credits the Elite Giants with a record of 37-15 (.712). In addition Lester and Clark credit the Homestead Grays with a record of 26-17 (.607) and have the Grays winning both halves of the 1942 Negro National League season even

though it appears that the Baltimore Elite Giants had a better won-loss record. Finally, Negro League historian and researcher John Holway credits the 1942 Elite Giants with a record of 38-22 (.633) and in second place three games behind the Homestead Grays. All three research groups agree the Homestead Grays were the Negro National League champions in 1942.

In 1942 Baltimore's Bill Byrd (pitcher) and Henry Kimbro (outfielder) were selected to the roster of the East team for the East-West All Star game classic. The West squad destroyed their Eastern competition by a score of 9-2.



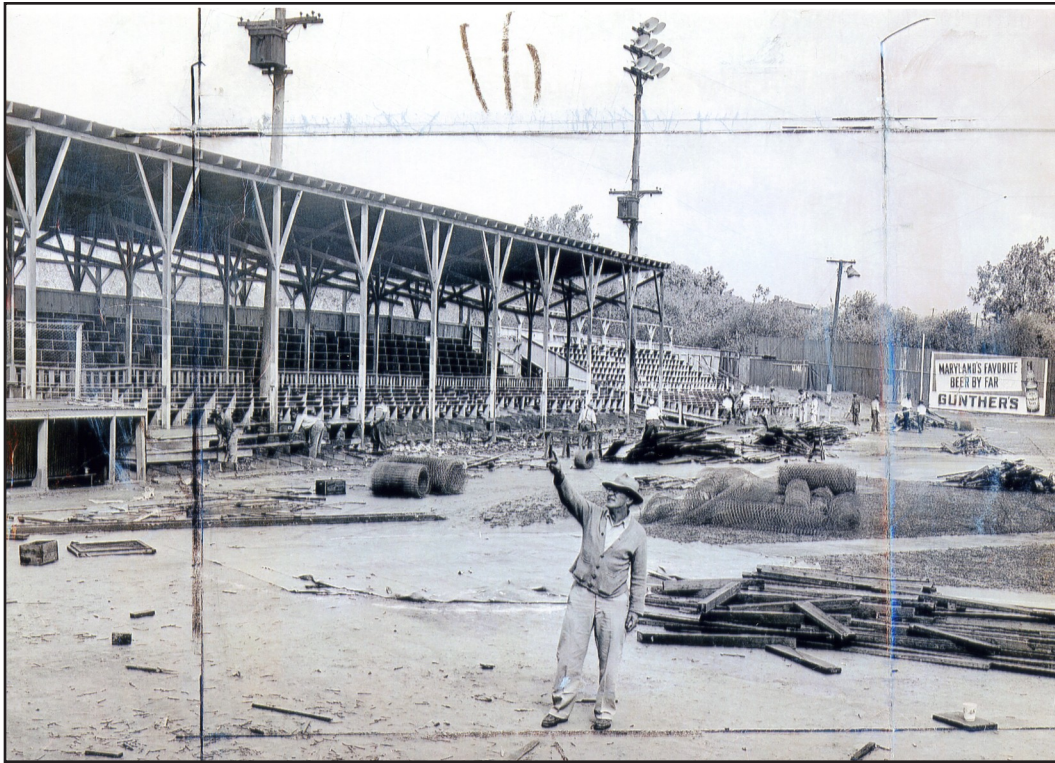
**East-West All Star Game (1942)
East Team**

(Left to right – George Scales, Jim West, **Walter “Buck” Leonard**, Felton Snow, Sam Bankhead, Johnny Wright, **Jud Wilson**, Henry Spearman, **Henry Kimbro**, Gene Benson, Jerry Benjamin, Pat Patterson, Barney Brown, **Bill Byrd**, Matt Carlisle, **Josh Gibson** and Robert Clarke.)

Bill Returns to the Elite Giants

Prior to spring training for the 1943 season, the Baltimore Elite Giants were faced with a tremendous amount of uncertainty for the upcoming season. Lured by high paying jobs in the defense industry, four Elite Giants players (Henry Kimbro, Bill Hoskins, Tom Glover and Bill Harvey) were considering not playing baseball and going to work for the Federal government in a defense plant. Fortunately all four decided to play baseball and reported for spring training.

Baltimore started the 1943 season with a new manager. George “Tubby” Scales replaced Felton Snow who had been the team's manager since 1939. For George Scales it would be a long and disappointing season. The Elite Giants played their home games at both Bugle Field and Oriole Park during the season.



Bugle Field
Baltimore, MD

George Scales didn't get hitting or pitching from his team during the 1943 season. The Elite Giants had a very disappointing .249 team batting average which was fifth in the "league" and the pitching staff had an uncharacteristic 5.11 team earned run average which was also fifth in the "league." It is important to note that there were only seven (7) teams in the Negro National League in 1943.

Baltimore's top hitters for the season were Bud Barbee (.293), Henry Kimbro (.284) and Bill Hoskins (.275). Bill Byrd also played a significant number of games in the outfield and hit a respectable .259 for the season.

Bill Byrd was the only bright spot on the team's pitching staff. Byrd went 11-5 (.688) with a 2.81 ERA. This was also the third season in a row that Bill Byrd had an earned run average (ERA) of under 3.00 for the season. His complete pitching statistics for the 1943 season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1943	Baltimore	20	141.0	11	5	137	44	95	36	2.81

In thirteen (13) starts in games against Negro National League opponents, Bill Byrd registered an amazing twelve (12) complete games. In addition, he had two games during the season in which he had eleven (11) strikeouts in each game.

Tom Glover (3-5 w/ 5.00 ERA), Bill Harvey (2-11 w/ 4.67 ERA), Andy Porter (2-3 w/ 6.17 ERA), Willie "Cowboy" Burns (1-3 w/ 8.12 ERA) and Ozzie Stewart (0-2 w/ 12.71 ERA) also pitched for Baltimore in 1943. Other players who pitched for the Elite Giants were Bud Barbee, Eddie Berry, Joe Black, Willie Burns, Charles Carter, Cowboy Murray, Eddie Perry and Ozzie Stewart. George Scales used at least fourteen (14) different pitchers during the season.

The Baltimore Elite Giants had a poor season in 1943. They finished the regular season with a dismal record of 18-26-3 (.409) and were in fifth place in the final “league” standings. They were 23 ½ games behind the Homestead Grays (53-14-1). If their “league” record wasn’t bad enough, the Elite Giants record was even worse in “non-league” games. According to the Seamheads research team they were 25-41-3 (.379) in games against all levels of competition.

In post season play the Baltimore Elite Giants played a seven game series at Bugle Field against the International All Stars. Baltimore took six of the seven games.

The Elite Giants also played a two game series with the Major-Minor League All Stars that featured Early Wynn and Mickey Vernon. The all-star team was put together by Washington Senators scout Joe Cambria. Bill Byrd and Early Wynn faced off in the first game. The game was a 1-1 pitchers duel until the sixth inning when the Major League All Stars scored nine runs and won the game by a score of 10-1. In a second box score has been found for the series the Major League All Stars also won this game. The Major-Minor Leaguers won the second game by a score of 4-1.

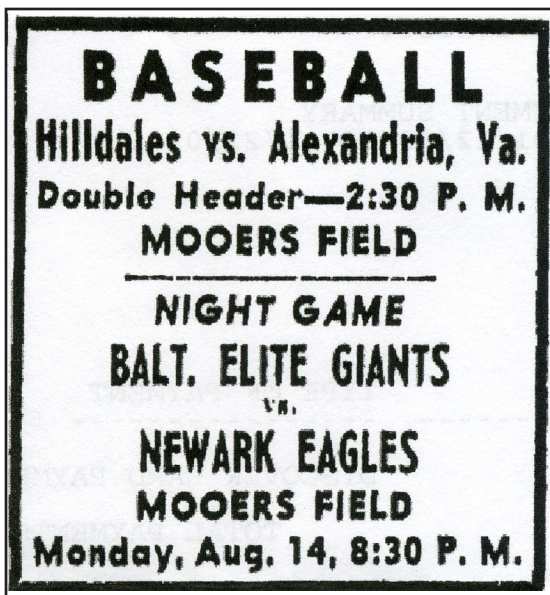
Byrd also pitched a game for the Southern All Stars after the regular season. The game was played on September 9th. Byrd pitched six shut out innings and came away with the victory.

During the 1943 season it has been documented that Bill Byrd also pitched briefly for the Philadelphia Stars (2 games), Chicago American Giants and the Homestead Grays. Details surrounding the circumstances as to why he played for these three teams are still unclear.

Byrd Suffers Through a Disappointing Season

After a very disappointing season by his team in 1943, Tom Wilson brought Felton Snow back as the team’s manager and that returned George “Tubby” Scales to the role of a full-time player. The Baltimore Elite Giants conducted their spring training in Hot Springs (AR). When spring training concluded, the Elite Giants barnstormed their way back to Baltimore for their Negro National League home opener. During the 1944 season Wilson’s Elite Giants continued to play their home games at Bugle Field in Baltimore.

The 1944 season started off on a positive note when Roy Campanella and Thomas Butts resolved their differences with Tom Wilson and returned to the Elite Giants. Hitters who contributed offensively for the Elite Giants in 1944 were Roy Campanella (.395), Bill Hoskins (.385), Henry Kimbro (.376), Bob Clarke (.321), Norman Robinson (.319) and Felton Snow (.298). The 1944 Baltimore Elite Giants had a very solid team batting average of .286 which was the third best in the “league” during the season.



Richmond Times Dispatch

Richmond, VA
08-13-44



Baltimore Elite Giants (1944)

(Standing left to right – **Roy Campanella**, Lester Lockett, Donald Troy, Tom Glover, Lamon Yokeley, Wesley “Doc” Dennis, Bill Hoskins and Andy Porter. Kneeling left to right – Unknown, Felton Snow, Bill Harvey, **Henry Kimbro**, Norman Robinson, **Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts**, Frank Russell and **George “Tubby” Scales**.)

Bill Byrd suffered through the 1944 season. He struggled both on the mound and in the batters box. For the first time in four years Byrd had an earned run average over three (3) runs a game. According to the Howe News Bureau who were the “official” statisticians for the Negro National League, Byrd had a won-loss record of 8-7 in 17 starts and registered two (2) shut outs. Control was not an issue because Bill registered 68 strikeouts and only gave up 11 walks in 108 innings.

Byrd also pitched one game for the Philadelphia Stars in 1944. He had a brilliant game for the Stars. Bill pitched a three hit shutout and went 2 for 3 with 2 runs batted in while picking up the victory.

Seventeen year old Donald Troy was the most effective pitcher on Felton Snow’s staff during the 1944 season. Troy went 5-2 (.714) with five (5) complete games in seven (7) starts. Felton Snow used at least eight (8) different starting pitchers during the season. Bill Byrd (8-7), Tom Glover (4-3), Bill Harvey (3-2), Andy Porter (3-1), Joe Black (3-3), Jonas Gaines (2-2), Tom “Tony” Walker (2-2) and Laymon Yokely (0-0) all pitched for the Baltimore Elite Giants during their 1944 Negro National League season. The Elite Giants pitching staff had a team earned run (ERA) of 4.06 for the season. This was the fourth best ERA in the Negro National League in 1944.

Even with what was for him a sub par won-loss record, Bill Byrd was selected to represent Baltimore in the 1944 East-West All Star game in Comiskey Park. There were 46,247 fans in attendance at the game. Byrd pitched two innings and did not give up a run. The West won the game by a score of 7 to 4.

Researchers disagree on the final won-loss records of the Baltimore Elite Giants during the season. According to the Seamheads research team, the Baltimore Elite Giants finished the 1944 Negro National League season with a won-loss record of 34-36 (.486) and were in fourth place in the final Negro National League standings. The Elite Giants were 12 ½ games behind the champion Homestead Grays who were 47-24-3 (.662). From box scores that have been found Baltimore had a record of 41-39 (.513) in games against all levels of competition. The research team of Larry Lester and Dick Clark credit Baltimore with a record of 27-21 (.563) and in second place in the final “league” standings. Both the Seamheads group and the team of Lester/Clark identify the Homestead Grays as the Negro National League champions.

Baltimore Has High Hopes for the 1945 Season

Tom Wilson entered the 1945 Negro National League season with high hopes. Felton Snow had met Wilson's expectations for the 1944 season and remained the manager of the team. After a successful spring training at Ponce de Leon Park in Atlanta (GA) and the return of Wild Bill Wright from Mexico, Snow had the Elite Giants playing very good team baseball starting the 1945 season.

Roy Campanella (.389), Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright (.363), Bill Hoskins (.307), Norman Robinson (.300) and Henry Kimbro (.291) led the Baltimore Elite Giants in hitting during the season. The Elite Giants had a team batting average of .279 for the Negro National League 1945 season. This was the second best team batting average in the "league" for the season.

Thirty-seven (37) year old veteran Bill Byrd was the ace of the pitching staff for the 1945 season. Byrd went 11-4 (.733) with a 2.52 ERA and twelve (12) complete games in fourteen (14) Negro National League starts. After struggling through the 1944 season, Bill Byrd regained his form in 1945 and put up brilliant pitching numbers during the season. This was one of his best seasons in his Negro League baseball career. His complete pitching statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1945	Baltimore	16	118.0	11	4	116	33	79	16	2.52

Unfortunately other than Andy Porter (7-3 w/ 3.38 ERA) none of the rest of the pitching staff delivered. The pitching staff for the 1945 Elite Giants also included William "Sack" Morgan (3-4), Bill Harvey (2-0), Tom Glover (2-2), Donald Troy (1-2), Archie Hinton (1-1), Roy Campanella (1-0), Joe Black (0-1), Frank Duncan III (0-1), Nate Moreland (0-1), Samuel Tarrant (0-1), Felton Snow (0-0) and Charley Walker (0-0). Baltimore's pitching staff had a team ERA of 4.74 for the season which ranked them fifth in the Negro National League.

Baltimore opened its season at Bugle Field on May 6th with a double header against the Philadelphia Stars. The hero of game one was Bill Byrd who hit a pinch hit homerun in the ninth inning to bring home a victory for the Elite Giants. Another highlight of the 1945 season for Bill Byrd was hitting a grand slam in the ninth inning with the score tied 2-2 to defeat the Philadelphia Stars once again. Bill's second homerun of the season against Philadelphia resulted in a 6-2 win for Baltimore.

In 1945 Bill Byrd was again selected to play in the East-West All Star game. The game was played at Comiskey Park in Chicago with 33,088 fans in attendance at the ball park. Bill entered the game in the ninth inning to bat for pitcher Roy Welmaker. Bill scored a run in the five run ninth inning for the East. Unfortunately the five runs were not enough as the East lost the game by a score of 9-6 in favor of the West.

— BUY WAR BONDS —

Byrd to Play Here Friday

Bill Byrd, former East High student, will return home Friday night as a star pitcher with the Baltimore Elite Giants, National Negro League team which meets the Homestead Grays in Red Bird stadium.

If he starts on the mound, Byrd will have his work cut out for him. The popular Grays are just as powerful as they have been in the nine years in which they've grabbed the Negro National League title.

Josh Gibson, "the Babe Ruth of Negro baseball," Buck Leonard, "Cool Papa" Bell, Stan Benjamin, Sammy Bankhead and all of the other Gray sluggers are still going great guns.

Game time Friday night will be 8:30 p. m.

The Seamheads research team credit, the Baltimore Elite Giants as finishing the 1945 Negro National League season in second place with a record of 32-30-2 (.516). They ended the season nine (9) games behind the “league” champion Homestead Grays (38-18-2). The research team of Larry Lester and Dick Clark identify that Baltimore had a won-loss record of 25-27 (.595) and were in second place behind the Homestead Grays (32-13).

After the regular season, Bill Byrd joined a barnstorming team that was billed as the “Negro Major League All Stars. The team was also called “Mackey’s All Stars.” Besides Byrd, the team also featured Frank Austin (2B), Roy Campanella (C), Johnny Davis (OF), Bob Harvey (OF), Monte Irvin (OF), Don Newcombe (P), Roy Partlow (P), Lennie Pearson (1B), Ed Stone, Dave “Showboat” Thomas (1B) and Willie Wells (SS). During their barnstorming tour they played a five (5) game series at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn (NY) against Dressen’s All Stars. Chuck Dressen’s team included Major League stars Ralph Branca, Tommy Holmes, Buddy Kerr, Eddie Stanky and Virgil Trucks. Dressen’s All Stars won three games (5-4, 10-2 and 3-1), Mackey’s All Stars won one game (2-1) and one game ended in a tie (0-0). The series was played from October 7th through October 14th.

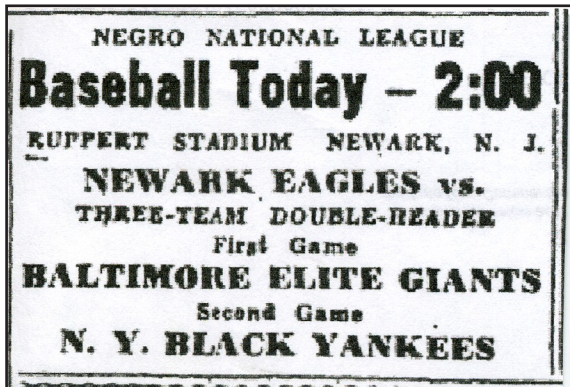
Elite Giants Have a Season of Ups and Downs

Felton Snow returned to manage the Baltimore Elite Giants in 1946.

The 1946 season was one of ups and downs. Many felt that the thirty-eight (38) year old Bill Byrd was at the end of his career and his performance on the mound did little to change the skeptics minds. On the positive, the hero of the 1946 season for the Baltimore Elite Giants was Henry Kimbro who ended up having the best season of his Negro League career in 1946. Kimbro had a .393 batting average with a .647 slugging percentage in Negro League games. His complete batting statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946	Baltimore	47	173	45	68	12	7	6	43	7	.393	.647

Norman Robinson (.342), Willie Wells (.325), Bill Hoskins (.310) and Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts also had very productive seasons in 1946. An interesting side note to the 1946 season was that a seventeen (17) year old James “Junior” Gilliam was on the Elite Giants roster. In a limited role Gilliam hit .304 for the season.



Newark Star-Ledger
Newark, NJ
06-16-46

Baltimore had a team batting average of .260 which was fourth in the Negro National League for the 1946 season.

With a string of lack luster outings, Bill Byrd seemed to fade from the Elite Giants spot light. Jonas Gaines became the ace of the pitching staff in 1946. Gaines had a record of 9-4 (.692) with a 3.43 ERA. Baltimore’s pitching staff during the season included Joe Black (5-10), Andy Porter (5-5), Bill Byrd (6-9), Bill Barnes (3-1), Tito Figueroa (3-2), Archie Hinton (1-0), Ernest Burke (1-0), Bill Harvey (0-1), Calvin Hadley (0-2) and Bob Romby (0-2). The Baltimore Elite Giants had the fourth most effective pitching staff in the “league” for the 1946 season with a 4.07 ERA.

In 1946 Bill Byrd and Henry Kimbro were selected to represent the Baltimore Elite Giants to play in both of the East-West All Star games that were held that year. The first game was played at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. on August 15th. Kimbro batted lead-off for the East and

went 1 for 2 with a walk and stolen base in the game. Bill Byrd pitched the East to a 6-3 win over Vibert Clarke and the West squad. Games played in cities other than Chicago had never drawn good crowds and this one was no exception. Unfortunately, the game at Griffith Stadium was a financial disaster because only 16,268 fans attended the game. The second East-West All Star game was played just three days later on August 18th. This time the game was returned to Comiskey Park and drew a crowd of 45,474 fans. Bill Byrd took the loss as the East went down by a score of 4 to 1.



East-West All Star Game (1946)
East team

(Standing left to right – Felton Snow, **Josh Gibson**, **Monte Irvin**, **Walter “Buck” Leonard**, **Raleigh “Biz” Mackey**, Pat Scantlebury, Lennie Pearson, **Larry Doby**, Fernando Pedroso, Silvio Garcia and Vic Harris.

Kneeling left to right – **Henry Kimbro**, Jonas Gaines, Murray Watkins, Bill Ricks, Gene Benson, **Leon Day**, Sam Bankhead and Howard Easterling. Bill Byrd not in photo)

The Baltimore Elite Giants finished the 1946 Negro National League season with a won-loss record of 39-36-3 (.520). According to the Seamheads research team, Baltimore ended the season in second place in the final Negro National League standings. Unfortunately they were 13 ½ games behind the Newark Eagles who won the “league” title with an amazing record of 50-20-2 (.714). Seamheads also credits the Elite Giants with a record of 43-36-3 (.544) in games against both “league” and “non-league” teams.

Research by the team of Larry Lester and Dick Clark report a significantly different won-loss record for the 1946 Baltimore Elite Giants. They have Baltimore with a 28-31 (.475) record and when the regular “league” season ended they were in fifth place. Lester and Clark do agree with Seamheads that the Newark Eagles won the “league” championship. According to the Lester and Clark research team the Newark Eagles had a record of 47-16 (.746).

Integration Comes to Major League Baseball

When Jackie Robinson signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers organization, players like Bill Byrd and Henry Kimbro were two of the many Negro League players who were considered to be too old to be viable candidates to be signed by “organized” baseball. Byrd and Kimbro’s decision was real easy – return to the Baltimore Elite Giants because they didn’t have any other real options.

Tom Wilson had been the driving force of the Elite Giants for over twenty-five (25) years. With his health declining Tom Wilson would not see the full impact and problems of the integration of “organized” baseball or the financial hard times it would bring to Negro League baseball. Shortly after the start of the season Tom Wilson passed away on May 17, 1947. Vernon “Fat Daddy” Green became the new owner of the team and took over the management and difficult task of running the franchise.

Before the start of the 1947 season, Felton Snow was replaced as the Elite Giants’ manager with Wesley Barrow. The first thing that Vernon Green did when he took over the team was to change managers. Out was Wesley Barrow who had gone 30-23-2 (.566) in his tenure with Baltimore and Green brought in George “Tubby” Scales who had managed the Elite Giants in the past. After only a few games Scales (3-3) was replaced with Felton Snow who had found success in the past with the Elite Giants. With Snow at the helm, Baltimore went 17-16-1 (.515) for the remainder of the 1947 Negro National League season.

Going into the 1947 season, the consensus of opinion was that the thirty-nine (39) year old Bill Byrd was finished as a professional baseball player. Like in the past, Bill Byrd would prove his critics wrong. Bill started fourteen (14) games for the Elite Giants in 1947 and went 8-5 (.615) with eleven (11) complete games and an impressive 2.61 ERA during the season. His complete pitching statistics for the season were:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1947	Baltimore	16	120.2	8	5	112	35	59	24	2.61

The Elite Giants had a very effective pitching staff in 1947. Baltimore had a team earned run average of 3.18 which was second best in the Negro National League. Even though Bill Byrd had an excellent season, Bob Romby was considered the best pitcher on the team during the season. Romby went 10-4 (.714) with a 2.43 ERA. Amos Watson (8-3 w/ 2.31 ERA), Joe Black (4-10 w/ 4.17 ERA) and Jonas Gaines (5-4) rounded out the starting rotation. Jose Pereira (2-1) and Ernest Burke (0-1) also pitched for the Elite Giants in 1947.

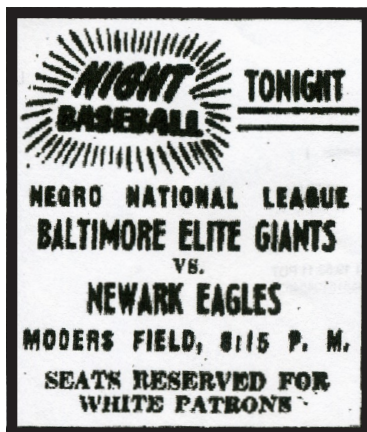
Henry Kimbro was the team’s best hitter and followed up his career best season in 1946 with another outstanding season in 1947. Henry hit .384 with a .624 slugging percentage. His complete batting statistics for the 1947 Negro National League season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947	Baltimore	63	242	81	93	24	5	8	52	11	.384	.624

The Seamheads research team considers Henry Kimbro as the best hitter in the Negro National League in 1947.

Other top hitters on the team during the 1947 season were Johnny Washington (.370), Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts (.352), Butch Davis (.336), Lester Lockett (.315) and Felix Guilbe (.292). For the 1947 Negro National League season, the Baltimore Elite Giants compiled an impressive team batting average of .287 which was the best team batting average in the Negro National League.

The Baltimore Elite Giants opened their 1947 Negro National League season on Saturday, May 31st with only 2,000 fans in attendance. Behind the hitting of Henry Kimbro who had two doubles and two homeruns, the Baltimore Elite Giants routed the Philadelphia Stars by a score of 20 to 4.



Richmond Times Dispatch

Richmond, VA
05-07-47

Despite all the problems of changes in managers and the death of owner Tom Wilson, the Baltimore Elite Giants had a fairly good season in 1947 against their Negro National League opponents. They ended the year with a record of 41-39-2 (.513) in “league” play. This left the Elite Giants in third place in the final Negro National League standings. In games against both “league” and “non-league” teams, the Elite Giants had a won-loss record of 50-42-3 (.543). The New York Cubans (43-19-1) were the Negro National League champions in 1947.

Byrd Returns to Baltimore

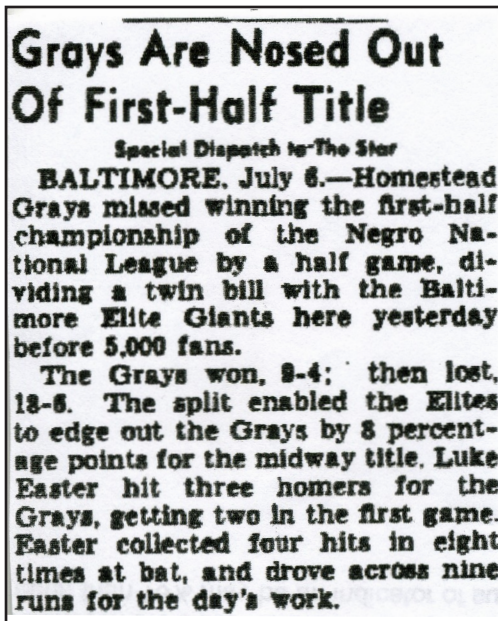
Over the off season between the 1947 and 1948 seasons, Vernon Green made two major changes in the management of the Elite Giants. First he turned over the day-to-day operational management of the team to Dick Powell. Then Green hired James “Candy Jim” Taylor to manage the Baltimore Elite Giants. Taylor who had been sick for some time was a no show for spring training because he had been hospitalized in Chicago. During spring training which was conducted in Nashville (TN), Green appointed Henry Kimbro as interim manager until Candy Jim joined the team. Unfortunately Taylor never left the hospital and passed away on April 3, 1948.

To take the place of Candy Jim Taylor, Vernon Green hired Jesse “Hoss” Walker to manage the Elite Giants.

During their 1948 Negro National League season, the Baltimore Elite Giants were led by the hitting of Lester Lockett (.370), Henry Kimbro (.314), Frank Russell (.312), Johnny Washington (.306), Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts (.302) and James “Junior” Gilliam (.287). Baltimore compiled a team batting average of .278 which led the Negro National League in 1948 and their .363 slugging percentage was second in the “league.”

Bill Byrd also had an excellent season at the plate in 1948. In 57 at bats, Bill collected 18 hits for a .316 batting average.

The Elite Giants also led the Negro National League in pitching in 1948 with a team earned run average of an amazing 2.47 ERA. Baltimore had an outstanding starting rotation in 1948 that was comprised of 40 year old veteran Bill Byrd (11-4 w/ 1.68 ERA), Joe Black (9-3 w/ 1.92 ERA), Jonas Gaines (7-3 w/ 2.92 ERA) and Bob Romby (5-3 w/ 1.59 ERA). Having three starting pitchers each with a season ERA under 2.00 was unheard of until Baltimore accomplished the feat in 1948. Ernest Burke (3-3), Al Wilmore (1-2), Toots Ferrell (1-0) and Clyde Sowell (0-2) also pitched for the Baltimore Elite Giants in 1948.



Baltimore Wins 1st Half Title
 Evening Star
 Washington, D.C.
 07-06-48

At the age of 40 Bill Byrd had one of the best seasons in his baseball career and had regained his position as the ace of the pitching staff. His complete pitching statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1948	Baltimore	17	123.1	11	4	104	23	88	24	1.68

Byrd also had a “league” leading 12 complete games in 13 starts.



Baltimore Elite Giants (1949)

(left to right – Henry Kimbro, Robert “Butch” Davis, Lester Lockett and Lennie Pearson)



Baltimore Elite Giants (1949)

(left to right – Henry Kimbro, **Bill Byrd**, Vic Harris and Jesse “Hoss” Walker)

Eagles' Nine Host To Baltimore Here

NEGRO NATIONAL LEAGUE Standing of Teams

Homestead Grays	14	4	.686	—
Baltimore	16	10	.615	—
Philadelphia	13	10	.565	1½
Newark	11	9	.550	2
N. Y. Cubans	8	12	.400	5
N. Y. Black Yanks	4	17	.190	9½

Tomorrow

Baltimore Elite Giants vs. Newark Eagles, Dunn Field, 8:15 p. m.

A victory tomorrow for the Baltimore Elite Giants over the Newark Eagles at Dunn Field, will move the Giants to within six points of first place in the torrid Negro National League race.

Trenton Evening Times

Trenton, NJ

06-15-48

With both excellent hitting and pitching the Baltimore Elite Giants had a very successful season in 1948. The team under the management of Hoss Walker the Elite Giants won the first half of the 1948 Negro National League season and faced the Homestead Grays (44-23-1) who were the winners of the second half of the season in a play-off series. Unfortunately for Walker his team ran out of luck in the play-offs. The Grays beat the Elite Giants in three straight games. The Baltimore Elite Giants compiled a won-loss record of 49-29 (.628) for the 1948 Negro National League season. The Seamheads research team credits the 1948 Baltimore Elite Giants with a record of 53-30-2 (.639) in all games played for the season.

Unfortunately, after the conclusion of the regular 1948 season, the Negro National League disbanded. This brought an end to a rich tradition in Negro League baseball that was started in 1920 when Andrew "Rube" Foster founded the "league."

Elite Giants Get a New Home

Going into the 1949 season the Baltimore Elite Giants were faced with a significant problem of finding a new home field because Bugle Field had just been demolished. Municipal Field which had been the home of the Baltimore Orioles of the International League was not an option because it had also been demolished over the winter. Memorial Stadium which held 19,000 fans took the place of Municipal Field as an option. The Baltimore Recreation and Parks Board were willing to rent the stadium to the Elite Giants but at an extremely high price. Richard Powell, owner of the Elite Giants, chose instead to lease Westport Stadium which was located in the Westport neighborhood of Baltimore. The only down side was that it only held 5,000 fans. The seating capacity of the stadium wasn't an issue for Powell because he knew he wouldn't be drawing crowds of over 5,000 for Elite Giants' games.

Bill Byrd returned to Baltimore to play the 1949 baseball season with the Elite Giants.

The Baltimore Elite Giants opened their Negro American League season on May 8th with a double header against the Indianapolis Clowns. Baltimore won both games by the scores of 6-3 and 5-0.

In the middle of the season Vernon Green passed away and the team's ownership passed to his wife Henryene. She immediately gave power of attorney to Richard Powell to run the team on a day-to-day basis.

Even though he was 42 years old, Bill Byrd was still very effective on the mound. According to the Howe News Bureau who were the "official" statisticians for the Negro National League, Bill compiled an excellent won-loss record of 12-3 (.800) with eleven (11) complete games during the season. His complete pitching statistics were:

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1949	Baltimore	25	144.0	12	3	145	67	73	53	-

Besides Byrd, the rest of the pitching staff for Baltimore performed extremely well the entire season. No one pitcher in the starting rotation dominated his team mates. They all pitched brilliantly. Hoss Walker used a five man starting rotation during the season that included Bob Romby (13-7), veteran Bill Byrd (12-3), Joe Black (11-7), Al Wilmore (10-7) and Leroy "Toots" Ferrell (8-2). In addition Hall of Fame member Leon Day (7-5) pitched and played in the outfield during the season.

The Baltimore Elite Giants had a very strong hitting team in 1949. They compiled a team batting average of .285 (909 for 3137) with a .401 slugging percentage both of which were the best in the Negro American League for the 1949 season. The starting line-up and their season batting averages in "league" games were as follows:

Baltimore Elite Giants (1949)

Position	Player	Avg.	Position	Player	Avg
1B	Clinton Mc Cord	.275	OF	Henry Kimbro	.360
2B	James Gilliam	.301	OF	Butch Davis	.366
SS	Thomas Butts	.264	OF	Lennie Pearson	.340
3B	Ed Finney	.308			
C	Henry "Frazier Robson	.257	P	Bob Romby	13-7
			P	Bill Byrd	12-3
			P	Joe Black	11-7



Baltimore Elite Giants (1949)

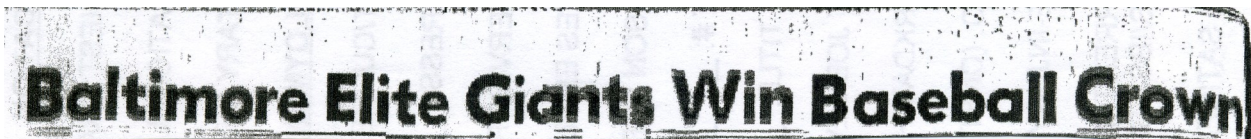
(Back row left to right – **Joe Black**, Luther Ferrell, Charles Davidson, Lennie Pearson, **Bill Byrd**, Al Wilmore, Bob Romby, Johnny Hayes, **James "Junior" Gilliam** and Jesse "Hoss" Walker. Seated left to right – Robert "Butch" Davis, Lester Lockett, Sylvester Rogers, **Henry Kimbro**, **Vic Harris**, Henry Bayliss, Frazier Robinson, Frank Russell, Thomas "Pee Wee" Butts and **Leon Day**)

Before the start of the 1949 Negro American League season several teams from the defunct Negro National League joined the Negro American League. In response to now having ten teams in the "league," the Negro American League was divided into two divisions. The Baltimore Elite Giants played in the Eastern Division of the Negro American League.

Negro American League (1949)

1949 (Eastern Division)	Games	Record	Pct.
Baltimore Elite Giants	89	59-30	.663
New York Cubans	46	26-20	.565
Indianapolis Clowns	81	37-44	.457
Philadelphia Stars	69	31-38	.449
Louisville Buckeyes	83	19-64	.229

1949 (Western Division)	Games	Record	Pct.
Kansas City Monarchs	91	54-37	.593
Chicago American Giants	83	48-35	.578
Birmingham Black Barons	84	45-39	.536
Houston Eagles	69	34-35	.493
Memphis Red Sox	89	39-50	.438



Detroit Tribune
Detroit, MI
10-01-49

The Baltimore Elite Giants easily won the Eastern Division of the 1950 Negro American League season. The Chicago American Giants were awarded the Western Division title when the Kansas City Monarchs were unable to defend their crown because several of the players were signed by Major League baseball. The Baltimore Elite Giants (Eastern Division champions) defeated the Chicago American Giants (Western Division champions) in a Play-Off Series.



Fort Worth Star Telegram
Fort Worth, TX
09-24-49

Bill Byrd's Obituary

Bill Byrd, Negro Leaguer, dies at 83 Baltimore pitcher trained big-leaguers

By **Bill Glauber**
THE BALTIMORE SUN

JANUARY 7, 1991

Bill Byrd was a pitcher who threw spitballs and a pioneer who helped pave the way for the integration of baseball.

Others were more charismatic, and brought greater talent to the game, but Byrd was a seemingly indestructible master who became the symbol of the Baltimore Elite **Giants** during a Negro League career that spanned two decades.

Byrd, who died Friday at the age of 83 at the Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, was the fourth-winningest pitcher in Negro League history, with a 114-72 record. But he also will be remembered as a teacher of future major-leaguers Roy Campanella, Jim Gilliam and Joe Black.

"I had a gift," Byrd said in an interview last year. "That's about all there was to it."

Byrd, who was born July 15, 1907, in Canton, Ga., learned to hit and pitch by breaking off tree branches and swinging at small rocks in the woods near his home. He began to play organized baseball with the Columbus (Ohio) Travelers and eventually won a job in 1933 with the Columbus Blue Birds of the Negro **National League**. After several stops, the franchise eventually moved to Baltimore and was renamed the Elite Giants in 1935.

Byrd's gift was his spitball, a legal pitch which he learned in 1934 after spending a few minutes on the sidelines with a veteran named Roosevelt Davis.

"A lot of pitchers tried it," Byrd said. "But few could control it. I saw a bunch of guys throw the ball into the stands. I prided myself on pitching the spitter. I'd always think about the catcher. I always kept it where the catcher could handle it. I didn't believe in bouncing the ball into the dirt."

Despite suffering an arm injury early in his career, the right-handed Byrd rarely missed a start, playing during the summer in Baltimore and spending parts of three winters pitching in Puerto Rico, where he was nicknamed "El Maestro."

"In Puerto Rico, it wasn't black, white or gray," he said. "It was just baseball."

Byrd, who was called "Daddy" by his Baltimore teammates, made his greatest contribution to Negro League history by teaching his professional craft to future major-league stars. Campanella, an eventual Hall of Famer who played with the Brooklyn Dodgers, began his baseball career as a teen-ager with the Elite Giants. Campanella often has credited Byrd with showing him how to play and act like a big-league ballplayer. But a major-league career eluded Byrd, who retired after his 17th season with the Elite Giants in 1949.

"Bill was born 20 years too soon," his wife, Hazel, once said. "If the break had come in his prime, he could have made it. The only one out of his prime to make it in the majors was Satchel Paige. And no one knew how old he was."

Monte Irvin, a Hall of Famer who played in the Negro Leagues and the major leagues, once said: "Byrd was a master. There is no doubt that Bill Byrd would have been a star in the major leagues."

Byrd worked 20 years as a raw-stock expeditor for General Electric in Philadelphia. In recent years, he received publicity as researchers began publishing Negro League history. Byrd was to be honored at an old-timers' game in Baltimore in April 1990, but was unable to attend because of health problems.

In addition to his wife, Byrd is survived by four children, 18 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. A viewing will be held Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon with services following at the Bruce R. Hawkins Funeral Home, 6828 Old York Road, Philadelphia.

Bill Byrd's Final Season in the Negro Leagues

The Baltimore Elite Giants held their spring training for their 1950 season in Charlotte (NC) and Bill Byrd was there to try to win a spot on the pitching staff. One newspaper article has been found for Bill Byrd pitching for the Elite Giants in spring training. According to the News and Observer of Raleigh (NC), Bill Byrd and Joe Coleman teamed up to defeat the Raleigh Tigers by a score of 6-3 with Bill getting credit for the win. Even though he was 43 years old, he was very confident based on his pitching performance during the 1949 Negro American League season. When spring training camp broke, Bill Byrd headed north with the team.

Team owner Richard Powell faced several challenges at the start of the season. The first was finding a manager to replace Hoss Walker who left the Elite Giants to become the owner-manager of the Nashville Black Vols. Powell's choice for the Elites' manager job was Lennie Pearson. The second issue for Powell to tackle was replacing James Gilliam and Toots Ferrell whose contracts he had sold to the Chicago Cubs. Gilliam and Ferrell reported to Chicago's Minor League camp in Haines City (FL) but were released after only three weeks. An additional challenge for Powell was finances.

According to statistics from the Howe News Bureau, Bill Byrd only played in one game during the regular season and he pitched two innings before he was released along with Leon Day two months into the season. Powell's rationale for releasing the pair was their age and the dollar amount of their contracts.

The Baltimore Elite Giants finished the 1950 Negro American League season with a record of 24-20-1 (.545.). They ended the season in second place in the Eastern Division behind the Indianapolis Clowns (47-38-2).

Life After the Negro Leagues

After leaving the Elite Giants Bill Byrd went to work for the General Electric Company in Philadelphia as a raw-stock expeditor. He worked for General Electric for twenty years until his retirement in 1970. Bill also played semi-professional baseball in the Philadelphia area for several years after his retirement from professional baseball.

Passing of a Legend

William Byrd passed away on January 4, 1991 in Philadelphia, PA at the age of 83. Byrd had been battling cancer and had been admitted to Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He was survived by his wife Hazel, a son (Ronald), three daughters (Sylvia Johnson, Dr. Ruth McArtis and Barbara Rooths), 18 grandchildren and 17 great grandchildren.

His services were held at the Bruce R. Hawkins Funeral Home at 6828 York Road in Philadelphia.

After his death Byrd's wife Hazel was quoted as follows:

“Bill was born 20 years too soon. If the break had come in his prime, he could have made it. The only one out of his prime to make it in the majors was Satchel Paige. And no one knew how old he was.”

Former Negro Leaguer, Major Leaguer and National Baseball Hall of Fame member, Monte Irvin, had the following to say about Bill Byrd:

“Byrd was a master. There was no doubt that Bill Byrd would have been a star in the Major Leagues.”

**Baltimore Elite Giants (1949)
Championship Teammates**



Jesse "Hoss" Walker (Manager), Frazier Robinson, Johnny Hayes and Vic Harris (Coach)



**Baltimore Elite Giants – Pitching Staff
(Joe Black Leroy Ferrell, Bill Byrd, Charles Davidson, Al Wilmore, Bob Romby, Sylvester Rodgers and Leon Day)**

Playing Career

Regular Season:

Year	Team	League
1932	Columbus Turfs	Negro Southern League
1933	Columbus Blue Birds	Negro National League
1934	Cleveland Red Sox	Negro National League
1935	Detroit Elite Giants	Negro National League
1935	Columbus Elite Giants	Negro National League
1936-1937	Washington Elite Giants	Negro National League
1938-1939	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League
1940	Centaurus de Maracaibo	Venezuelan League
1940-1943	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League
1943	Chicago American Giants	Negro American League
1943	Homestead Grays	Negro National League
1943-1944	Philadelphia Stars	Negro National League
1944-1948	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League
1949-1950	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro American League

Winter Leagues and Post Season:

1939	Baltimore Elite Giants	Jacob Ruppert Memorial Cup Tournament
1939	Baltimore Elite Giants	Double Header vs Major League All Stars
1939-40	Santurce Cangrejeros	Puerto Rican Winter League
1940-41	Caguas Criollos	Puerto Rican Winter League
1940-41	Caguas Criollos	Puerto Rican Winter League Play-Offs
1941-42	Caguas Criollos	Puerto Rican Winter League
1942	Baltimore Elite Giants	Post Season Play
1943	Baltimore Elite Giants	Seven Game Series vs International All Stars
1943	Baltimore Elite Giants	Two Game Series vs Major & Minor League All Stars
1943	South All Stars	Post Season Play
1945	Biz Mackey's All Stars	Five Game Series vs Dressen's All Stars
1945	Negro Major League All Stars	Barnstorming Career
1948	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League Play-Off Series vs Homestead
1949	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro American League Play-Off Series vs Chicago



Baltimore Elite Giants

vs

Homestead Grays

Negro National League

Trenton Evening Times

Trenton, NJ

06-15-48

Career Statistics – Pitching (Negro Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1933	Columbus	13	95.0	3	8	104	45	33	12	4.26
1934	Cleveland	11	58.2	3	8	89	45	24	15	6.90
1935	Columbus	4	33.0	2	2	35	18	13	1	4.91
1936	Washington	17	99.0	9	4	106	36	43	24	3.27
1937	Washington	8	66.2	5	1	65	28	17	11	3.81
1938	Baltimore	11	96.0	9	2	91	33	18	6	3.09
1939	Baltimore	17	111.2	10	3	126	39	42	24	3.14
1941	Baltimore	13	89.0	8	3	72	20	45	25	2.02
1942	Baltimore	19	99.0	15	4	87	32	53	23	2.91
1943	Baltimore	20	141.0	11	5	137	44	95	36	2.81
1944	Baltimore	17	108.0	8	7	97	-	68	11	-
1944	Philadelphia	1	7.0	1	0	3	0	7	2	0.00
1945	Baltimore	16	118.0	11	4	116	33	79	16	2.52
1946	Baltimore	17	82.0	6	9	93	43	43	15	4.72
1947	Baltimore	16	120.2	8	5	112	35	59	24	2.61
1948	Baltimore	20	124.0	11	4	104	23	88	24	1.68
1949	Baltimore	25	144.0	12	3	145	56	57	30	3.50
1950	Baltimore	1	2.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		246	1594.2	132	72	1582	530	784	299	3.21

(Note – In calculating lifetime ERA, innings pitched in 1944 & 1950 are not calculated in total because there are no runs reported.)

Career Statistics – Pitching (Play-Off Games)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1939	Baltimore	3	27	2	1	23	-	6	0	-
1949	Baltimore	1	4	-	-	-	0	3	0	0.00
Total		4	31	2	1	23	0	9	0	-

Career Statistics – Pitching (East-West All Star Games)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1936	Washington	1	3.00	0	0	4	0	4	1	0.00
1939	Baltimore	2	6.00	1	0	6	1	2	2	-
1941	Baltimore	1	1.00	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.00
1944	Baltimore	1	2.00	0	0	3	0	0	0	0.00
1946	Baltimore	2	4.00	1	1	5	3	4	3	-
Total		7	16.00	2	1	19	4	10	6	2.25

Career Statistics – Pitching (Exhibition Games)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1943	South All Stars	1	6.0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0.00

Career Statistics – Pitching (Non-League Games)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1933	Columbus	-	-	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
1934	Cleveland	-	-	1	0	-	-	-	-	-
1936	Washington	-	-	11	3	-	-	-	-	-
1937	Washington	-	-	6	3	-	-	-	-	-
1938	Baltimore	-	-	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
1939	Baltimore	-	-	8	2	-	-	-	-	-
1941	Baltimore	-	-	7	3	-	-	-	-	-
1942	Baltimore	-	-	5	3	-	-	-	-	-
1944	Baltimore	-	-	6	1	-	-	-	-	-
1947	Baltimore	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
1948	Baltimore	-	-	1	0	-	-	-	-	-
1950	Baltimore	-	-	1	0	-	-	-	-	-
Total		-	-	51	16	-	-	-	-	-

Career Statistics – Pitching (Puerto Rico)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1939-40	Santurce	-	229	15	10	-	-	158	-	1.97
1940-41	Caguas	-	200	15	-	53	-	-	-	2.38
1941-42	Caguas	-	-	10	-	-	-	94	-	-
	Total	-	593	40	24	-	-	377	-	2.17

Career Statistics – Pitching (Puerto Rico – Play-Offs)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1940-41	Caguas	-	-	2	0	-	-	-	-	-

Career Statistics – Pitching (Venezuela)

Year	Team	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
1940	Maracaibo	-	-	1	0	-	-	-	-	-

Career Statistics – Pitching (Career Totals)

	Games	Innings	Won	Lost	Hits	Runs	SO	BB	ERA
Negro League	246	1594.2	132	72	1582	530	784	299	3.21
Play-Off Games	4	31.0	2	1	23	0	9	0	-
East-West All Star Games	7	16.0	2	1	19	4	10	6	2.25
Exhibition	1	6.0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0.00
Non-League	-	-	51	13	-	-	-	-	-
Puerto Rico	-	593.0	40	24	-	-	377	-	2.17
Puerto Rico Play-Offs	-	-	2	0	-	-	-	-	-
Venezuela	-	-	1	0	-	-	-	-	-
Total	258	2240.2	231	114	1627	534	1181	235	-

Pitching and League Leader Titles

Category	Year	League	Number
Games	1936	Negro National League	17
Wins	1936	Negro National League	9-4
	1940-41	Puerto Rican Winter League	15-?
	1942	Negro National League	15-4
	1945	Negro National League	11-5
	1948	Negro National League	11-6
	1949	Negro American League	12-3
Complete Games	1939	Negro National League	10
	1948	Negro National League	12
Earned Run Average	1941	Negro National League	2.02
	1948	Negro American League	1.68



Baltimore Elite Giants (1945)

(Back row left to right – Andy Porter, Tom Glover, Bill Hoskins, James Dudley, Harry Williams, Duncan, **Bill Byrd**, Wesley “Doc” Dennis and Don Troy. Front row left to right – **Roy Campanella**, Robert Clarke, Tom Walker, Norman Robinson, **Henry Kimbro**, Archie Hinton and Felton Snow)



Baltimore Elite Giants (1949)

(Left to right – Ed Finney, **Henry Kimbro**, Johnny Hayes, **Leon Day**, Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts, **Vic Harris**, Clinton “Butch” McCord, **James “Junior” Gilliam**, Bob Romby, Frazier Robinson, Al Wilmore, Jesse “Hoss” Walker, Robert “Butch” Davis, Lennie Pearson, Leroy “Toots” Ferrell and **Joe Black**)

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Negro Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1933	Columbus	17	51	3	6	1	0	1	5	0	.118	.196
1934	Cleveland	19	51	9	19	3	1	0	5	2	.373	.471
1935	Columbus	15	30	6	11	0	0	2	8	0	.367	.567
1936	Washington	23	56	9	18	3	2	0	10	0	.321	.446
1937	Washington	23	43	9	14	1	1	2	6	0	.326	.535
1938	Baltimore	20	55	8	13	3	0	1	9	0	.236	.345
1939	Baltimore	15	36	9	14	3	0	4	14	0	.389	.806
1941	Baltimore	19	44	8	14	1	1	1	8	0	.318	.455
1942	Baltimore	29	59	10	20	1	2	0	9	0	.339	.424
1943	Baltimore	38	112	18	29	6	1	2	17	2	.259	.384
1944	Baltimore	23	50	2	7	2	0	0	3	0	.140	.180
1944	Philadelphia	1	3	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	.667	1.333
1945	Baltimore	23	53	7	10	0	2	1	9	0	.189	.321
1946	Baltimore	22	54	4	13	4	0	0	4	0	.241	.315
1947	Baltimore	22	48	7	12	2	0	1	5	0	.250	.354
1948	Baltimore	30	63	10	20	3	0	0	11	0	.317	.365
1949	Baltimore	32	59	10	13	1	0	0	5	0	.220	.237
Total		371	867	131	235	36	10	15	130	4	.271	

Career Statistics – Hitting (Negro League – Play-Off Series)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1939	Baltimore	2	6	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	.500	-
1949	Baltimore	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	1.000	4.000
Total		3	7	1	4	-	-	1	2	-	.571	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (East-West All Star Games)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1945	East	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Venezuela)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1940	Centauros	13	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Career Totals)

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Negro League	371	867	131	235	36	10	15	130	4	.271	.388
Play-Offs	3	7	1	4	-	-	1	2	-	.571	-
East-West All Star Games	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
Venezuela	13	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Total	3881	875	135	239	-	-	17	132	-	.273	-

Assessing Bill Byrd's Career

- Negro League researchers disagree with Bill Byrd's career pitching statistics but all agree **he was one of the best pitchers of his day**. The following chart identifies the won-loss records of Bill Byrd for his Negro League career as presented by seven leading Negro League research groups.

	CNLBR	Lester & Clark	Seamheads	Baseball Reference	John Holway	James Riley	Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia
1932	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1933	3-8	2-6	3-8	2-6	5-6	-	3-6
1934	3-8	3-10	2-8	3-10	3-11	-	1-6
1935	2-2	2-2	1-3	2-2	2-3	-	2-3
1936	9-4	7-6	9-4	6-5	10-5	20-7	8-4
1937	5-1	5-2	2-2	5-1	9-6	5-3	5-5
1938	9-2	9-2	7-2	6-1	9-2	6-3	6-3
1939	10-3	7-4	9-3	6-3	15-4	9-4	9-4
1940	1-0	-	-	-	-	-	-
1941	8-3	8-4	8-3	8-4	15-6	10-2	7-6
1942	15-4	9-3	10-3	9-3	15-6	9-4	15-4
1943	11-5	10-5	10-5	9-5	9-6	8-7	9-5
1944	9-7	4-4	4-5	4-4	8-7	10-6	10-7
1945	11-4	6-3	11-3	5-3	7-4	-	6-3
1946	6-9	5-8	5-8	5-7	4-7	-	3-7
1947	8-5	2-3	8-5	2-2	9-6	9-6	9-6
1948	11-4	4-2	11-4	-	11-6	11-6	11-6
1949	12-3	-	-	-	12-3	12-3	12-3
1950	0-0	-	-	-	-	-	0-0
Career Won-Loss Record	132-72 (.647)	83-64 (.565)	103-69 (.599)	103-75 (.579)	144-88 (.621)	109-51 (.681)	116-78 (.598)

(It is important to note that the Center for Negro League Baseball Research only includes "league" games in their won-loss totals for Bill Byrd in this chart. The records presented by John Holway include both "league" and "non-league" games.)

In addition according to Negro League author Bob Luke who wrote a book covering the history of the Baltimore Elite Giants, Bill Byrd had a won-loss record of 114-72 (.613). The online website of the Baseball Think Factory credits Byrd with a 133-84 record.

- Baseball statisticians have developed a sabermetric baseball statistic called "Wins Above Replacement (WAR)" to value a player's contributions to his team. When the Seamheads research team compiled the WAR statistics for Negro League pitchers, Bill Byrd was **ranked third on the all-time list of Negro League pitchers**. The top Negro League pitchers based on their WAR ranking are as follows: Raymond Brown (37.9), Satchel Paige (34.0), Bill Byrd (27.7), Hilton Smith (24.3), Bill Holland (19.3) and Leon Day (16.5).
- Bill Byrd was an **extremely versatile ball player**. He was known throughout his career as a dominant starting pitcher but also played in the outfield where he more than held his own defensively and offensively. In addition he was often used as a pinch hitter.

According to research by the Seamheads research team, during his Negro League career Bill Byrd played 24 games in right field, 20 games in left field, 12 games in center field, 2 games at first base, 2 games at third base and was called on as a pinch hitter in 34 games.

- As a pitcher Bill Byrd had **excellent control**. Current research credits Byrd with 784 strikeouts and only 299 bases on ball during his Negro League career. This means that Bill registered 2.62 strikeouts for every walk that he gave up.

- For a pitcher Bill was a **very good hitter**. Current research by the Center for Negro League Baseball Research (CNLBR) has identified that Bill Byrd had a .271 (235 for 867) batting average in 371 Negro League games.

Negro League researchers disagree on Bill Byrd’s career batting average but all agree that he was a very good hitter for a pitcher. The following chart presents Bill Byrd’s career hitting research by four leading Negro League researchers.

	CNLBR	Lester & Clark	Seamheads	Baseball Reference
At Bats	867	576	774	595
Hits	235	160	203	158
Career Batting Average	.271	.278	.262	.266

(CNLBR stands for the Center for Negro League Baseball Research (CNLBR). Lester and Clark stands for the research team of Larry Lester and Dick Clark. Both the CNLBR and Lester/Clark statistics only include “league” games.)

According to research by the Center for Negro League Research (CNLBR) Bill Byrd hit over .300 in eight (8) of his sixteen (16) seasons for which they had data.

- Bill Byrd was selected to **numerous all-star teams** during his career. Some of these all-star teams include the following:

Year	Team	League
1936	Washington Elite Giants	Negro National League
1939	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League
1940-41	Caguas Criollos	Puerto Rican Winter League
1941	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League
1941-42	Caguas Criollos	Puerto Rican Winter League
1944	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League
1945	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League
1946	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League

- Byrd **played on several championship teams** during his career. Some of these were as follows:

Year	Team	League
1936	Washington Elite Giants	Negro National League (2 nd half of Season)
1939	Baltimore Elite Giants	Jacob Ruppert Memorial Cup Tournament
1940-41	Caguas Criollos	Puerto Rican Winter League (regular season)
1940-41	Caguas Criollos	Puerto Rican Winter League (play-off series)
1948	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro National League (1 st half of season)
1949	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro American League (Western Division)
1949	Baltimore Elite Giants	Negro American League (play-off series)

- Bill Byrd played professional baseball for nineteen (19) seasons from 1932-1950. The **longevity of his baseball career** is very impressive.
- Byrd was known to have been an **excellent mentor to young ball players**. One of those players was a young catcher by the name of Roy Campanella who would go from the Baltimore Elite Giants to the Brooklyn Dodgers of the National League. Reportedly, Campanella called Bill Byrd - “Daddy.” During an interview long after his playing days Bill Byrd made the following comment about mentoring young players.

“We didn’t have coaches in those days. The young fellows needed help. It was up to us older fellows to teach them how to play.”

Some of the top players Bill Byrd taught his professional skills to on their way to Major League baseball were Joe Black, Roy Campanella and James “Junior” Gilliam.



Bill Byrd and Seward Posey

(1945)

Selected Career Highlights

- During his Negro League career, Bill Byrd posted a won-loss record of 132-72 (.647) in Negro League games and went 231-114 (.670) in games against all levels of competition. Byrd is considered the fourth winningest pitcher in the history of Negro League baseball.
- Byrd helped lead the Washington Elite Giants to the title for second half of the season of the Negro National League in 1936.
- He was a member of the 1939 Baltimore Elite Giants team that won the 1939 Jacob Ruppert Memorial Cup Tournament.
- Bill Byrd was selected to play in eight (8) East-West All Star games (1936, 1939 – two games, 1941, 1944, 1945 and 1946 - two games).
- During his 1939-40 season in Puerto Rico, Bill Byrd completed 24 of 26 games started, collected 15 wins and finished the season with an impressive 1.97 ERA.
- Bill Byrd led the Caguas Cirollos to the regular 1940-41 Puerto Rican Winter League title and then pitched them to the play-off series championship. Byrd had 15 wins to lead the “league” in wins for the regular season and then picked up two (2) more wins in the play-offs.
- He led the Negro National League in wins on five (5) different occasions. These were in 1936 with a 9-4 record, 1942 with a 15-4 record, 1945 with a 11-5 record, 1948 with an 11-4 record and 1949 with a 12-3 record.
- At forty-one (41) years of age Bill Byrd had one of the best seasons of his career in 1948. Byrd went 11-4 in “league” games with an amazing 1.68 ERA. Bill had 88 strikeouts and only gave up 24 bases-on-balls. He also helped lead the Baltimore Elite Giants to the first half title for the 1948 Negro National League season.
- In 1949 Byrd who was now forty-two (42) years old posted an amazing won-loss record of 12-3 (.800) with eleven (11) complete games for Baltimore against their Negro American League opponents.
- In 1948 Bill Byrd was considered the best pitcher in the Negro National League and in 1949 he was considered the best pitcher in the Negro American League.
- In 1952 the Pittsburgh Courier newspaper conducted a poll to identify the greatest Negro League players of all-time. Bill Byrd was selected to the third team along with players like Rap Dixon, Fats Jenkins, Bill Holland, Dick Lundy, Louis Santop and Jud Wilson.
- In 2006 the National Baseball Hall of Fame considered inducting several former Negro League players to the Hall of Fame. From a list of ninety-four (94) former Negro League players a list of thirty-nine (39) players was submitted for consideration. Bill Byrd’s name was on that list. Unfortunately he did not get enough votes to be elected.
- As a star in the Negro Leagues from 1932 to 1950, Bill Byrd helped pave the way for the integration of Major League baseball and served as a mentor for several future Major League stars. He is truly a “Forgotten Hero.”

Baltimore Elite Giants
Negro American League
Champions
1949

During his eighteen (18) year Negro League career, Bill Byrd spent fifteen (15) seasons with the Elite Giants. In 1949 he helped lead the Baltimore Elite Giants to a Negro American League championship title.



Baltimore Elite Giants
Negro American League Champions
1949

(Back row left to right – **Joe Black**, Leroy “Toots” Ferrell, Charles Davidson, Lennie Pearson, **Bill Byrd**, Al Wilmore, Bob Romby, Johnny Hayes, **James “Junior” Gilliam** and Jesse “Hoss” Walker. Seated left to right – Butch Davis, Lester Lockett, Sylvester Rogers, **Henry Kimbro**, **Vic Harris**, Henry Bayliss, Frazier Robinson, Frank Russell, Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts and **Leon Day**.)