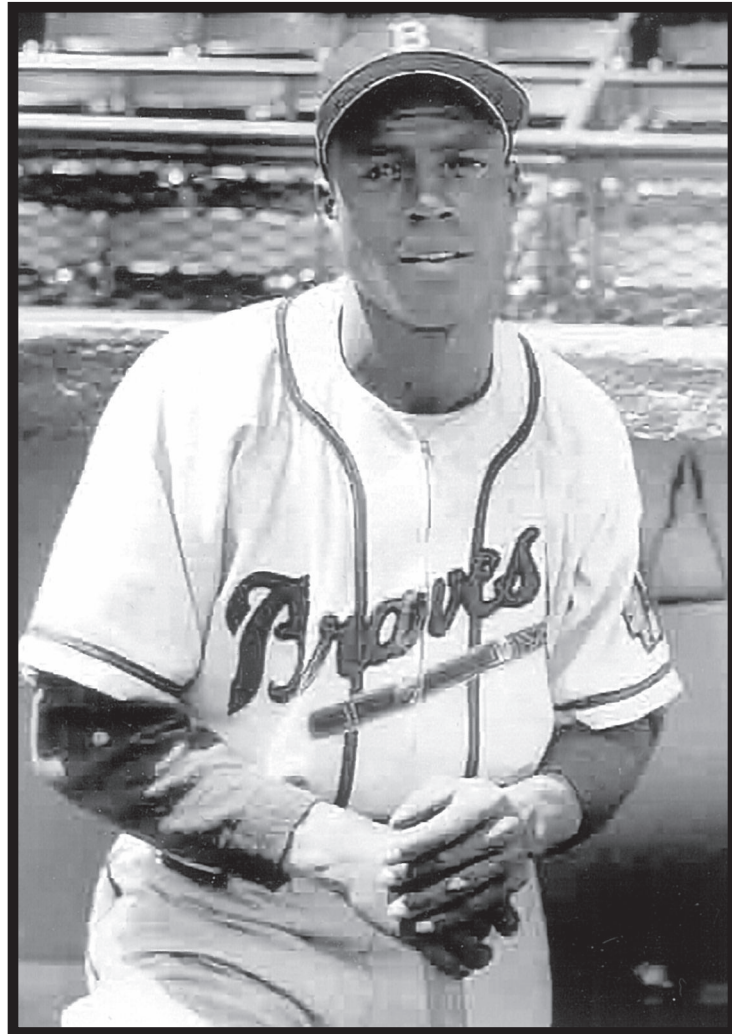


Forgotten Heroes:

Sam “The Jet” Jethroe



by

Center for Negro League Baseball Research

Dr. Layton Revel

Sam Jethroe Integrates the Boston Braves

On April 18, 1950 Sam “The Jet” Jethroe integrated the Boston Braves of the National League.

As the team’s starting centerfielder and lead-off hitter, he had an excellent season for his rookie year in the Major Leagues.

Not only did he lead the National League in stolen bases in 1950 with 35 steals but he was also named the National League Rookie of the Year. He also led the National League in stolen bases during his second season in the National League.

In his first two seasons in the Major Leagues, Sam “The Jet” Jethroe put up the following impressive statistics:

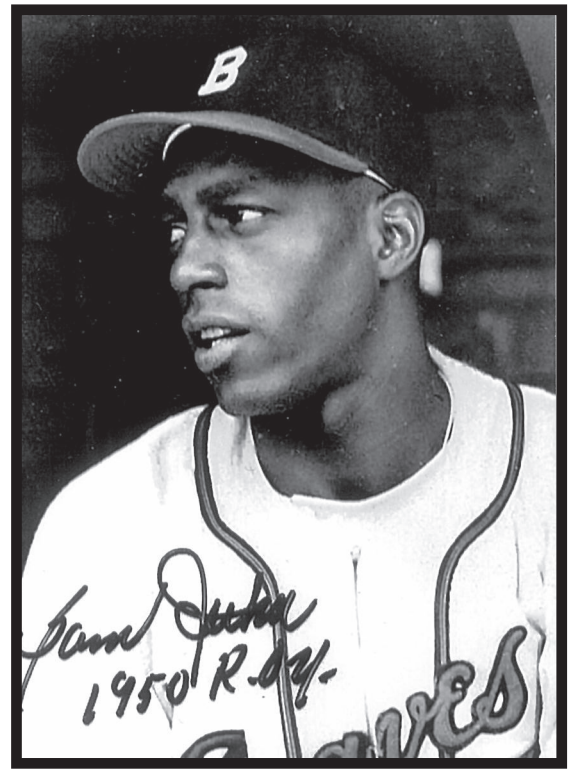
Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1950	Boston	141	582	100	159	28	8	18	58	35	.273	.442
1951	Boston	148	572	101	160	29	10	18	65	35	.280	.460



Sam “The Jet” Jethroe
Dresses Out for His First Game with the Boston Braves

Samuel “The Jet” Jethroe was born in East St. Louis (IL) on January 20, 1917 to Albert “Chip” and Jannie Jethroe. His father was a farmer and his mother was employed as a “sheller” in a nut factory. His mother also worked as a domestic. Some researchers list Sam’s year of birth as 1922 or 1923 and his place of birth as Lowndes County, Mississippi. According to an interview that Dr. Revel had with Sam Jethroe, he identified his “real” birth day as January 20, 1917 and his place of birth as East St. Louis. Sam should be the best person to know when and where he was born. In addition the Social Security Death Index lists his birthplace as East St. Louis and the 1930 United States Census lists Sam as 13 years old which would make his year of birth 1917.

The difference in his reported dates of birth stems from the fact that when he started playing professional baseball, Sam Jethroe shaved off several years to make him look younger to team owners. It looks like Jethroe shaved off at least five years of his real age. In actuality he was born in 1917 and his fictional “base age” had him born in 1922. His age really wasn’t a consideration when he joined the Boston Braves. Boston’s manager Billy Southworth’s position was very simple - “I don’t care if he’s 50, just as long as he can do the job.”



Sam Jethroe
Boston Braves
1950-1952

During his career he was an outfielder who threw right handed and was a switch hitter at the plate. Sam stood 6 feet 1 inch tall and weighed 178 pounds during his playing days. He was primarily a centerfielder because of his speed and range. Sam was a very good hitter who got on base with a high degree of regularity. However, Jethroe’s claim to fame was his blazing speed. Sam “The Jet” Jethroe was considered the fastest baseball player “black” or “white” of his day.

Sam Jethroe played baseball in the Negro Leagues during 1938 and from 1942-1948. He entered “organized” baseball in 1948. After playing with the Montreal Royals in 1948 and 1949, Sam made his Major League debut in 1950. He played for the Boston Braves from 1950-1952 and then briefly appeared for the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1954. He finished his career in the Minor Leagues, playing primarily with the Toronto Maple Leafs of the International League from 1955 to 1958.

Early Baseball Career

Growing up in East St. Louis, his neighbor was future Major League star Hank Bauer and they played baseball together almost every day. Sam Jethroe honed his baseball skills on the sandlots of East St. Louis, Illinois. According to Negro League author James Riley, Sam’s father taught him to play baseball. Sam attended Lincoln High School in East St. Louis where he was a standout athlete. In high school he starred in football, basketball and boxing. During his amateur career he played for both the East St. Louis Colts and St. Louis Giants.

Jethroe also appeared briefly for the Indianapolis ABCs in 1938. According to research by Paul Debono for his book The Indianapolis ABCs, Sam caught and played in the outfield for the ABCs. The Indianapolis ABCs played in the Negro American League during the 1938 season. The team was managed by George Mitchell. Marshall Riddle (2B), Neal Robinson (OF), Ted Strong (1B) and Quincy Troupe (C) led the team in hitting. The pitching staff for Indianapolis included Walter Calhoun, Frank “Chip” Mc Callister, Ted Alexander and Ossie Brown. According to research by Larry Lester and Dick Clark, the Indianapolis ABC’s had a disappointing record of 14-19 (.174) in Negro American League games. Currently, only one box score has been found for Sam Jethroe playing with the 1938 Indianapolis ABCs. In this game, he

caught and went 1 for 3 at the plate. According to Jethroe he played a few games with the ABCs but returned home because of the health of his mother. Sam took care of his mother until she passed away on New Years eve of 1941. Her passing made him more inclined to pursue a full time career in professional baseball.

After his brief stint with the Indianapolis ABCs in 1938, he returned to East St. Louis where continued to play for the East St. Louis Colts and St. Louis Giants. The culmination to his semi-professional career in East St. Louis was being named to the 1941 St. Louis Municipal League All Star team.

Impact of World War II on Negro League Baseball

World War II had a significant impact on professional baseball in the United States. The “white” Major Leagues lost a significant number of star players to the war effort. Fortunately, the Negro Leagues were not hit nearly as hard by the loss of players to the war effort as “white organized” baseball.

Many star Negro League players were considered too old for military service. This group included Dave Barnhill, Eugene Bremer, Bill Byrd, Ray Dandridge, Josh Gibson, Lester Lockett, Walter “Buck” Leonard, Satchel Paige, Hilton Smith and Jim West.

Sam Jethroe was very fortunate because he received a physical deferment which exempted him from military service. Some of the other Negro League star players who also received physical deferments from serving in the military were Roy Campanella, Johnny Davis, Lorenzo “Piper” Davis, Verdell “Lefty” Mathis, Booker Mc Daniels, Lennie Pearson, Bonnie Serrell, Artie Wilson and Burnis “Wild Bill” Wright.

In addition the Latin players like Francisco “Pancho” Coimbre and Juan “Tetelo” Vargas who played in the Negro Leagues were not impacted by the United States war effort.

Negro League Career

Before the start of the 1942 baseball season, Sam Jethroe was signed by the Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes who were playing their first season in the Negro American League. The Buckeyes were owned by Ernie Wright who also owned the Pope Hotel in Erie (PA). The Buckeyes divided their home games between Cincinnati (Crosley Park) and Cleveland during the 1942 season. Most of their home games were played in Cleveland (OH) at League Park II. The Buckeyes also played several home games in Meadville (PA) and other surrounding cities.

After spring training in New Orleans (LA), the Buckeyes returned north to start their inaugural Negro American League season. The management team for the 1942 Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes included Ernest Wright (President), Wilbur Hayes (Business Manager), DeHart Hubbard (Club Secretary) and Walter Burch (Manager).

Walter Burch started off the season as the team’s manager but after going 13-9-1 (.591), he was replaced in June by Parnell Woods who finished out the season with a 32-31 (.508) record against top level competition.



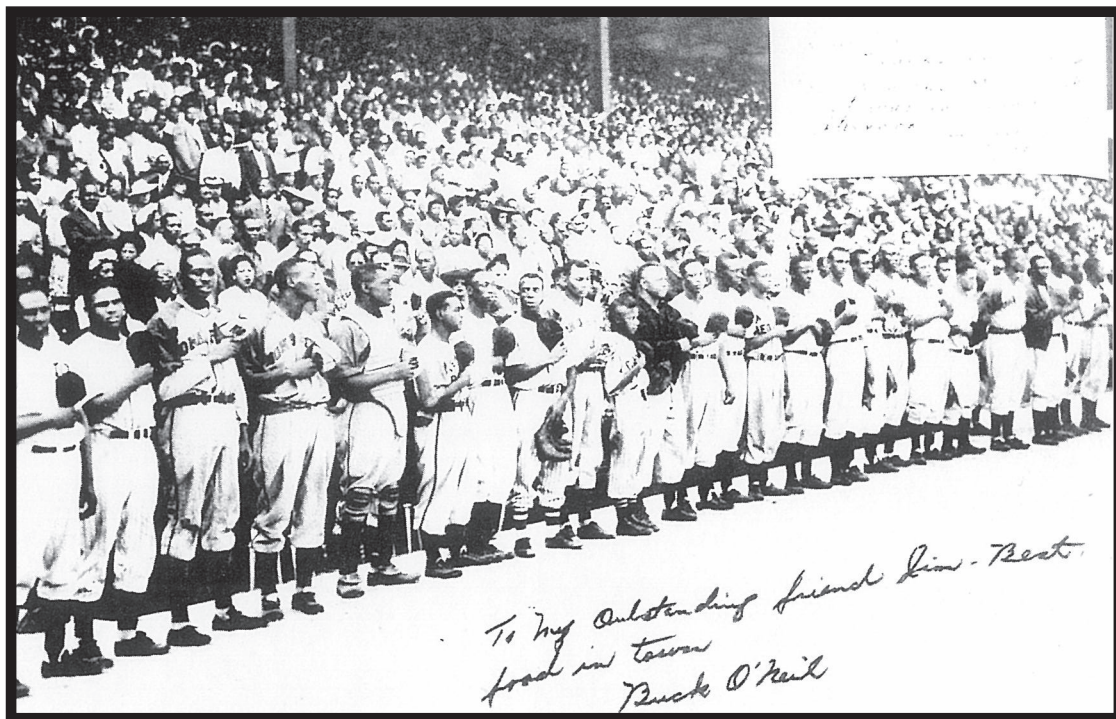
Sam Jethroe
Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes

Parnell Woods (.344), Sam Jethroe (.305) and Billy Horne (.300) were the leading hitters for the Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes. Jethroe's complete statistics in 1942 "league" games were:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1942	Cleveland	31	118	19	36	10	1	1	18	7	.305	.432

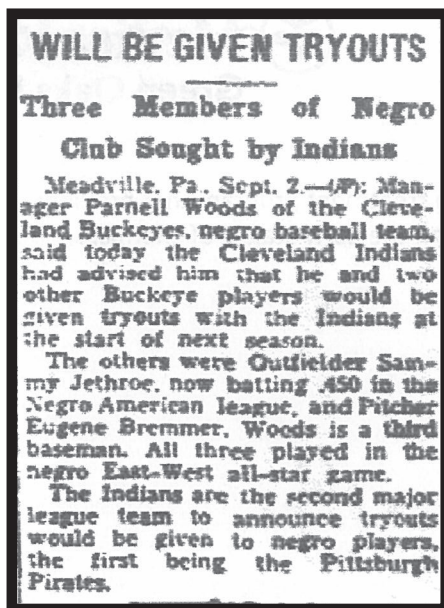
There is a significant discrepancy in Jethroe's batting average for the season. According to a newspaper article that appeared in the Plain Dealer of Cleveland (OH) on July 5th, Jethroe was leading the team in hitting with a .400 batting average. On September 3rd the Charleston News and Courier of Charleston (SC) reported that Sam Jethroe was batting .450. It is important to note that newspaper stories aren't always based on "real" or confirmed statistics. The statistics presented above are from actual box scores from "official" Negro American League games. Regardless of which source is used to identify Sam's batting average for the season, there is no question that Sam Jethroe had a very good season in his first season in the Negro American League. He was considered one of the best outfielders in the "league" for the 1942 season.

The Buckeyes' pitching staff and their records in "league" games were Eugene Bremer (6-2), Willie Jefferson (4-1), Raymond "Smokey" Owens (2-2), Alonzo Boone (2-1) Ray Robinson (1-1), Sug Cornelius (0-2) and Bob Boone (0-3). These won-loss records are considered incomplete. Bremer is credited with an 11-2 (.846) record in games against all levels of competition and Jefferson went 9-3 (.750).



East-West All Star Game (1942)

(Left to right – W.S. Welch, Art Pennington, **Satchel Paige**, Buck O'Neil, Joe Greene, T.J. Brown, Paul Hardy, Joe Scott, Hilton Smith, Bat Boy, Ted Radcliffe, Verdell "Lefty" Mathis, Fred Bankhead, Porter Moss, Fred McDaniel, **Sam Jethroe**, Ted Strong, Parnell Woods, Ducky Davenport, Willard "Homerun" Brown, Gene Bremer, unknown and Marlin Carter.)



Charleston News and Courier

Charleston, SC
09-03-42

One of the biggest games of the year for the Cleveland Buckeyes occurred in early August against the All Nations team. The game was played on Cleveland's Amateur Day. Approximately 13,000 fans showed up to see their Buckeyes beat the visitors by a score of 9-0. Sam went 1 for 3 with a double, stolen base and one run scored in this non-league game.

During the 1942 season the Cleveland newspaper the Call and Post continually pressured the Cleveland Indians of the American League to give Cleveland Buckeyes players Eugene Bremer, Sam Jethroe and Parnell Woods a tryout. To placate the newspaper and Buckeyes, Alva Bradley (owner of the Cleveland Indians) agreed to "scout" (whatever that meant) these three players at the 1942 East-West All Star game. Bremer, Jethroe and Woods never got a real tryout and the Indians never gave the indication that they had any interest in signing any of the three players.

In August of 1942 Sam Jethroe was selected to play for the West squad in both East-West All Star games. When all the ballots were in, Sam finished third in the voting (104,728) just ahead of fourth place finisher James "Cool Papa" Bell who garnered 99,203 votes. Willard "Home Run" Brown (133,572) and Ted Strong (120,997) were the top two vote getters. The first East-West All Star game was played on August 16th at Comiskey Park in Chicago (IL). There were 45,179 fans in attendance to see the East take a 5-2 victory. Sam Bankhead and Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright led the way for the East with each player driving in two runs. Sam appeared in the game as a pinch hitter for Porter Moss. Jethroe failed to get on base. When the game was concluded each player received a mere \$ 50 for the game. This was a sad pay day especially for a sell out crowd of over 45,000 people.



Comiskey Park
Chicago, IL

Game two of the East-West All Star classic was played on August 18th in Cleveland (OH) at Municipal Stadium. A disappointing crowd of only 10,791 fans turned out for the classic. Sam Jethroe started game two as the team's center fielder. He batted lead-off and went 1 for 5 with one run scored. The East dominated their West opponent and won the game by a score of 9 to 2.

TWO BALL PLAYERS KILLED; FOUR INJURED

PITCHER AND CATCHER DIE IN COLLISION

**Buckeye's Major League
Prospect Among Those
Seriously Injured**

THE DEAD

Buster Brown, catcher
Raymond Owens, pitcher

THE INJURED

Eugene Bremmer, pitcher
Lefty Watts, pitcher
Alonso Boone, pitcher
Wilbur Hayes, manager

GENEVA, Ohio — Buster Brown, catcher, and Raymond Owens, pitcher, both members of the Buckeyes baseball team of Cincinnati, were almost instantly killed on a highway near here when a truck crashed into the back of their automobile at 3 o'clock on Labor Day morning.

Four other members of the same club were seriously injured in the crash. The injured, who were rushed to the hospital are Eugene Bremmer, pitcher; Lefty Watts, pitcher; Alonso Boone, pitcher, and Wilbur Hayes, general manager of the club.

Gene Smith (New York Black Yankees) got the win and Gene Bremer (Cleveland Buckeyes) took the loss in the East-West classic. The game was played as a benefit fund raiser for the Army-Navy Relief Fund which collected \$ 9,499.04 for the game.

Tragedy struck the Buckeyes in September of 1942 when their bus broke down on the side of the road near Geneva (OH). The team was on its way back to Cleveland after just playing the New York Black Yankees in Buffalo (NY). The accident occurred around 3:00 am on Labor Day morning. With several players standing on the side of the road by the bus, a truck ran into them killing Raymond "Smokey" Owens and Ulysses "Buster" Brown. Buckeyes' star pitcher Eugene Bremer was also hit and suffered a concussion and fractured skull. Other Buckeyes personnel who were injured in the accident and taken to the hospital were Herman "Lefty" Watts (pitcher – dislocated hip), Alonso Boone (pitcher – multiple lacerations to face and body) and Wilbur Hayes (business manager – injured hip and multiple lacerations).

According to newspaper reports, the Buckeyes had concluded their regular season schedule and were on a post season barnstorming tour. The day after the tragedy the team played a game in Akron and then followed that up with a game in Meadsville (PA).

The Chicago Defender

Chicago, IL
09-12-42

The Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes ended their regular season on September 16th when they played the New York Cubans in Indianapolis, Indiana.

According to an article that appeared in the Chicago Defender on September 19th the Cincinnati Buckeyes had played 43 games during the first half of the season and won 35 while losing only 8 games. From actual box scores that have been found, the Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes finished the season with a 45-40-1 (.529) won-loss record in games against all levels of competition for the 1942 season. The Buckeyes were considered one of the top teams in the Negro American League in 1942. The Kansas City Monarchs were considered the "league" champion.

After the season Sam worked for team owner Ernie Wright tending bar at the Pope Hotel. Over the years Jethroe also worked for the General Electric Company in the off season when he wasn't playing baseball.



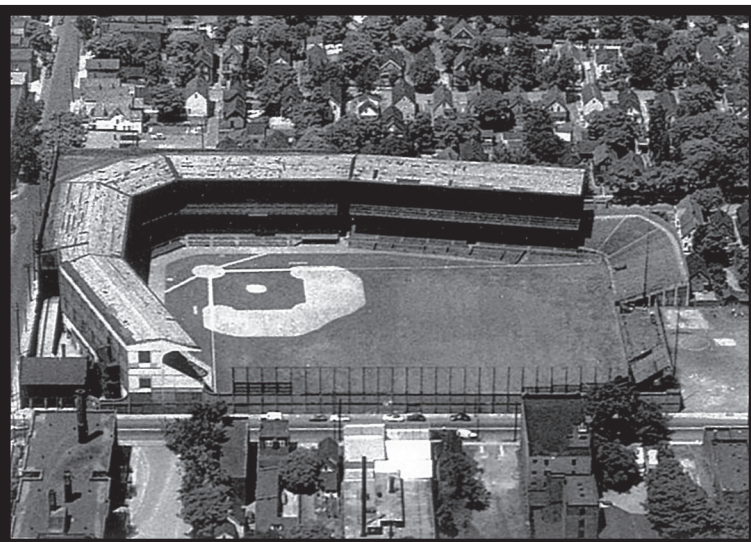
Cleveland Buckeyes Bus

Negro League Players are Lost to War Effort

Before the start and during the 1943 Negro League season, numerous Negro League stars were lost to military service. The Kansas City Monarchs and Newark Eagles were two of the toughest teams hit. Willard “Homerun” Brown, Joe Greene, Connie Johnson, Buck O’Neil and Ted Strong were lost by Kansas City. The Newark Eagles lost Leon Day, Larry Doby, Monte Irvin and Max Manning. Some of the other Negro League players who went into the military were Lyman Bostock, Sammy Hughes, Dick Seay and Hank Thompson. Sam Jethroe’s deferment kept him out of the military.

Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes Move to Cleveland

Before the start of the 1943 season the management of the Buckeyes decided to concentrate their efforts in Cleveland with League Park as their home field. Parnell Woods was retained by team management as the club’s manager for the season.



League Park
Cleveland, OH

The Cleveland Buckeyes were led by the hitting of Parnell Woods (.323), Sam Jethroe (.310), Archie Ware (.273) and John Hundley (.271) during the 1943 season. Jethroe's hitting statistics for the season were as follows:

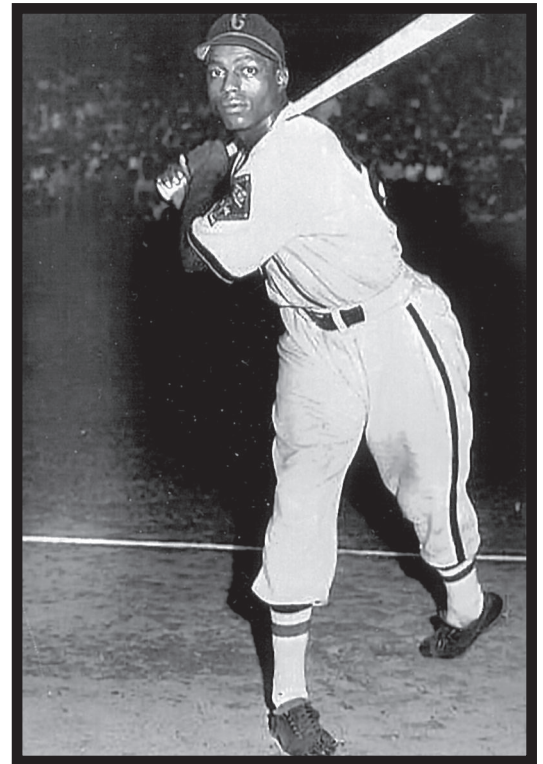
Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1943	Cleveland	36	142	28	44	12	4	1	14	5	.310	.472

According to Negro League researcher John Holway, Sam Jethroe led the Negro American League in doubles with eight (8) and triples with four (4).

Eugene Bremer (10-3) was the ace of the pitching staff. Theolic "Fireball" Smith (8-6), Willie Jefferson (4-7) and Alonzo Boone (2-3) rounded out the starting rotation for Cleveland. Sam Barber, Chet Brewer, Ross "Satchel" Davis, Napoleon Gulley, Lovell Harden, Johnny Johnson and Willie McCarey also pitched for the Cleveland Buckeyes during the 1943 season.

The Cleveland Buckeyes opened their Negro American League season on May 2nd against the St. Louis Stars.

One of the Cleveland Buckeyes biggest games of the season occurred on September 8th in Buffalo (NY) when they played Honus Wagner's All Stars which featured the pitching of Dizzy Dean. In the game Sam proved he could hit Major League pitching when he connected off Dean for a grand slam homerun. Cleveland took the game by a score of 16 to 2.



Sam "The Jet" Jethroe

Buckeye Star Slams
4-Run Homer Off Diz
BUFFALO, Sept. 8—Second Base-
man Sam Jethroe of the Cleveland
Buckeyes slammed a four-run
homer off Dizzy Dean as the Sixth
City squad routed Honus Wagner's
All Stars, 16 to 2, here tonight.
The Buckeyes return home for a
Sunday game with the Cincinnati
Cardinals at League Park.

Plain Dealer
 Cleveland, OH
 09-08-43

In games against all levels of competition the Cleveland Buckeyes finished the season on a winning note with a 46-33-2 (.582) record. Most resources credit Cleveland with finishing the regular Negro American League season with a record of 25-20 (.556). The Seamheads research team, however, credits the 1943 Cleveland Buckeyes with a record of 37-21-1 (.638). Research by Larry Lester, Dick Clark and John Holway all agree that the Birmingham Black Barons won the Negro American League title with a record of 20-14 (.588) and the Memphis Red Sox were in second place with a 15-11 (.577) record.

Jethroe Return to the Buckeyes

Sam Jethroe returned to the Cleveland Buckeyes for the 1944 Negro American League season.

According to the Howe News Bureau which kept and recorded Negro League statistics, Sam Jethroe's hitting statistics for the season were:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1944	Cleveland	68	275	55	97	14	2	2	-	18	.353	.440

Buckeyes Have Good Hitter in Jethroe

The big reason the Cleveland Buckeyes remained in the Negro American League championship race all season was Sam Jethroe.

This husky outfielder, who comes to Red Bird Stadium Tuesday night when the Buckeyes meet the Homestead Grays, has set the batting pace for the league all year. It's currently .365 and still going up.

Columbus Dispatch

Columbus, OH

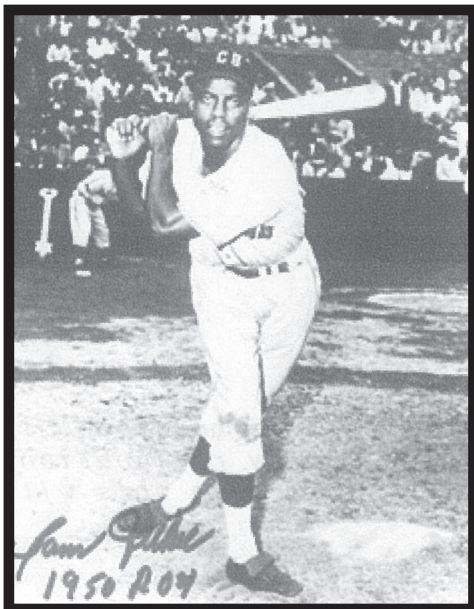
09-11-44

Jethroe won the 1944 Negro American League batting crown with a .353 batting average for the 1944 season. He also led the "league" in hits (97), total bases (121), runs scored (55), doubles (14) and in stolen bases (18). Amazingly, Sam Jethroe led the Negro American League in six (6) offensive categories in 1944.

Other top hitters for the Buckeyes in 1944 were Parnell Woods (.329), Buddy Armour (.299), and Archie Ware (.267). The Cleveland Buckeyes led the Negro American League in hitting with a .271 team batting average and in fielding with a .958 fielding percentage.

Manager Parnell Woods' starting rotation for the 1944 season were Eugene Bremer (10-6), George Jefferson (9-6), Willie Jefferson (6-11) and Lovell Harden (5-3). John Brown (2-5), John Britton and Willie Grace also pitched for Cleveland in 1944.

In August of 1944 Sam Jethroe was selected to represent the Cleveland Buckeyes in the East-West All Star game. The game was played on August 13th at Comiskey Park in Chicago. As in years past the game drew a huge crowd. The 1944 game drew a sellout crowd of 46,247 paid attendance. Sam was the West team's starting centerfielder and batted lead-off. According into the Plain Dealer newspaper of Kansas City Jethroe was leading the "league" in hitting with a .377 batting average. Unfortunately, Sam went 0 for 3 in the game. Ironically the highlight of the game for Jethroe was throwing out Josh Gibson at the plate. The ironic part of this play was that Sam was generally considered an average fielder with a weak and not always accurate arm. The West squad won the game by a score of 7 to 4. Verdell "Lefty" Mathis (Memphis Red Sox) was credited with the win and Terris McDuffie (Newark Eagles) took the loss.



Sam Jethroe
Cleveland Buckeyes

The Cleveland Buckeyes ended the 1944 season with a record of 40-41 (.494) and were in third place in the final Negro American League standings. The Birmingham Black Barons (48-22) won the title and the Indianapolis-Cincinnati Clowns (40-31) finished the season in second place.

The Seamheads research team, however, presents a significantly different record for Cleveland. They credit the 1944 Cleveland Buckeyes with a 32-24 (.571) record in "league" play and a record of 35-33 (.515) against all levels of competition.

Other teams that played in the Negro American League in 1944 were the Memphis Red Sox (44-51), Kansas City Monarchs (23-42) and the Chicago American Giants (32-39).

Sam Travels to Puerto Rico

After the 1944 Negro American League season, Sam Jethroe joined several other Negro League players and traveled to San Juan to play for the Senadores of the Puerto Rican Winter League. The 1944-45 Puerto Rican season included teams from Mayaguez, Ponce, San Juan and Santurce.

Sam Jethroe was in the starting outfield for San Juan. Other Negro League players on San Juan's roster were Raymond Brown, Roy Campanella, Robert Clark, Ducky Davenport, Felle Delgado, Roy Partlow and Quincy Troupe. Jethroe was one of the leading hitters in the Puerto Rican Winter League during the 1944-45 season with a .342 batting average. His complete statistics for the winter league season were:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1944-45	San Juan	-	161	37	55	-	7	1	27	-	.342	-

He also led the "league" in triples with 7 and in runs scored with 37.

The Ponce Leones won the "league" title with an impressive record of 28-11 (.718). Santurce ended up in second place with a record of 22-20 (.524), San Juan was in third place with a losing record of 19-22 (.463) and the Mayaguez Indios were in last place with an 11-27 (.289) record.

Robinson, Jethroe and Williams Try-Out for the Boston Red Sox

One of the early tryouts of Negro League baseball players by a Major League Baseball club occurred in 1945 by the Boston Red Sox of the American League.

Isadore H.Y. Muchnick, a Boston city councilman, had been pressuring the Boston Braves and Boston Red Sox to add black ball players to their Major League rosters. To get the Braves and Red Sox attention, Muchnick threatened to get the Red Sox's permit to play professional baseball games on Sunday revoked. The team's inability to play Sunday baseball would have had a significant negative financial impact on the team. The Boston Red Sox of the American League finally agreed to hold a tryout. Sports writer Wendell Smith of the Pittsburgh Courier agreed to help identify the Negro League players for the tryout. Sam Jethroe (outfielder for the Cleveland Buckeyes), Jackie Robinson (infielder for the Kansas City Monarchs) and Marvin Williams (infielder for the Philadelphia Stars) were the three players chosen for the tryout. This time young, talented Negro League ball players were chosen.



Boston Red Sox Try-Out

San Francisco Chronicle

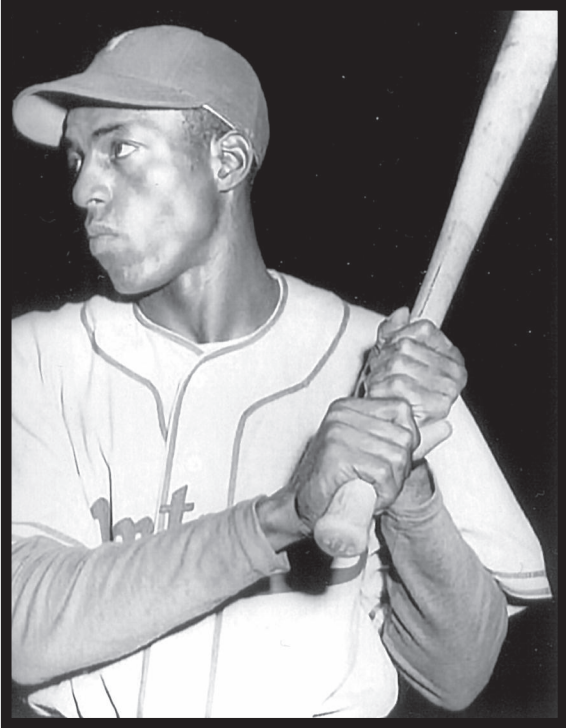
San Francisco, CA

04-15-45

According to an interview with Jackie Robinson by the Boston Traveler which was published on January 26th of 1962 he, Sam Jethroe and Marvin Williams rode the train from Houston to Boston. Each of them was given a \$ 10 roll of quarters to cover traveling expenses. Not a \$ 10 bill, two fives or ten ones but a roll of quarters.

The tryout was scheduled for Fenway Park in April. Fenway Park was chosen because the Red Sox were out of town on a road trip. When the trio arrived at the ball park, they reported to General Manager Eddie Collins who sent them to the dressing room. Jethroe, Robinson and Williams worked out in front of Red Sox management along with twelve (12) white players. Reportedly the Boston Red Sox had high school pitchers throw batting practice to the Negro League trio.

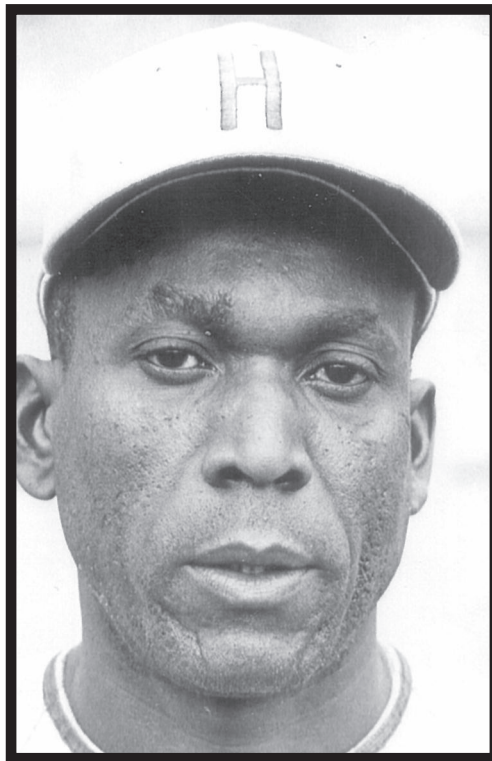
Boston Red Sox Try-Out



Sam Jethroe



Jackie Robinson



Marvin "Tex" Williams

Joe Cronin (Red Sox Manager) and Hugh Duffy (Red Sox Coach) both commented later that they were very impressed with the skills of all three players. Duffy's specific comments to the press were that Williams "was fast and had possibilities." Duffy went on to say that it was difficult to evaluate and make a definite decision as to their playing abilities after a single workout. After the tryout, the players filled out applications and were told that they would be hearing from the Red Sox. The call never came from the Red Sox and the Boston Braves never scheduled a work out. Instead of becoming the first team to integrate Major League baseball, they would be the last when they signed Pumpsie Green in 1959.

Brent Kelly in his book The Negro Leagues Revisited published the following interview with Marvin Williams when he talked about the tryout with Boston Red Sox:

"When we got there, we were supposed to tryout for three days. Now, the Red Sox were leavin' that first evening and we tried out at 10:00 that morning. There wasn't any of the regular players out there – you know Bobby Doerr and Johnny Pesky. Now we were supposed to have a tryout the next day when the Braves were in town. They was comin' in that night and we were supposed to practice the next day. I think we woulda had a better tryout, but President Roosevelt died that night and that stopped everything.

We took infield practice and battin' practice – just like we would with any team. They had relief pitchers thrown' to us (one newspaper story said they were actually local high school players) – long relief pitchers. They had about three of 'em; I don't remember their names. They didn't have their stoppers, but they were still major league pitchers.

Joe Cronin (Red Sox Manager) told us, he said "No doubt that you guys can play major league baseball. I've seen all of you play and I know you can play it. You can play better than some here, but what owner, what manager is gonna have the nerve to put one (a black player) on the team?Because if one is signed and doesn't make it, you'll hurt the rest of them."

In an interview with Dr. Revel (Center for Negro League Baseball Research), Marvin Williams shared that he knew that the chances of being signed were very slim. But in Williams' own words: "we had to take advantage of the opportunity and it was gratifying to show those white boys that we could play ball."

Sam Jethroe had the same basic impression of the try-out as Marvin Williams. According to Cleveland Buckeyes team mate Willie Grace, Sam Jethroe shared with him the following: "What a joke that so-called tryout was. He said you just knew it was a farce and that Cronin although he was up in the stands with his back turned most of the time."

Negro Trio Works Out Under Coach Hugh Duffy of Red Sox

Something new was added to a single workout. He thought Williams looked like a good ball player, with plenty of speed and potential ability. Manager Cronin exhibited interest in the work of Robinson, a former Army lieutenant, who was 31 months in the service. Robinson is shortstop for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro-American League.

The three players were Jackie Robinson, former UCLA football and baseball star from Pasadena, Calif.; Sam Jethroe, Negro-American League batting champion of 1944 from St. Louis, and Marvin Williams, second baseman for the Philadelphia Stars of the Negro National League.

The Negro recruits reported to General Manager Eddie Collins, who sent them to the Red Sox dressing room to be issued uniforms. They worked out on the field for an hour under Coach Hughie Duffy, with Manager Joe Cronin watching from the bench.

Duffy, veteran Red Sox coach, said the trio seemed like "fine fellows," but he did not care to make a definite decision as to their ability after

Boston Herald
Boston, MA
04-17-45

Negro Stars Impress Joe Cronin in Tryouts

Boston, Mass. —(AP)—Two of three Negro aspirants for major league baseball berths—Jackie Robinson of Pasadena, Calif., and Marvin Williams of Philadelphia—impressed Manager Joe Cronin and Coach Hugh Duffy Monday while working out for the Boston Red Sox.

Cronin exhibited interest in Robinson, former UCLA football and baseball star, who served overseas for 31 months as an army lieutenant and Duffy commented that Williams was fast and had possibilities.

The other Negro player to display his wares was Sam Jethroe of St. Louis and Erie, Pa., the 1944 Negro American league batting champion with the Cleveland Buckeyes.

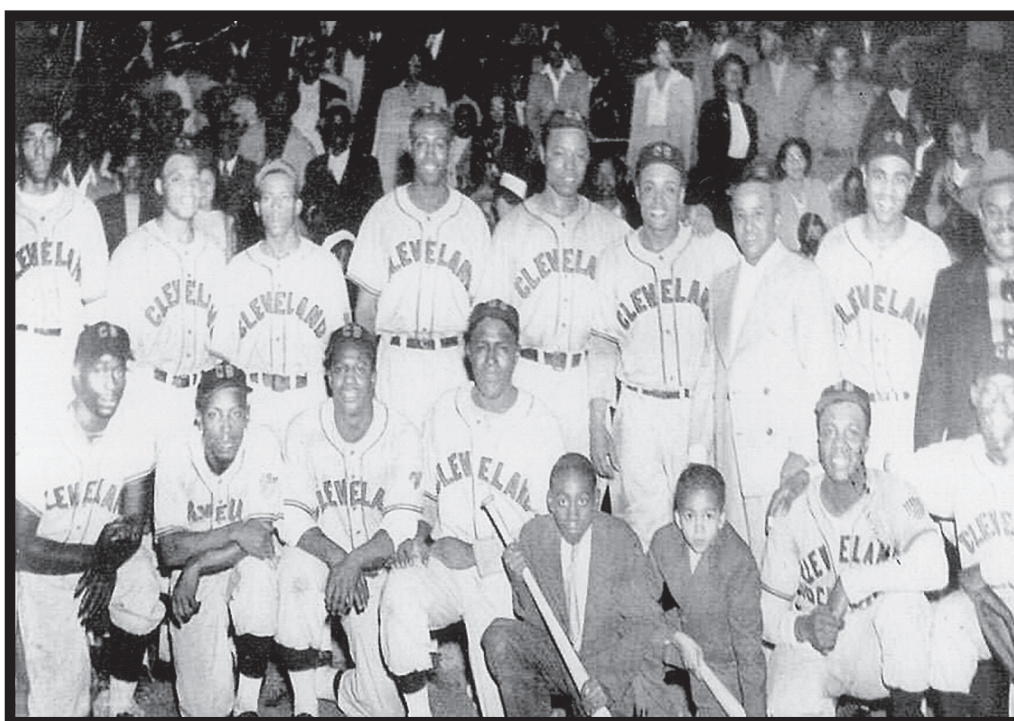
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Milwaukee, WI
04-17-45

Buckeyes Claim the Negro American League Title

The 1945 Negro American League season would be one of the best in the team's history. The Buckeyes went into the season with the youngest team in the "league" and great expectations. Leading this roster of young players was Quincy Trouppe as manager. The Buckeyes played their home games during the season at both League Park and Cleveland Stadium.

The starting line-up for the 1945 Cleveland Buckeyes was as follows:

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Archie Ware	.296	OF	Buddy Armour	.325
2B	Johnnie Cowan	.247	OF	Sam Jethroe	.393
SS	Avelino Canizares	.314	OF	Lloyd "Ducky" Davenport	.345
3B	Parnell Woods	.335			
C	Quincy Trouppe	.245	P	George Jefferson	11-1
			P	Willie Jefferson	10-1
			P	Eugene Bremer	8-4



Cleveland Buckeyes (1945)

Sam Jethroe was without question the best player in the "league" during the 1945 season. Not only did he win the batting title with a .393 batting average, but he also led the Negro American League in total bases (123), runs scored (61), triples (10) and stolen bases (21). His complete hitting statistics for the 1945 season are as follows:

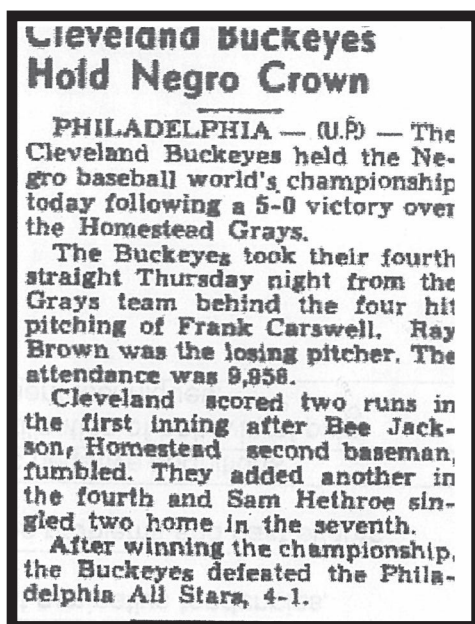
Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1945	Cleveland	56	214	61	84	10	10	3	37	21	.393	.575

The top utility players for the Buckeyes in 1945 were Earl Ashby (.286) and Willie Grace (.232).

The Cleveland Buckeyes led the Negro American League in hitting with a .297 team batting average (562 for 1895) and in fielding with a .959 fielding percentage. The Buckeyes also led the “league” in runs scored (349), triples (39) and stolen bases (83).

The Jefferson brothers George (11-1 w/ 1.75 ERA) and Willie (10-1 w/ 1.57 ERA) were virtually unstoppable the entire season. George also had 11 complete games and Willie pitched 9 complete games during the season. Eugene “Gene” Bremer (8-4 2.44 ERA w/ 10 complete games) rounded out the starting rotation. Frank Carswell (5-2 w/ 2.14 ERA), John Brown (3-2), Lovell Harden (3-2), Roosevelt Davis (2-4), Napoleon Gulley (0-1) and Rayford Finch also pitched for Cleveland during the season.

The Buckeyes dominated the Negro American League competition the entire season. They finished the regular season with an impressive 53-16 (.768) record and far out distanced the second place Birmingham Black Barons who were 39-30 (.565). Cleveland was 14 games ahead of second place Birmingham. The Cleveland Buckeyes won both halves of the season to capture the Negro American League championship without a play-off series being required.



Madison Wisconsin State Journal

Madison, WI
09-21-45

Buckeyes Win the Negro League World Series

The Cleveland Buckeyes Negro American League championship earned them a trip to the Negro League Worlds Series against the legendary Homestead Grays of the Negro National League. The Homestead Grays roster included five (5) future National Baseball Hall of Famers: James “Cool Papa” Bell, Ray Brown, Josh Gibson, Walter “Buck” Leonard and Jud Wilson. In addition the Homestead roster included all star players Sam Bankhead, Jerry Benjamin, Dave Hoskins and Jelly Jackson. In short the Cleveland Buckeyes were up against a formidable opponent.

The Cleveland Buckeyes were not intimidated by their Negro National League opponent. Cleveland swept the series in four straight games. In the final game of the series 9,958 fans showed up in Philadelphia to see Cleveland sweep the world famous Homestead Grays. Cleveland hitters scored 15 runs in the four games and Cleveland pitchers limited Homestead to just three (3) runs in the four games. No one had ever dominated the Homestead Grays in post season play like the Buckeyes did in 1945.

Quincy Troupe .400 (6 for 15), Sam Jethroe .333 (5 for 15), Willie Grace .313 (5 for 16) and Buddy Armour .308 (4 for 13) paved the way in the hitting department for Cleveland. Troupe used four different pitchers (Willie Jefferson, Gene Bremer, George Jefferson and Frank Carswell) in the series. All four pitchers turned in outstanding performances.

A summary of the 1945 Negro League World Series is as follows:

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	Cleveland	Sept 13 th	Cleveland	2-1	Willie Jefferson	Roy Welmaker
2	Cleveland	Sept 16 th	Cleveland	4-2	Gene Bremer	Johnny Wright
3	Washington, D.C.	Sept 18 th	Cleveland	4-0	George Jefferson	Roy Welmaker
4	Philadelphia	Sept 20 th	Cleveland	5-0	Frank Carswell	Ray Brown

On October 7, 1945 Sam Jethroe played for the South squad in the North-South Classic. Jethroe went 1 for 4 in the game.

Jackie Robinson Signs with the Brooklyn Dodgers

On October 23, 1945 Jackie Robinson made baseball history when he signed a contract with the Montreal Royals (International League) who were the AAA farm team of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Robinson's signing initiated Major League baseball scouts to start looking very closely at Negro League talent. According to newspaper accounts during this time the following ten (10) Negro League ball players were the top potential recruits. Sam Jethroe was one of these players. The complete list of Major League baseball's top ten players in the Negro Leagues was:

Player	Team	Player	Team
Roy Campanella	Baltimore Elite Giants	Orestes Minoso	New York Cubans
Larry Doby	Newark Eagles	Don Newcombe	Newark Eagles
Monte Irvin	Newark Eagles	Roy Partlow	Philadelphia Stars
Sam Jethroe	Cleveland Buckeyes	Harry Simpson	Philadelphia Stars
Luis Marquez	Homestead Grays	Johnny Wright	Homestead Grays



Jackie Robinson
Signs w/ Brooklyn Dodgers
October 23, 1945

American All Stars Play in Venezuela

In November of 1945 an all-star team of Negro League ball players traveled to Venezuela to play an exhibition series against the Cerveceria Caracas and Estrellas del Caribe (Stars of the Caribbean) teams. The Negro League all-star team was billed as the "American All Stars." The series began on November 24th and play concluded on December 23rd.

The American All Stars fielded the following starting line-up and their batting average for the series was as follows:

American All Stars (1945)

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Walter "Buck" Leonard	.462	OF	Sam Jethroe	.339
2B	Marvin Barker	.214	OF	Gene Benson	.281
SS	Jackie Robinson	.339	OF	Roy Campanella	.262
3B	Parnell Woods	.419			
C	Quincy Troupepe	.413	P	Roy Welmaker	3-0
			P	Verdell "Lefty" Mathis	3-0
			P	Bill Anderson	3-1



American All Stars Caracas, Venezuela

(Back row left to right – **Roy Campanella**, Marvin Barker, Bill Anderson, Quincy Troupe, Blanco Chataing, George Jefferson, Parnell Woods, Roy Welmaker and **Walter “Buck” Leonard**. Front row left to right – **Jackie Robinson**, Gene Benson, Felton Snow, Verdell Mathis, **Sam Jethroe** and Trainer.)

Included on the roster with Sam Jethroe and the other Negro League stars was Jackie Robinson. Jackie played on the tour to help him prepare for his debut in the Brooklyn Dodgers organization.

Sam Jethroe batted lead-off for the American All Stars and compiled the following hitting statistics for the Venezuelan tour:

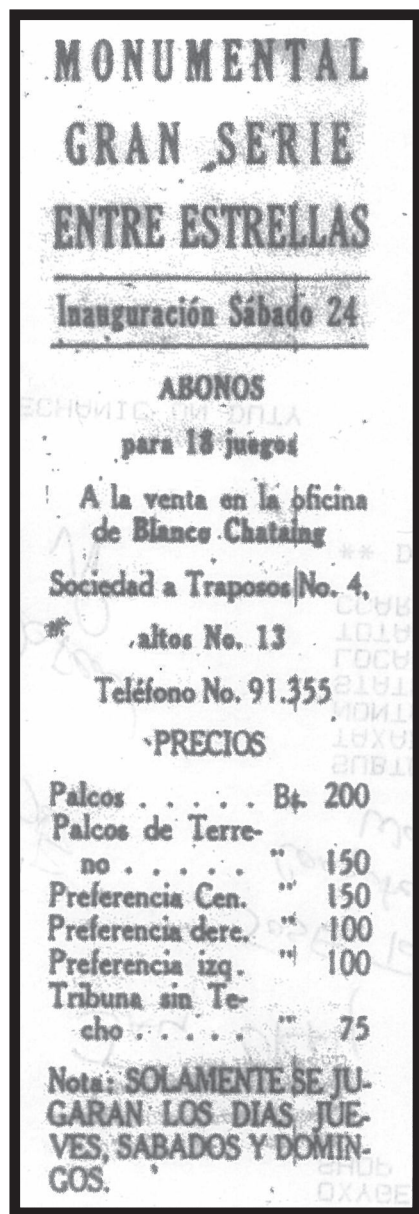
Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1945	American	14	59	16	20	5	1	3	7	-	.339	.610

The American All Stars posted a team batting average of .320 (162 for 506) for the tour.

Cerveceria Caracas was led by the hitting of Eduardo Perez (.385) and the pitching of Julio Bracho (2-2). Negro League second baseman Marvin Williams paved the way for the Estrellas del Caribe with a .423 batting average and .673 slugging percentage. Only Buck Leonard of the American All Stars had a better series. Buck hit .462 with a .723 slugging percentage. Daniel Canonico (1-1) and Domingo Barboza anchored the pitching staff for the Estrellas del Caribe.

Game one of the tour was played on November 24th between the American All Stars and the Estrellas del Caribe. Behind the pitching of Verdell “Lefty” Mathis the American All Stars got off to a great start on the exhibition tour with an 8-2 win. Both Buck Leonard and Jackie Robinson hit homeruns in the game.

The American All Stars dominated their Latin opponents and finished the regular part of the tour with a 7-2 (.778) record. Cerveceria Caracas went 3-4-1 and the Estrellas del Caribe were 2-5-1. In the Serie Finale the American All Stars played Cerveceria Caracas. The American All Stars won all five games of the Serie Finale.



Venezuela

American Series

1945

Game Poster

Promoted by
Blanco Chataing

Pasquel Recruits Jethroe to Play in Mexico

Jorge and his brother Bernardo controlled baseball in Mexico. To promote Mexican League baseball and make it more successful, the Pasquel brothers recruited Major League and Negro League players to join the Mexican League. Sam Jethroe was one of the players that the brothers targeted to play in Mexico. According to newspaper reports Jethroe turned down an offer of \$ 15,000 from the Pasquel brothers and stayed in Venezuela to start the 1946 baseball season.

Jethroe Stays in Venezuela

Sam Jethroe's excellent play with the American All Stars earned him a contract with the Sabios de Vargas of the Venezuelan League for the 1946 baseball season. The Venezuelan Professional Baseball League had been organized in December of 1945 and the 1946 season is considered the first season of professional "league" baseball in Venezuela. League play started in January of 1946 and continued on into the summer.

For ball players, Venezuela was a great place to play because games were only played three days out of the week (Thursday, Saturday and Sunday). Practice was limited to a few easy workouts during the week and players had a lot of time to rest up. In addition there was virtually no travel because all of the games were played at Estadio Cerveza Caracas.

Besides Sam Jethroe, the owners of Vargas also signed the following four (4) other Negro League stars: Roy Campanella (C), Bill Jefferson (P), Roy Welmaker (P) and Marvin Williams (2B). Roy Welmaker was the best pitcher in the "league" with a record of 12-8 (.600) and a "league" leading 2.80 ERA. Roy also led the "league" in strike outs with 139 strike outs in 192.1 innings. Daniel Canonico (1-2) and Balbino Fuenmayor (1-0) also pitched for Vargas during the season.

Jethroe played in the outfield and batted lead-off for Vargas. Sam had an excellent season in Venezuela in 1946. He led the "league" in triples (5) and in stolen bases (11)

With Daniel Canonico as the team's manager and the newly imported Negro League players, Vargas captured the Venezuelan League championship with a record of 18-12 (.600). Other teams that played in the "league" during the 1946 season were Cerveceria Caracas (15-15), Venezuela (15-15) and Magallanes (12-18).

Sam Returns to the Buckeyes

After playing for Vargas at the start of the 1946 baseball season, Sam Jethroe returned to Cleveland to play for the Buckeyes. The success that the Cleveland Buckeyes found in 1945 did not carry over to the 1946 season. Even with Quincy Troupe as the manager and a strong contingent of players from the previous season's starting line-up returning, the Cleveland Buckeyes struggled the entire season. Cleveland continued to play their home games at League Park and Municipal Stadium.

George Minor (.314), Quincy Troupe (.313), Tommy Harris (.311) Sam Jethroe (.310), Willie Grace (.305) and Leon Kellman (.301) were the team's best hitters during the 1946 Negro American League season. Sam Jethroe's hitting statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946	Cleveland	62	226	54	70	-	-	6	-	20	.310	-

According to newspaper reports, Sam Jethroe met with early success in hitting when he rejoined the Cleveland Buckeyes. On June 26th the Times-Picayune of New Orleans (LA), reported that Sam was hitting .378 and leading the "league" in batting.



The Buckeyes had a good hitting team during the season but the pitching staff struggled. Gone were the Jefferson brothers who had compiled a record of 21-2 (.913) for the 1945 championship team. During the 1946 season at least twenty (20) different players pitched for Cleveland. Chet Brewer (6-9), Eugene Bremer (5-3) and Vibert "Webbo" Clarke (3-3) were the team's top pitchers in 1946. Also pitching for the Buckeyes in 1946 were Hosea "Buster" Allen, Alonzo Boone, Charles "Lefty" Boone, Herbert "Doc" Bracken, John Brown, Walter Burch, (no first name) Bush, Walter Calhoun, Frank Carswell, Frank Fleming, Willie Hubert, Curtis "Bud" Jones, Steve "Zeke" Keys, Eddie Klepp, (no first name) Shelton, Alex Singleton, (no first name) Thomas and Sam Woods. Sam Jethroe even took the mound in a game against a strong Lloyd's team from Chester (PA).

Times-Picayune
New Orleans, LA
06-26-46

Buckeye All-Stars See Action Today

Five Cleveland Buckeyes who have been selected to play in the annual Negro East-West All-Star game in Comiskey Park, Chicago, Aug. 18, will be in action today when the Negro American League champions collide with the Memphis Red Sox in a circuit double-header at League Park.

Quincey Troupe, Buckeye manager and catcher who will pilot the West nine; Outfielders Willie Grace and Sam Jethroe, First Baseman Archie Ward and Pitcher Vibert Clark are the Buckeyes who will compete in the East-West contest.

Sam is Selected To East-West All Star Game

Sam Jethroe was selected to play in both of the East-West All Star games in 1946. The first all-star game was played on August 15th at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. Only 16,268 attended the game. Jethroe was the West's starting centerfielder and batted in the clean-up spot. He went 0 for 4 with one run scored. The East squad won the game by a score of 6 to 3. For the second East-West All Star game, five Cleveland Buckeyes players (Vibert Clark - pitcher, Willie Grace - outfield, Sam Jethroe - outfield, Quincy Troupe - catcher and Archie Ward - first base) were selected to the West's all-star team. Game two was played on August 18th at Comiskey Park in Chicago. A crowd of 45,474 fans attended the game to witness Chin Evans, Dan Bankhead and John Williams pitch a four hitter and led the West to a 4-1 victory. Jethroe was the West's starting centerfielder and batted third in the line - up. Sam went 0 for 3 with a run scored and a stolen base.

Plain Dealer

Cleveland, OH

08-11-46

According to research by Larry Lester and Dick Clark, the Cleveland Buckeyes finished the Negro American League season in third place with a record of 26-27 (.491). The Kansas City Monarchs (43-14) won the "league" title and the Birmingham Black Barons (35-25) ended up in second place. In games against all levels of competition, the Seamheads research team credit the 1946 Cleveland Buckeyes with a losing record of 36-40-3.



East West All Star Game (1946)

(Standing left to right – Hornsby Howell, Gentry Jessup, John Williams, Clyde Nelson, Ed Steele, **Dan Bankhead**, **Lorenzo Davis**, Chin Evans, Willie Grace, Quincy Troupe, Joe Greene and Alex Radcliffe, Kneeling left to right – Unknown, **Candy Jim Taylor**, Cowan Hyde, Archie Ware, Larry Brown, **Artie Wilson**, Jesse Williams, Vibert Clarke, **Sam Jethroe**, Frank Duncan and Jim La Marque. Front row –Batboy)

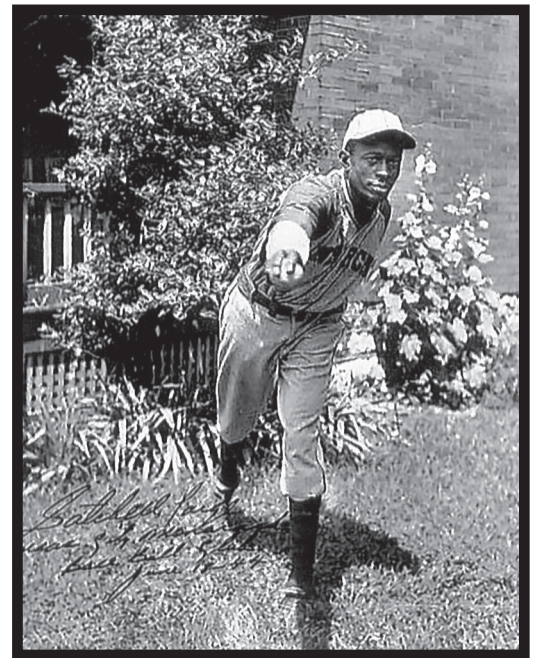
Jethroe Fails to Impress the Chicago White Sox

During the 1946 season the Chicago White Sox of the American League expressed an interest in signing Sam Jethroe and gave him a try-out at Comiskey Park. According to White Sox management, they were concerned about Jethroe's age and were not that impressed with his skills on the field. The Chicago White Sox passed on making an offer for the Negro League star.

Barnstorming with Satchel Paige

After the 1946 Negro League season was over, Satchel Paige formed an all star team that barnstormed against a "white" team of all stars featuring Bob Feller. The Satchel Paige All Stars included Barney Brown (P), Willard Brown (OF), Johnny Davis (OF), Howard Easterling (2B), Gentry Jessup (P), Sam Jethroe (OF), Max Manning (P), Buck O'Neil (1B), Lennie Pearson (1B), Hilton Smith (P), Hank Thompson (3B), Quincy Trouppe (C), Artie Wilson (SS) and other black baseball stars. Bob Feller's All Stars included Spud Chandler (P), Bob Lemon (P), Phil Rizzuto (SS), Charlie Keller (OF), Mickey Vernon (1B), Ken Keltner (3B), Bobo Newsom (P), Stan Musial (1B) and other Major League stars.

The Satchel Paige All Stars vs Bob Feller All Stars cross-country barnstorming tour was originally set-up to include a schedule of about 30 to 35 games in 27 days in 31 cities and 17 states. The tour started at Forbes Field (Pittsburgh, PA) on September 30th with a 3-0 victory by the Bob Feller All Stars. Over the 1946 tour, some of the stadiums and cities in which games were played included: Yankee Stadium (New York City, NY), Forbes Field (Pittsburgh, PA), Ruppert Stadium (Newark, NJ), Baltimore (MD), Columbus (OH), Dayton (OH), Comiskey Park (Chicago, IL), Kansas City (MO), Wichita (KS), Wrigley Field (Chicago, IL), Long Beach (CA), Wrigley Field (Los Angeles, CA) and San Diego (CA). The tour was abruptly cut short in Long Beach (CA) on October 26th before all the games could be played when Kennesaw Mountain Landis who was the Major League Baseball Commissioner ordered the tour stopped. Even with the abbreviated schedule, the tour was very successful.



Satchel Paige

According to a The Sporting News magazine article published on November 6, 1946 the tour drew 271,645 fans for the games they played. Bob Feller reportedly made all the financial arrangements. He focused on one basic principle. Play in large cities where they could draw large crowds and it worked. Some of the "big" games that the Satchel Paige All Stars and Bob Feller's All Stars played were the following:

Stadium	Location	Attendance
Yankee Stadium	New York City, NY	27,462
Wrigley Field	Los Angeles, CA	22,577
Yankee Stadium	New York City, NY	21,291
Comiskey Park	Chicago, IL	21,131
Ruppert Stadium	Newark, NJ	13,000

Some games were also a disappointment. An example of this would be on September 30th when the two teams only attracted a gate of 4,592 fans at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh (PA). Satchel Paige defeated Bob Feller by a score of 3 to 1 in a game that was marred by cold weather.



Satchel Paige's All Stars

(Jethroe – standing fourth from left)

Reportedly Bob Feller made \$ 80,000 for the barnstorming tour. Sam Jethroe gave Bob Feller a significant amount of credit for the tour and as he put it, “He gave us a chance to show what we could do against the Major Leaguers.”

An interesting side note to the tour is in this famous photo of the 1946 Satchel Paige All Star team. The picture shows the team getting ready to board an airplane. The traditional story told is that this was Satchel's airplane and that the team flew all over the country in it. However, according to Richard Wilkinson, the pilot of the plane and son of the owner of the Kansas City Monarchs (J.L. Wilkinson), the plane did not belong to Satchel and Paige made only one trip in it.

Sam Jethroe Returns to Puerto Rico

After a one year absence, Sam Jethroe returned to the San Juan Senadores for the 1946-47 winter league season. Also appearing for the Senadores were Monte Irvin who led the “league” in hitting with a .387 batting average and Raymond Brown who was the best pitcher in the Puerto Rican Winter League with 16 wins and a miniscule 1.25 ERA. Also playing for San Juan were Negro League players Roy Campanella, Robert Clark and Larry Doby.

Sam Jethroe only had 39 at bats during the season. He got 13 hits for a .333 batting average. The reason for his limited time in Puerto Rico during the 1946-47 season was that he had played with the Satchel Paige All Stars after the 1946 season.

There were six teams (Aguadilla, Caguas, Mayaguez, Ponce, San Juan and Santurce) that played in the “league” during the 1946-47 season. Ponce won the “league” title with a won-loss record of 38-22 (.633). Caguas ended the season in second place with a 35-25 (.583) record and San Juan finished in third place with a record of 31-25 (.544).

Cleveland Claims another Negro American League Championship

Dissatisfied with their lack luster performance in 1946, Cleveland Buckeyes management was determined to bring their team back to championship form. Quincy Troupe was retained as the team manager and given one order – win ball games.

One of the keys for Troupe was getting Sam Jethroe to play centerfield and lead the offense. Sam Jethroe eagerly signed a contract to return to the Buckeyes and led the team in hitting while taking them to their second Negro American League championship. The starting line-up for the 1947 Cleveland Buckeyes was as follows:

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Archie Ware	.349	OF	Joe Atkins	.335
2B	Johnnie Cowan	.286	OF	Sam Jethroe	.353
SS	Al Smith	.285	OF	Willie Grace	.301
3B	Clyde Nelson	.333			
C	Quincy Troupe	.352	P	Chet Brewer	12-6
			P	Vibert Clarke	11-2

Sam Jethroe's complete batting statistics for the 1947 Negro American League season:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947	Cleveland	70	306	90	108	35	10	7	-	52	.353	.601

Jethroe was sensational during the season. He led the Negro American League in runs scored (90), hits (98), total bases (184), doubles (35), triples (10) and stolen bases (52).

Chet Brewer (12-6) and Vibert "Webbo" Clarke (11-2) provided the team's one-two punch on the mound. Alonzo Boone (5-1), Ross Davis (5-1), Eugene Smith (4-1), Sam Jones (4-2), Eugene Bremer (3-4), Herbert "Doc" Bracken (2-0), Chet Brewer (2-1), Clyde Williams (2-0) and Ramon Bragana (1-0 in the Negro League World Series) also pitched for Cleveland during the season.



Cleveland Buckeyes (1947)
(Sam Jethroe – back row first on right)

RED SOX BID FOR JETHROE, NEGRO OUTFIELD STAR

Reported After 28-Year-Old
Center Field Slugger of
Cleveland Buckeyes

Sam Jethroe, veteran Negro outfielder of the Cleveland Buckeyes who had a spring try-out with the Boston Red Sox, soon may be wearing the uniform of the American League champions, it was reported last night.

The Buckeyes' 28-year-old center fielder has been under the eyes of big league ivory hunters since the current season opened. It was rumored, and the Boston club is now dickering for his services.

Plain Dealer
Cleveland, OH
06-03-47



Oregonian
Portland, OR
07-30-47

Seals Give Up Plan To Obtain Jethroe

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 1. (AP) — The San Francisco Seals announced today they had given up on their attempt to obtain Sam Jethroe, Negro player of the Cleveland Buckeyes, as a means of bolstering the Pacific Coast league club.

Charles H. Graham, president of the Seals, said that Ernest Wright, president of the Buckeyes, refused to make any commitment now on Jethroe because of a promise to the Cleveland Indians, who are also interested in the player.

Graham said he told Wright not to consider the Seals any further in regards to Jethroe, and that San Francisco wasn't interested in any other player on the Buckeye team.

San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune
San Luis Obispo, CA
08-01-47



Cleveland Buckeyes Hitting Attack (1947)

(Left to right – **Sam Jethroe**, Tommy Harris, Bill Reynolds, Willie Grace, Joe Greene, **Al Smith**, Chico Renfroe and Archie Ware)

According to an article that appeared in the Plain Dealer newspaper of Cleveland on June 8th, the Boston Red Sox were supposedly interested in securing the services of Sam Jethroe. This report apparently was unconfirmed because the Red Sox didn't appear to be legitimately interested in signing an African American player in the 1940's.

In July of 1947 Sam "The Jet" Jethroe was selected to play in both East-West All Star games. Game one was played on July 27th at Comiskey Park in Chicago, IL. Sam Jethroe started in right field and batted third in the line-up. He went 1 for 3 with one run scored and a stolen base. The West squad defeated the East team by a score of 5-2. The second East-West All Star game was played on July 29th at the Polo Grounds in New York City, NY. Jethroe's last all star game in the Negro Leagues was his best. Jethroe was the West's starting center fielder and batted clean-up. He went 3 for 5 with a triple, run scored and four runs batted in. With Sam Jethroe's heroics the West won the game 8 to 2. The game was attended by 38,402 fans and numerous Major League scouts in the stands.

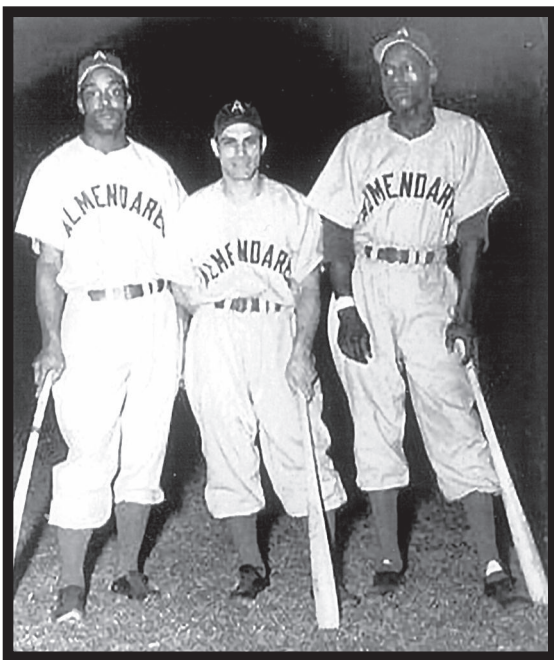
In late July of 1947 the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League opened negotiations with Ernest Wright who was the owner of the Cleveland Buckeyes to buy the contract of Sam Jethroe. When Charles H. Graham who was the president of the Seals found out that Wright was also talking with the Cleveland Indians, his interest ended. Graham felt that Wright had just strung him along. If Jethroe had been signed by the Seals he would have been the first African American to play in the Pacific Coast League.

The 1947 Negro American League season was a hard fought contest between primarily the Cleveland Buckeyes and the Kansas City Monarchs. Cleveland was declared the "league" champion at the end of the season with a won-loss record of 54-23 (.701) and the Kansas City Monarchs ended up in second place several games back with a record of 38-22 (.633).

By winning the Negro American League, the Cleveland Buckeyes faced the New York Cubans of the Negro National League in the Negro League World Series.

The first two games of the series were played in New York City. Game one ended in a five to five tie. In a real slugfest the Buckeyes came away with a 10-7 victory in game two. Ramon Bragana got the win for Cleveland and Lino Donoso took the loss for the Cubans. From there on it was downhill for the Buckeyes. The New York Cubans took the next four games and the Negro League World Series title. A summary of the 1947 Negro League World Series is as follows:

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	New York City	Sept 19 th	Tie Game	5-5	-	-
2	New York City	Sept 21 st	Cleveland	10-7	Ramon Bragana	Lino Donoso
3	Cleveland	Sept 23 rd	New York	6-0	Barney Morris	Sam Jones
4	Philadelphia	Sept 24 th	New York	9-4	Dave Barnhill	Gene Bremer
5	Chicago	Sept 26 th	New York	9-2	Lino Donoso	Chet Brewer
6	Cleveland	Sept 27 th	New York	6-5	Pat Scantlebury	Eugene Smith



Almendares Alacranes (1947-48)
(Sam Jethroe – first on right)

Leon Kellman (.450), Sam Jethroe (.316) and Al Smith (.294) led the Buckeyes in hitting during the 1947 series. The New York Cubans were led by the hitting of Minnie Minoso (.423), Claro Duany (.421), Ray Noble (.400), Silvio Garcia (.389), Louis Louden (.375) and Lorenzo Cabrera (.316). Unfortunately for Cleveland their pitching consistently got hit hard by Cubans' batters. The series went to the New York Cubans because they just scored more runs. In the six game series, New York scored 42 runs and Cleveland could only counter with 26 runs.

Sam Jethroe Plays Winter Ball in Cuba

After the 1947 Negro League season, Sam Jethroe was recruited and signed by the Almendares Alacranes of the Cuban Winter League. Four teams (Almendares, Cienfuegos, Habana and Marianao) played in the 1947-48 Cuban Winter League. It was a difficult season for the "league" because they had to compete with a "new" league that had been formed by the Cuban players. This "new" league was called the "Players Federation."

The seventy-two (72) game Cuban Winter League season started on October 9, 1947 and play concluded on February 24, 1948.

Almendares was managed by Fermin Guerra. The team was led by the hitting of Sam Jethroe (.308), Jack Cassini (.304) and Dee Fondy (.257). Negro Leaguers Gene Benson (.238), Thomas "Pee Wee" Butts (.246) and Monte Irvin (.242) also played for the Alacranes. Sam Jethroe's complete hitting statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947-48	Almendares	75	305	53	94	12	10	1	18	22	.308	.423

Sam Jethroe led the "league" in runs scored (53) and stolen bases (22). At the end of the season he was selected to the Cuban Winter League All Star team.

The Almendares pitching staff was anchored by Conrado Marrero (12-2 w/1.12 ERA) and Pat Scantlebury (10-6).

The season was closely played and only seven games separated the pennant winner from last place. The “league” championship came down to the final game of the 1947-48 season between Almendares and Habana. Habana behind the pitching of Alex Patterson and Rufus Lewis beat Conrado Marrero and Almendares by a score of 3-2 to claim the championship. The final Cuban Winter League season standings were as follows: Habana (39-33), Almendares (38-34), Cienfuegos (35-37) and Marianao (32-40).

Jethroe’s Last Season in Cleveland

The Cleveland Buckeyes started the 1948 season with high expectations and a new manager. According to the Plain Dealer of Cleveland, Quincy Troupe was replaced as the Buckeyes’ manager by Al Boone. In a short article that appeared in the Plain Dealer on April 13th the newspaper reported that Sam Jethroe was the only player with a guaranteed starting spot in the opening day line-up. The 1948 Negro American League season was Sam Jethroe’s last in the Negro Leagues.

The top hitters for Cleveland in 1948 were Archie Ware (.349), Willie Grace (.322), Clyde Nelson (.310), Leon Kellman (.307), Al Smith (.300), Sam Jethroe (.296) and Othello Renfroe (.296). Sam Jethroe’s complete hitting statistics in “league” games for the 1948 season were the following:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1948	Cleveland	47	186	61	55	13	4	5	30	29	.296	.489



Cleveland Buckeyes
(Sam Jethroe – first on right)

Sam Jethroe's .296 batting average in 1948 was the lowest of his Negro League career. The primary reason for his downturn in hitting for the season was a string of nagging injuries that plagued him all season long.

The pitching staff for the 1948 Buckeyes was comprised of Sam Jones (9-8), Vibert "Webbo" Clarke (8-9), Ernest Long (7-3), Chet Brewer (5-5), John Brown (4-1), Eugene Bremer (3-5), Samuel Thompson (2-2), Gene Smith (2-6), Frank Carswell (1-2) and Alonzo Boone (0-1).

Discrepancies in Cleveland Buckeyes Won-Lost Records

After celebrating their Negro American League championship in 1947, the Cleveland Buckeyes quickly settled back into mediocrity. They ended the 1948 season in third place in the final "league" standings with a disappointing record of 41-42 (.494). The Birmingham Black Barons (57-21) and the Kansas City Monarchs (43-25) were the two best teams in the Negro American League in 1948.

Sam Jethroe played for the Cleveland Buckeyes from 1942 to 1948. To best analyze Jethroe's Negro League career it is also important to look at the performance of the Buckeyes. Researchers, however, disagree on the won-loss records for the team during Negro American League play. The chart below represents the research of the top two Negro League researcher groups. Both groups conduct primary source research by analyzing the actual box scores.

Larry Lester and Dick Clark					Seamheads Research Team				
Year	Team	Record	Pct	Place	Year	Team	Record	Pct	Place
1942	Cincinnati-Cleveland	12-8	.600	2 nd	1942	Cincinnati-Cleveland	39-21-1	.650	2 nd
1943	Cleveland	25-20	.566	3 rd	1943	Cleveland	37-21-1	.638	1 st
1944	Cleveland	40-41	.494	3 rd	1944	Cleveland	32-24	.571	3 rd
1945	Cleveland	53-16	.768	1 st	1945	Cleveland	45-12-1	.789	1 st
1946	Cleveland	26-27	.491	3 rd	1946	Cleveland	31-34-1	.477	3 rd
1947	Cleveland	54-23	.701	1 st	1947	No Data			
1948	Cleveland	41-42	.494	3 rd	1948	No Data			

Financial Woes Plague Cleveland

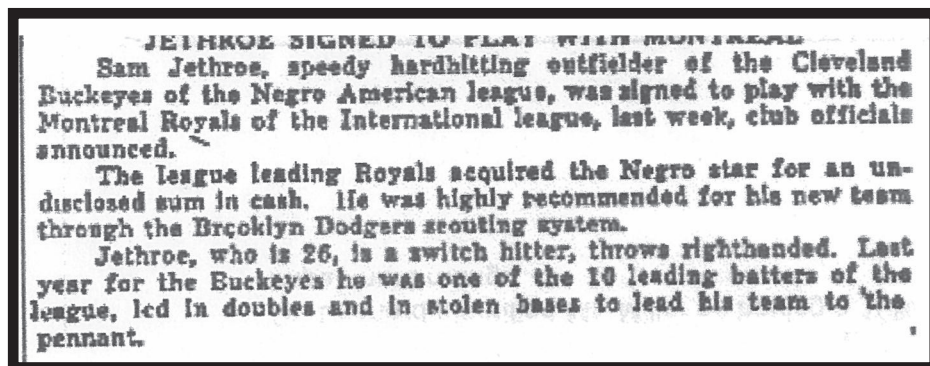
The 1948 season was financially troubling for owner Ernie Wright, general manager Wilbur Hayes and traveling secretary George Jefferson. Looking at all the empty seats at League Park, all the Buckeyes management duo could concentrate on was all the Cleveland fans who had abandoned the Buckeyes to watch Larry Doby play with the Cleveland Indians. One idea that Wright had was to align the team with a local radio station and television station to broadcast Buckeyes games to their fans. Reportedly this was the first time in the history of Negro League baseball that games were televised.

With all of his financial problems, the idea of selling the contracts of his players became a viable option for Wright. One of the highest paid players on his roster was Sam Jethroe who was making \$1,000 a month. With a roster of high caliber-expensive ball players, Wright would start entertaining offers from Major League ball clubs. Besides Jethroe some of the other players who would command interest from "organized" baseball were Quincy Trouppe (catcher), Chet Brewer (veteran pitcher), Archie Ware (first base), Sam Jones (promising young pitcher) and Vibert Clark (left handed hurler).

The Cleveland Indians had expressed some interest in Sam Jethroe but they were firmly convinced that he was significantly older than the 27 years of age that was promoted by the team. Jethroe's age and his questionable defensive skills caused the Indians to back off.

Jethroe is Sold to the Brooklyn Dodgers

Ernie Wright, owner of the Cleveland Buckeyes, could see that the Negro Leagues would decline significantly as soon as more African American players especially the stars were signed into “organized” baseball. Even though the Cleveland Indians did not purchase Jethroe’s contract, Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers didn’t care about how old Sam was. Rickey knew that Sam Jethroe could run faster than anyone in “organized” ball and that he could hit. This made Jethroe very appealing to the Dodgers. In June of 1948 Wright sold Samuel “The Jet” Jethroe to the Brooklyn Dodgers of the National League for a reportedly \$ 5,000.00 which was a steal. Branch Rickey would later say that purchasing Jethroe’s contract from Cleveland was one of the best business deals he ever did in his baseball management career. Branch was also quoted to the media that Sam Jethroe was “the greatest athlete I’ve ever seen.”



Plain Dealer

Cleveland, OH
07-16-48

Sam Jethroe was now in “organized” baseball with the opportunity of going to the Major Leagues. The only down side was that he reportedly had to take a pay cut from the \$ 700 to \$1,000 per month he was making with the Cleveland Buckeyes to the \$ 400 per month he would get paid for playing in the Minor Leagues for the Dodgers organization.

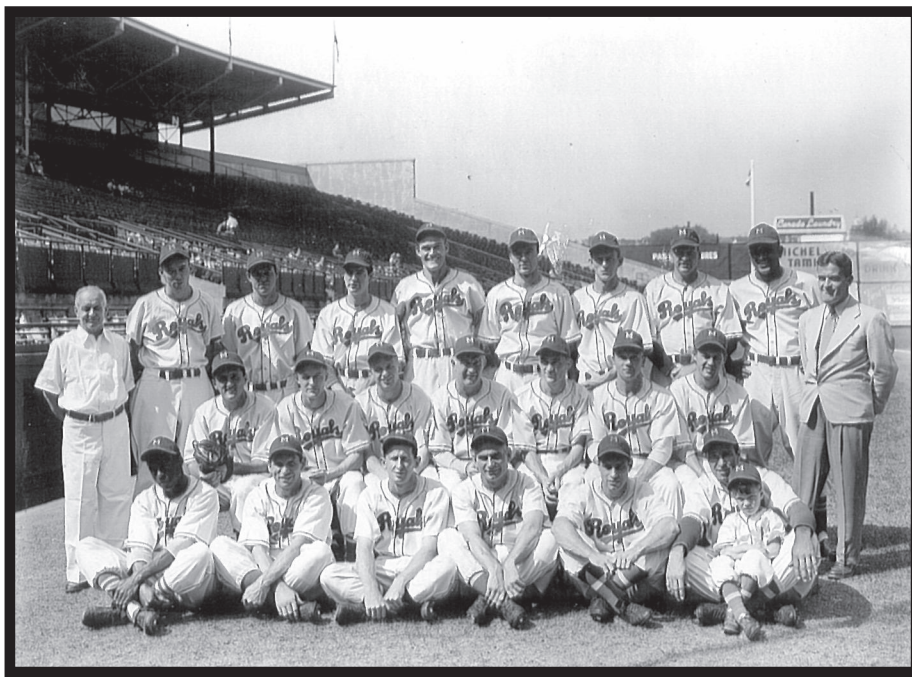
Jethroe signed a contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers organization on July 11, 1948 and was immediately assigned to the Dodgers AAA franchise at Montreal in the International League. As soon as he joined the Montreal Royals he started contributing and by the end of the season he was one of the team’s top two hitters. Jethroe’s hitting statistics for Montreal in 1948 were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1948	Montreal	76	292	52	94	19	11	1	25	18	.322	.473

Sam’s 18 stolen bases tied him for the International League lead with Johnny Welaj of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Amazingly, this was done with Sam only spending about half the season with Montreal.

Montreal was a strong team even before Sam Jethroe joined them. The Royals featured the hitting of Duke Snider (.327), Chuck “The Rifleman” Connors (.307), Jack Simmons (.296), Jimmy Bloodworth (.294), Al Gionfriddo (.294) and Walter Sessi (.280). The Royals led the International League in hitting for the 1948 season with a team batting average of .274.

Jack Banta (19-9 w/3.25 ERA), former Negro Leaguer Don Newcombe (17-6 w/ 3.14 ERA), Bud Podbielan (13-8 w/ 2.79 ERA), Johnny Van Cuyk (10-7) and Frank Laga (10-7) comprised Montreal’s starting rotation.



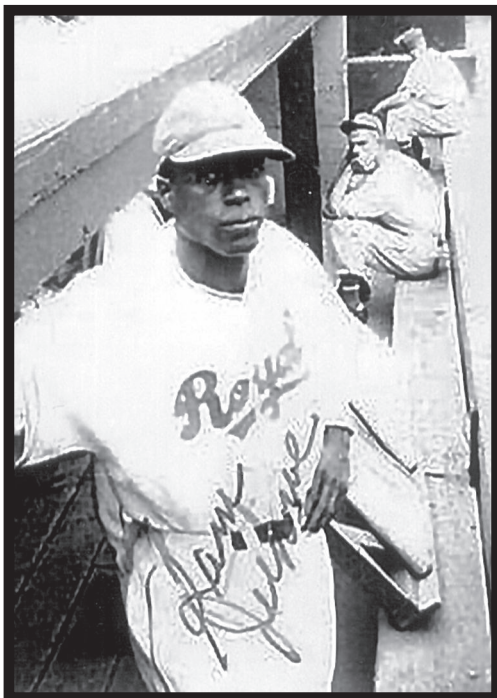
Montreal Royals (1948)

(**Sam Jethroe** – seated first on left and **Don Newcombe** – standing back row first on right)

Under manager Clay Hooper, the Montreal Royals dominated “league” competition the entire season. When the regular season ended the Montreal Royals won the International League championship with a record of 94-59 (.614). They were 13.5 games ahead of the Newark Bears and 15.5 games out in front of the Syracuse Chiefs.

Royals Enter the Play-Offs

In the International League’s play-off series for the Governors Cup, Montreal barely squeaked by Rochester who were the fourth place finisher during the regular season. The Royals prevailed by winning four games to Rochester’s three victories. In the other round one play-off series, Syracuse defeated Newark four games to three to advance to the finals. In the championship round, the Montreal Royals got off to a good start with Don Newcombe pitching two hitter before a crowd of 18,862 that were on hand at Montreal’s home ball park to see the Royals win the first game of the championship series by a score of 4-3.



Montreal went on to destroy the Syracuse Chiefs. Montreal took the Governors Cup winning four of the five games that were played. Sam Jethroe led the team in hitting with a .429 (9 for 21) for Montreal and Don Newcombe led the team in pitching.

Winning the Governors Cup punched Montreal’s ticket to the Junior World Series to meet the St. Paul Saints who were the champions of the American Association. The series started on October 5th with St. Paul shutting out the Royals by a score of 5-0. On October 9th Sam Jethroe went 4 for 4 to lead the Montreal Royals to a 15 to 1 win over St. Paul.

Sam Jethroe
Montreal Royals

This gave the Royals a 2 games to 1 advantage over the American Association champions. After their opening game loss, Montreal came back to win the next four games and take the Junior World Series title. This was Montreal's second Junior World Series title in three years.

Jethroe Helps Bring a Title to Almendares

The Almendares Alacranes had come within one game of winning the title for the 1947-48 season and the team owners were determined to bring home the title for the 1948-49 season. With the Players Federation no longer in existence, the players and owners were now unified. This created an environment where there was less stress and turmoil for the team owners. The Cuban League season started on October 8, 1948 and ended on February 17, 1949. The seventy-two (72) game season was played at the Gran Stadium in Havana.

Sam Jethroe returned to Cuba along with Monte Irvin to play for Almendares. Al Gionfriddo (.308), Monte Irvin (.274 w/ 10 homeruns), Sam Jethroe (.273) and Chuck "The Rifleman" Connors (.257) paced the team in hitting during the season. Sam started the season hot and by November 17th he was hitting .471. However he slumped especially during the second half of the season. Even though his batting average was down, Sam Jethroe still led the "league" in stolen bases with 32 steals.

Many Cuban baseball historians consider the outfield of Al Gionfriddo, Monte Irvin and Sam Jethroe as one of the best outfielders in Cuban baseball history.

The pitching staff for the Alacranes included Morris Martin (9-2 w/ 2.37 ERA), Octavio Rubert (8-1 w/ 1.63 ERA), Rene Solis (7-4 w/ 2.36 ERA) and Conrado Marrero (6-4 w/ 3.48 ERA).



Almendares Alacranes (1948-49)
(Monte Irvin - middle row fifth from left and Sam Jethroe - middle row third from right)



Almendares Championship Banner

Team manager, Fermin Guerra, got Almendares off to a strong start and the players never let-up. The Almendares Alacranes dominated play the entire season. They ended up winning the Cuban Winter League championship with a record of 47-25 (.653) and were eight games ahead of the Habana Leones who were the second place finisher with a respectable record of 39-33 (.542). Marianao (29-42) and Cienfuegos (28-43) also competed in the “league” during the season.

Almendares Wins the First Caribbean World Series

By winning the Cuban Winter League title for the 1948-49 season, Almendares received an invitation to represent Cuba in the first ever Caribbean World Series tournament. Havana was the site for the inaugural event. The teams that participated in the tournament were the champions of Cuba (Almendares), Panama (Spur Cola), Puerto Rico (Mayaguez) and Venezuela (Cerveceria Caracas). The idea of a Caribbean World Series had been talked about for years and finally became a reality at the end of February of 1949.

Almendares ran away with the title by winning all six of their games. Al Gionfriddo (.533), Gilberto Valdivia (.412), Hector Rodriquez (.458), Chuck Connors (.409), Monte Irvin (.389) and Sam Jethroe (.320) led the way for Almendares in hitting. The Alacranes compiled an impressive .297 team batting average against their Latin opponents. Sam Jethroe’s complete batting statistics for the first Caribbean World Series were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	Cuba	6	25	6	8	2	3	0	5	3	.320	.640

Sam Jethroe’s three (3) triples led the tournament.

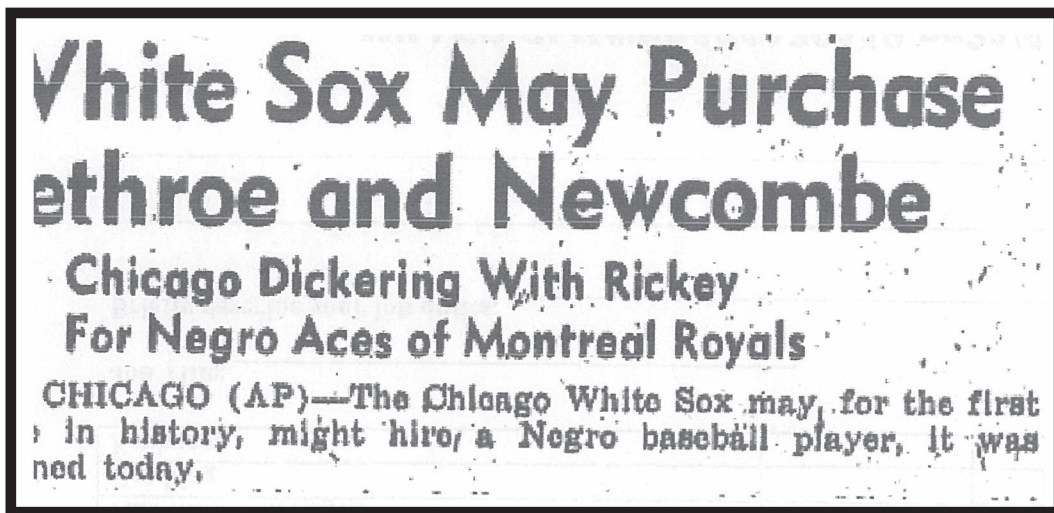
Manager Fermin Guerra used four pitchers during the series. Agapito Mayor led the way by winning all three of the games he pitched. Conrado Marrero, Rene Solis and Ed Wright each won one game to give Cuba a perfect 6-0 record.

The final standings in the Caribbean World Series I were Cuba (6-0), Venezuela (3-3), Panama (2-4) and Puerto Rico (1-5).

White Sox Express an Interest in Jethroe

During the off season the Brooklyn Dodgers made it very clear that they were willing to accept offers to sell Jethroe to the highest bidder. With several other Negro players in their organization Branch Rickey saw selling Jethroe’s contract as a good way to make a nice profit. The first and what would be the only interest in Jethroe came from the Chicago White Sox.

In December of 1948 newspapers around the country reported that the Chicago White Sox of the American League were interested in acquiring Sam Jethroe and Don Newcombe from the Brooklyn Dodgers. The report came during the Minor League Baseball Convention that was being held in Minneapolis (MN). If he had gone to the White Sox, he would have been the first Negro to play in the Major Leagues for the Chicago White Sox. Frank Lane, general manager of the Chicago White Sox, reportedly met with Branch Rickey for several hours at the convention about the deal. Lane was trying to provide youth, speed and hustle for his lowly White Sox team.



Jersey Journal
Jersey City, NJ
12-11-48

In addition Lane felt that Jethroe would be an excellent gate attraction. One of the most interesting aspects of the potential deal was that Sam Jethroe's age was listed by Brooklyn as 22. Then the big impasse came when the two clubs talked about the price of Jethroe's contract. Evidently, Chicago wasn't willing to pay Rickey's \$ 40,000 asking price.

According to an article that appeared in the December 11th edition of the Arkansas Democrat (Little Rock, AR), Branch Rickey was asking an unbelievable \$ 500,000 for Newcombe's contract. Obviously the White Sox didn't bite on a deal for Newcombe.

Sam Jethroe Returns to Montreal

With the Dodgers unable to sell Sam in the off season, he remained on the Montreal Royals roster and reported to Vero Beach (FL) for spring training. One problem that the Dodgers organization faced in spring training was being able to play the Atlanta Crackers in a game at their home field in Atlanta. It took Earl Mann who operated the Atlanta Crackers having to go to city authorities to make an exception to the Jim Crow laws to allow the Dodgers' Negro players to participate in the exhibition game that was planned at Ponce De Leon Park.



Ponce de Leon Park
Atlanta, GA



Sacramento Bee
 Sacramento, CA
 03-10-49

During spring training Jethroe showed plenty of speed and power. From Sam’s perspective, he hoped he had shown Brooklyn enough to call him up to the Major Leagues.

After spring training with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Sam Jethroe was assigned back to the Montreal Royals. Sam started the season slowly for the Montreal Royals. After his first week he was only hitting .208 and his batting average was down to .206 by the end of week two. His slump ended and he started to find his hitting stroke by the third week of the season. When the third week had come to an end, his batting average was up to .258. By the end of the month Jethroe had raised his average to .306. With his hitting problems resolved, “The Jet” became a terror on the base paths.

During the 1949 season, Montreal was led by the hitting of Bobby Morgan (.337), Sam Jethroe (.326), former Negro Leaguer Dan Bankhead (.323), Chuck Connors (.319), Steve Lembo (.291), Kermit Wahl (.286) and George Schmees (.285). For the second straight year the Royals led the International League in hitting with a .283 team batting average.

Jethroe had an excellent season in Montreal. His statistics for the 1949 season were:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	Montreal	153	635	154	207	34	19	17	83	89	.326	.520

Playing a full season in the International League gave Sam Jethroe the opportunity to really showcase his skills. When the season ended, he led the “league” in runs scored (154), hits (207), total bases (330), triples (19) and stolen bases (89).

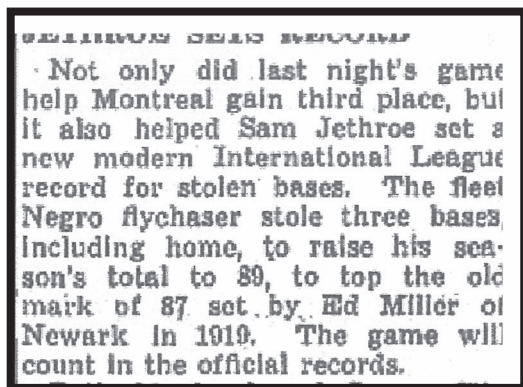
Sam Jethroe had a lot of big games for the Montreal Royals during the season. One of these occurred on June 22nd when he went five for five, hit for the cycle (single, double, triple and homerun), scored three runs, had two runs batted in and also had two stolen bases. In mid-July Jethroe showed everyone that he could hit Major League pitching when the Montreal Royals played the New York Giants of the National League in an exhibition game in Montreal with 11,770 fans in attendance. In the game Sam had two singles, a double and two stolen bases.

In June of 1949 Sam Jethroe ran against Olympic track star Barney Ewell in a 75 yard exhibition race. The event was held before an International League game between the Montreal Royals and Newark Bears. Jethroe defeated Ewell by about three yards and was clocked at 7.4 seconds. Ewell would avenge his loss in early September when he beat Sam by about a yard.



Montreal Royals (1949)
(Sam Jethroe – middle row third from left)

Trouble found Sam in August of 1949 when he was suspended and fined \$ 100 by Manager Clay Hooper. The incident occurred in the team's dressing room on August 20th when Jethroe took exception to being criticized for his play in the first game of a double header against International League opponent the Syracuse Chiefs. According to the Royals manager Sam "popped off" and continued to talk after being warned to stop.



**Jethroe Sets International League Record
for Stolen Bases**

Jersey Journal
Jersey City, NJ
09-13-49

Sam Jethroe saved his best game of the 1949 season for the last game of the season. Going into the final "league" game, "The Jet" needed two stolen bases to break the thirty-one (31) year old International League record of 87 steals set by Ed Miller in 1919. He also needed two hits to win the "league" title for base hits for the 1949 season. Jethroe responded to the challenge by getting four base hits and stealing three bases.

Former Negro League pitcher Dan Bankhead was the ace of the pitching staff with a record of 20-9 (.769) and a 3.76 ERA. Clyde King (17-7 w/ 4.25 ERA), Pat McGlothlin (13-7 w/ 4.02 ERA), Bud Podbielan (9-13 w/ 3.98 ERA) and Johnny Van Cuyk (10-10 w/ 4.10 ERA) rounded out the pitching staff for the Royals. Montreal got solid hitting throughout the season but unfortunately the pitching staff gave up a lot of runs. Unfortunately for Montreal, Dan Bankhead's 3.76 ERA was the best of any starting pitcher and that doesn't win championships. Bankhead led the "league" with 176 strikeouts but he also gave up 170 base-on-balls. In 1949 the Montreal Royals pitching staff was ranked last in the "league."

ew York (N)	000	020	000-2	9	0
Montreal (IL)	201	000	10x-4	9	1

Batteries—Jansen, Hartung (3), Behrman (6);
 and Franks; Lare, Andromidas (5), Poddielan
 2) and Thompson, Lembo.

34

Jethroe is Traded to the Boston Braves

Even after hitting .326 and leading the International League in runs scored (154), hits (207), total bases (330), triples (19) and stolen bases (89). Sam Jethroe for some unknown reason did not fit into the long term plans of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Some of the reasons as to why Brooklyn could have been motivated to trade Sam are as follows:

1. One conjecture is that Brooklyn Dodgers management was concerned that they already had too many black players in their organization.
2. Secondly, the Dodgers had superstar Duke Snider playing centerfield and the Dodgers management did not feel that they needed another outfielder at the Major League level.
3. According to the scouting reports on Jethroe everyone conceded that he had great speed but there was some question to his power at the plate and his defensive skills.
4. Also, there is the financial issue, The Dodgers had paid \$ 5,000 for his contract and stood to make twenty to thirty times that in the deal with Boston. That kind of return on investment was very good and made good business sense. This was one of the most financially successful deals in Branch Rickey's career.
5. Lastly, the Brooklyn Dodgers may just not have seen a roster spot for him at the Major League level.

It appears that Brooklyn's plan for Sam Jethroe had been for quite some time to sell his contract. The previous season there had been numerous talks with different organizations and in August of 1949 there was even a story published in various newspapers around the country that Branch Rickey was hoping to sell Sam's contract to the Chicago White Sox of the American League,

On October 4, 1949 John Quinn (General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers) announced that Sam Jethroe was traded along with Bob Addis to the Boston Braves for the following players: Al Epperly (P), Dee Phillips (3B) and Don Thompson (OF). Reportedly, Boston also kicked in between \$ 100,000 to \$ 150,000 to secure the services of Sam Jethroe. The Braves considered the acquisition of Jethroe and Addis as the first step in their rebuilding program.

After the trade was concluded, Branch Rickey was quoted as having said: "It might be the biggest mistake I ever made in baseball."

When the trade was announced, the Boston Herald newspaper labeled Sam "The Jet" Jethroe as being "regarded as the greatest base runner since Ty Cobb." The local Boston black newspaper, the Boston Chronicle, did not make a big deal out of the signing. They did provide the following quote when they asked him about his plans for playing with the Braves:

"I'll let the record do the talking, I just won the Little World Series, now I hope to get into the big one."

When Sam Jethroe was signed by the Boston Braves, he was excited about the opportunity to play in the Major Leagues. He also knew he would receive a tremendous amount of scrutiny and there would be pressure.

Sam Jethroe Sold To Boston Braves

MONTREAL, Oct. 1—(AP)—Sammy Jethroe, the Montreal Royals' star center fielder, has been sold to the Boston Braves, of the National League, Buzzie Bavasi, Royals' general manager, announced today.

Bavasi said the Montreal (International League) club received one of the largest cash sums ever paid for a player, but he refused to discuss the amount.

Bavasi said several players will come to Montreal in the deal—these to be named by the Boston club by October 15. Jethroe will join the Braves in the Spring.

The fleet-footed Negro is reported to have been sought by at least a half-dozen major league clubs.

Richmond Times Dispatch

Richmond, VA

10-02-49

HOT STOVE STUFF IN MAJORS

Easter, Jethroe Draw Main Scrutiny Among Rookies

Luke Easter and Sam Jethroe Prepare to Enter the Major Leagues

San Diego Union
San Diego, CA
12-130-49

For Jethroe the controversy started as soon as he was signed. It all began when a sports reporter commented that he did not see Sam making an impact in the Major Leagues. According to the reporter's assessment "All he's got is speed – no power." Jethroe would make the reporter eat his words when he was named the National League Rookie of the Year for the 1950 season.

Wanting Sam Jethroe to be fresh for the 1950 season, the Boston Braves requested that Sam not play winter baseball. Rather than go to Latin America to play winter league baseball, Sam spent most of the off season at home with his wife and family. It was a unique experience for Jethroe.

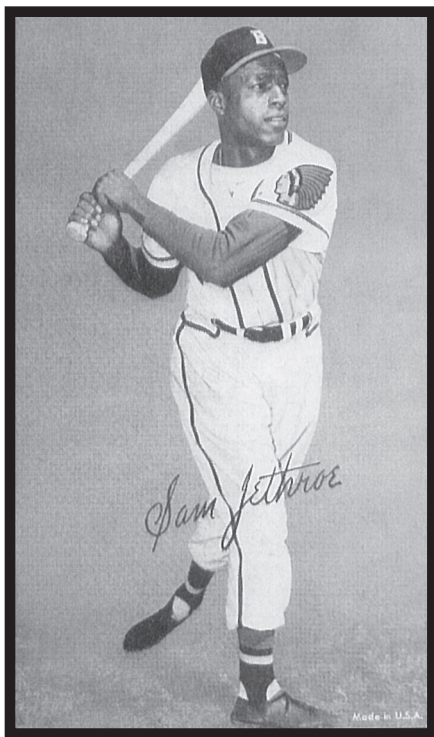
Jethroe Reports for Spring Training

Before the start of the 1950 National League season the Boston Braves held their spring training camp in Bradenton, Florida and Sam Jethroe was there to impress the Braves management. His goal was very simple – win a spot on Boston's Major League roster. Spring training was brutal for Sam Jethroe. The Register-Republic of Rockford, IL summed it up the best:

"A buildup campaign (by the Boston Braves) backfired. Everybody expected so much and Sam did so little. The hits won't drop in. His arm was weak. He didn't get on base enough to exploit his speed."

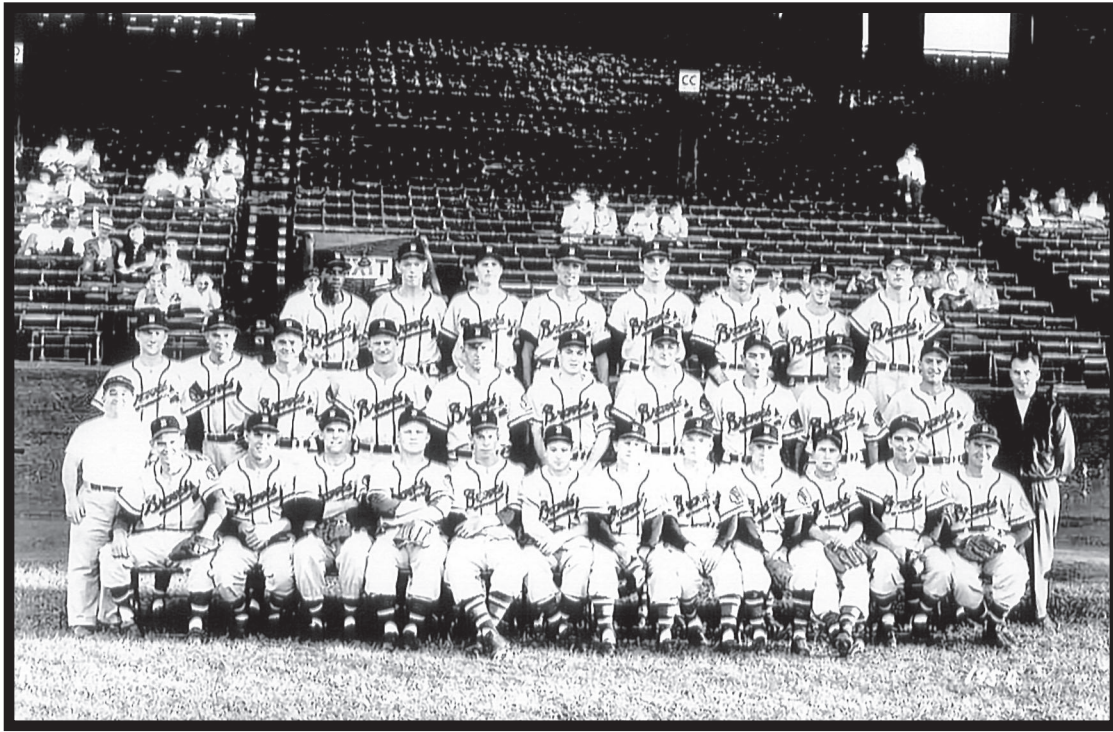
In Jethroe's favor was his positive can do attitude and he was determined not to miss the biggest opportunity of his life.

Fortunately during spring training the focus of the media was on his speed not his race. In addition his questionable age was not much of a source of concern for the Braves or the media. His blazing speed made people forget about how old he might really be. In addition Sam had the support of his manager (Billy Southworth) before spring training even started. In December of 1949 Southworth announced to the media that his outfield for the upcoming season would be Sid Gordon in left field, Willard Marshall in right field and Sam Jethroe in center field.



Sam Jethroe
Boston Braves

By the end of spring training Sam had even won over the majority of the media. When the Major League roster was announced for the Boston Braves for the 1950 season, Sam "The Jet" Jethroe had not only made the team but was the team's starting centerfielder. He also fit right into Manager Billy Southworth's "running" style of game. When Jethroe took the field for the Braves he became the first African American player to play for the Boston Braves. Sam Jethroe made his Major League debut for the Boston Braves on April 18, 1950. On opening day for the Braves he got off to a good start by hitting a homerun.



Boston Braves (1950)

(Sam Jethroe – back row first on left)

The starting line-up for the 1950 Boston Braves was as follows:

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Earl Torgeson	.290	OF	Sid Gordon	.304
2B	Roy Hartsfield	.277	OF	Sam Jethroe	.273
SS	Buddy Kerr	.227	OF	Tommy Holmes	.298
3B	Bob Elliott	.305			
C	Walker Cooper	.329	P	Warren Spahn	21-17
			P	Johnny Sain	20-13

Sid Gordon (27 HR and 103 RBI), Bob Elliott (24 HR and 107 RBI) and Earl Torgeson (23 HR and 87 RBI) provided the power in Boston's line-up. Unfortunately, the Boston Braves didn't get much help during the season from their bench. Willard Marshall (.235), Gene Mauch (.231), Luis Olmo (.227) and Del Crandall (.220) were the most often used utility players by Manager Billy Southworth. As a team the Boston Braves compiled the fourth best team batting average in the National League with a .263 team batting average.

Warren Spahn (21-17 w/ 3.16 ERA), Johnny Sain (20-13 w/ 3.94 ERA), Vern Bickford (19-14 w/ 3.47 ERA) and Bob Chipman (7-7 w/ 4.43 ERA) comprised the starting rotation for Boston. The Braves had the fourth best team earned run average in the "league" with a 4.14 ERA.

Sam Jethroe was an instant hit with Boston fans. When the Braves arrived in Boston after spring training in Florida, they played what was billed as the "City Series" against the Boston Red Sox of the American League. Jethroe was the Braves' starting centerfielder and batted second in the line-up. The first game was played on April 15th with 7,400 fans in attendance. In the first game, Sam Jethroe got two singles, scored one run and had one run batted in while leading his team to a 4-1 win. The Red Sox won the second game 3-1 behind a three run home run by Ted Williams. Trying to rob Williams of the home run, Sam slammed hard into the bull pen wall as he ran out of real estate.

Jethroe Batting Hero In Hub Diamond Debut

First Negro Ever to Play in Boston Clips Two Solid
Singles After Warm Welcome; Tribe Hits Timely
in 4-1 Victory Halted by Rain in Seventh

Springfield Union
Springfield, MA
04-16-50

BON ELLIOT, Connie Ryan and rookie Sam Jethroe, the Negro speed demon, battered Giant pitching for homers. Jethroe also singled and walked in an auspicious debut. On the other side Hank Thompson and Whitey Lockman homered off Spahn.

BOSTON (N)				NEW YORK (N)													
abr.h.o.a.				abr.h.o.a.													
Ryan 2b	5	2	12	2	Stanky 2b	3	2	0	3	1							
Jethroe cf	4	2	2	4	0	Lockman lf	5	1	2	2	0						
Marshall rf	5	1	1	0	0	Thompson cf	5	0	2	2	0						
Elliott 2b	3	1	1	0	3	D. Mueller rf	5	0	1	1	0						
Ordson lf	2	1	0	1	0	Thompson 3b	4	1	1	2	1						
Ordson 1b	4	0	1	0	1	Park ss	4	0	2	0	2						
Crandall c	5	1	2	2	0	Westrum c	1	0	0	0	2						
Kerr ss	1	1	2	1	1	Harshman 1b	3	0	0	10	1						
Spahn p	5	2	2	1	1	Jansen p	2	0	0	0	2						
						Maglie p	0	0	0	0	1						
						Maguire	1	0	0	0	0						
						Hight p	0	0	0	0	0						
						Hartung p	1	0	0	0	1						
Totals				34	11	12	27	8	Totals				34	4	8	27	11
Abbed out for Maglie in 6th.																	
Boston				003				052				020--11					
New York				100				120				000--1					
E--None.																	
RF--Ryan 2, Jethroe 2, Elliott 2, Crandall, Kerr, ESpahn, Lockman 2, D. Mueller, Torceson, Thompson, 3B--Kerr, RF--Thompson, Elliott, Lockman, Ryan, Jethroe. RF--Thompson, Stanky and Harshman; Torceson (unassisted).																	
Jansen 4, Maglie 2, Hight 1, HO--Jansen, 6 left--Boston, 8; New York, 6. RB--Spahn, 6; Jansen, 3, Maglie 2, Hight 2, HO--Spahn 6, in 4 1-3 innings; Maglie, 4 in 1 2-3; Hight, 2 in 1 2-3; Hartung, 0 in 1 1-3. WFL--Spahn, Balk--Hight, Loss--Jansen, 0--Ballantini, Ruelick and Donatelli. A--32,441.																	

In his first game of the National League season, the Braves played the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds in New York City. Jethroe went 2 for 4 with a home run in the eighth inning. The Boston Braves won the game by a score of 11-4.

Jethroe who was a notoriously slow starter, got off to a slow start at the beginning of the Braves season. Naturally Sam was apprehensive when the season started. According to a quote that appeared in the Trenton Evening Times on April 21st, Sam had the following to say about his slow start:

"I was worried because I wasn't hitting and I guess I wasn't fielding so good either. I really began to feel like I had trouble when I got benched."

The Trenton newspaper reported that his poise and confidence was reestablished on a train ride from Tampa to Atlanta (the article never explained what happened on the train) plus receiving phone calls from Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson. On the train ride Sam spent the entire time talking hitting with Manager Billy Southworth. A phone call and pep talk from boxing great Sugar Ray Robinson helped Sam out of the "funk" into which had fallen. According to a news paper article that appeared in the Boston Traveler on February 16th of 1951, part of Robinson's "fight talk" was as follows:

"Sam, what's the matter with you boy? Get in there and show what you can do. You're better than you've been showing. Get going."

Richmond Times Dispatch

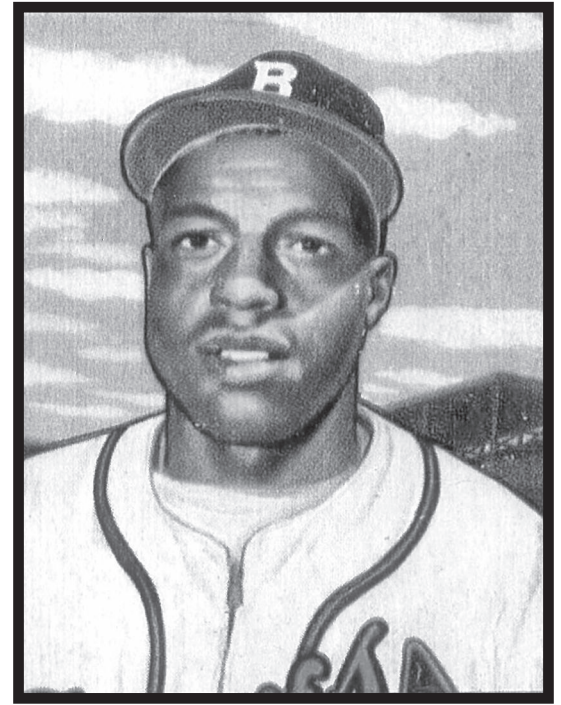
Richmond, VA
04-19-50

Manager Billy Southworth realized that Sam was pressing too hard and trying to kill the ball every time he took a swing. When Southworth moved Jethroe to the lead-off position where he had batted most of his career, Sam took off. In his first 10 at bats as Boston's lead-off hitter, Jethroe got on base 8 times. In his first 47 games "The Jet" only had 6 stolen bases, but in his next 27 games he had 18 stolen bases.

Jethroe had one of his first big games in the Major Leagues on April 30th against the Philadelphia Phillies in Philadelphia at Connie Mack Stadium with 14, 201 fans in the stands. He went 3 for 4 with a homerun, triple, two runs scored and two runs batted in. By May 2nd the Boston Traveler newspaper was already touting Sam Jethroe as the National League's leading candidate for Rookie of the Year. Sam Jethroe's productivity was rewarded by the Boston Braves on May 27th

when he was given a raise by the Braves front office “for a job well done.” The amount of the raise was not identified. The pay increase which was unusual for that early in the season settled the question as to the Boston Braves satisfaction with Jethroe. At the time Jethroe was the only Braves regular player batting .300 or better. Jethroe was hitting .301 with five homeruns. He was also tied for the National League lead in triples and tied for second place in runs scored with 25. Another highlight of the early part of the season for Sam was when he stole home against the Cincinnati Reds in a game that was played on June 6th. Ewell Blackwell was pitching and Dixie Howell was the catcher for the Reds.

Sam suffered a minor set back in a game against the New York Giants that was played on July 9th. He suffered a severe bone bruise on his foot sliding into the base for his third steal of the game. The injury caused him to miss several games. Jethroe made a tremendous mistake when he tried to come back from the injury too early. In his first game back which occurred on July 21st against the Chicago Cubs, Jethroe re-injured the instep of his bad foot while swinging at the second pitch of his first at bat of the game. When he finally returned to the starting line-up for good, his production was off. To make matters worse for Sam he was bothered by a sore shoulder late in the season.



Sam Jethroe
Bowman Baseball Card
1950

In the first half of the season he hit .280 but only batted .258 in the second half. In addition he stole 24 bases in the first half and had only 11 steals in the second half. His 35 stolen bases, however, did lead the National League. As a measure to judge his performance on the base paths, the American League leader in stolen bases was Dom DiMaggio (Boston Red Sox) with only 15 stolen bases.

Overall offensively Sam Jethroe had a very good season in his rookie year in the Major Leagues. His complete hitting statistics for the 1950 National League season are as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1950	Boston	141	582	100	159	28	8	18	58	35	.273	.442

Unlike some of the other Negro League ball players who integrated Major League teams, Sam was well received by the Boston fans. Sam Jethroe was a fan favorite from the very beginning. His box office attraction was significantly more than Braves' management could have ever imagined. Once the Boston fans saw him run, they adopted him as their favorite player. What made this even more remarkable was that the fan base for the Boston Braves was virtually all-white. The “non-white” population of Boston when Jethroe came up was only 5.3 % of the population. In an interview about his first season in the Major Leagues with Boston, Sam Jethroe was quoted as follows:

“The people of Boston were crazy about me. Everyone crowded around me for autographs after my first game.”

According to Sam one of the things that may have helped in his transition into the Boston community was that he kept a very low profile when he wasn't at the ball park. On this subject, Sam was quoted as follows:

“I stayed pretty close to home. The High Hat Club on Massachusetts Avenue was my spot. I didn't go around too many white places – bars, movies, etc. But I met a lot of nice people.”

When he was in Boston he resided at the Kenmore Hotel which was close to the ball park.

When the Boston Braves traveled to St. Louis, Sam Jethroe was delighted to have his father in the stands to watch him play in the Major Leagues. Unfortunately, Sam's father had to sit in the "negro" section of the stadium.

Jethroe N. L. Rookie of '50

*Sam Plans to Capture
MVP Award Next Year*

Boston Herald
Boston, MA
11-10-50

For his excellent play during the 1950 season, Sam Jethroe was selected by the Baseball Writers Association as the National League Rookie of the Year. At the age of 33 Sam Jethroe was and still is the oldest player to win the Rookie of the Year award. Jethroe received 11 first place votes from the Baseball Writers Association. Philadelphia Phillies pitcher Bob Miller came in second place with 5 votes. This was the third time in four years that a former Negro League player had won the award. Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn Dodgers) won the award in 1947 and Don Newcombe (Brooklyn Dodgers) was the 1949 winner. An interesting side note to the Rookie of the Year Award was that the Braves cross town rival, the Boston Red Sox, had one of their players (Walt Dropo) win the American League Rookie of the Year Award. When asked by the Boston Herald to comment about winning the award, Sam Jethroe made the following statement: "That's fine for now, I'm aiming to win the National League Most Valuable Player Award next year."

The 1950 season ended on a very positive note when the team held a Sam Jethroe night at the ball park on September 15th. The Braves played and beat the Pittsburgh Pirates by a score of 7-4 to further enhance "Sam Jethroe Night." The game and pre-game ceremonies were attended by 9,168 fans. Knowing that he would be showered with gifts and money, Sam asked that they go into a scholarship fund for Negro youth. His season both on and off the field was very successful. Jethroe performed on the field and was extremely diplomatic on how he presented himself in the community.

Jethroe Came Through For Braves

News and Observer
Raleigh, NC
08-24-50

The Boston Braves had a good year in 1950 and finished the season in fourth place in the final National League standings with a record of 83-71 (.539). They were eight games behind the National League champion Philadelphia Phillies who won the "league" title with a record of 91-63 (.591). The Brooklyn Dodgers (89-65) were in second place and the New York Giants (86-68) ended the season in third place.

Post Season Play in 1950

In early October eight (8) former Negro players from the American League and National League traveled to Columbia (SC) to play a game against the Jacksonville Eagles. The team was billed as the "Major League All Stars" and included the following players: Roy Campanella, Larry Doby, Luke Easter, Monte Irvin, Sam Jethroe, Don Newcombe, Jackie Robinson and Hank Thompson. To fill out the roster several Minor League players were signed. The results of the game were not reported.

On Friday night October 13th Sam Jethroe played for the National League All Stars in a game played at Comiskey Park in Chicago against the American League All Stars. Beside Jethroe some of the other players on the National League All Stars team included the following: Sid Gordon (OF), Gil Hodges (1B), Howie Pollett (P), Red Schoendienst (2B), Duke Snider (OF) and Wes Westrum (C). John Riddle managed the National League All Stars and Buster Mills managed the American League All Stars. Mills' American League All Stars squad included the following: Jerry Coleman (2B), Sherm Lollar (C), Mel Parnell (P), Al Rosen (3B), Early Wynn (P) and Gus Zernial (OF). The score of the game is unknown but it was reported in the newspaper that only 3,030 fans attended the game. This did not come as a big surprise because Major League baseball games were down a reportedly 13 % for the season.



John Jachym (left)

and

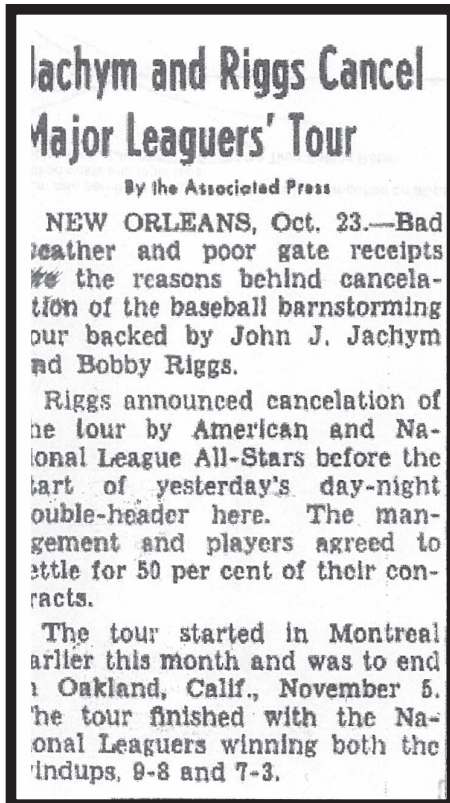
Happy Chandler (right)

After the conclusion of the regular Major League season, John Jachym (businessman) and Bobby Riggs (famous tennis player) formed their own all star teams for a barnstorming tour that started on October 10th in Montreal (Quebec, Canada). Jachym and Riggs formed two teams (American League All Stars and National League All Stars). Their National League All Star team is different from the one that Sam Jethroe played for at Comiskey Park in Chicago on October 13th. At least thirty-nine (39) different players appeared on Jachym & Riggs All Stars teams and Sam Jethroe was one of them. The roster seemed to change on almost a game by game basis. The American League All Stars included Sam Chapman, Dom DiMaggio, Walt Dropo, Gerry Coleman, Mike Garcia, Ned Garver, Sherm Lollar, Al Rosen, Dizzy Trout, Early Wynn and Gus Zernial. The National League All Star squad included Al Dark, Sid Gordon, Gil Hodges, Larry Jansen, Sam Jethroe, Ralph Kiner, Ted Kluszewski, Don Newcombe, Howie Pollett, Duke Snider and Wes Westrum.

Sam Jethroe appears to have had a very solid tour. Two different newspaper articles have him hitting a homerun in two different games and another credits Sam with hitting a game winning triple. In addition one box score has been found with Jethroe playing center field and batting lead-off. Sam went 3 for 4 in this game.

Bad weather in Canada got the Jachym & Riggs team off to a bad start. Approximately thirty-four (34) games were played on the tour. According to newspaper reports the team's schedule included the following stops:

Date	City	Date	City	Date	City	Date	City
Oct 10 th	Montreal (QU)	Oct 17 th	Rochester (NY)	Oct 25 th	Mobile (AL)	Nov 1 st	Los Angeles (CA)
Oct 11 th	Syracuse (NY)	Oct 18 th	Richmond (VA)	Oct 25 th	Birmingham (AL)	Nov 2 nd	Los Angeles (CA)
Oct 12 th	Toronto (ON)	Oct 19 th	Columbia (SC)	Oct 26 th	Memphis (TN)	Nov 3 rd	Hollywood (CA)
Oct 13 th	Chicago (IL)	Oct 19 th	Charleston (SC)	Oct 27 th	San Antonio (TX)	Nov 4 th	Fresno (CA)
Oct 14 th	Cincinnati (OH)	Oct 20 th	Tampa (FL)	Oct 28 th	Houston (TX)	Nov 4 th	Sacramento (CA)
Oct 15 th	Pittsburg (PA)	Oct 21 st	Miami (FL)	Oct 29 th	Ft. Worth (TX)	Nov 5 th	Oakland (CA)
Oct 15 th	Columbus (OH)	Oct 22 nd	New Orleans (LA)	Oct 29 th	Dallas (TX)	Nov 5 th	San Francisco (CA)
Oct 16 th	Hamilton (ON)	Oct 23 rd	Nashville (TN)	Oct 30 th	San Diego (CA)		
Oct 17 th	Brantford (ON)	Oct 24 th	Birmingham (AL)	Oct 31 st	San Diego (CA)		



Evening Star
Washington, D.C.
10-23-50

From the limited number of box scores, line scores and newspaper articles that have been found, it appears that the National League All Stars had a commanding lead in the series. The results of eleven (11) games have been found. The National League All Stars compiled a won-loss record of 9-2 in these eleven (11) games.

From published reports it does not appear that the tour drew large crowds. Some of the reported crowds from newspaper accounts during the tour are as follows: Rochester, NY (3,357 fans), Pittsburgh – Forbes Field (2,685 fans), Brantford, Ontario (1,800 fans) and Columbia, SC – Capitol City Park (750 fans).

Unfortunately it appears that several dates were cancelled due to bad weather.

The tour ended abruptly in San Francisco (CA) on November 5th and all the remaining tour dates were cancelled. Bobby Riggs was quoted in the media as saying the tour was being cancelled because of bad weather and poor attendance. Reportedly Jachym & Riggs lost \$ 64,000.00 on the venture. The players also suffered financially with the majority of them getting only about 50 % of their contract.

After the tour ended Sam Jethroe returned to Boston and took a job as a disc jockey for a local radio station in Lynn (MA). He also made numerous public appearances like the "Sports Nite Parade."

Jethroe's Second Season in the Majors

Sam Jethroe's performance during the 1950 season made him a star in the Major Leagues. With nothing to prove he was extremely relaxed and returned to the Boston Braves in 1951 with a starting job in their outfield.

During the off season in December of 1950 Sam had suffered a broken bone in his throwing hand when he slipped on a patch of ice in the drive-way while closing his garage door. While the doctor categorized the injury as not serious, Jethroe's hand was in a cast for three weeks.

On February 01, 1951 Sam Jethroe (National League) and Walt Dropo (American League) received their 1950 Rookie of the Year awards at the Boston Baseball Writers annual clambake which was held at Copley Plaza Hotel. When asked to speak at the gala affairs, Sam Jethroe

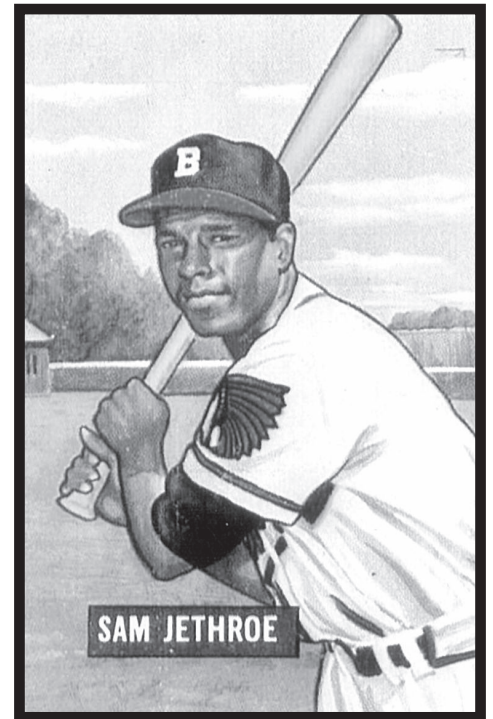
shared with the audience that he didn't have any fear of the supposed "sophomore jinx." In fact Jethroe identified that his goal for the 1951 season was to win the Most Valuable Player (MVP) award. Jethroe's plan to make that happen was to concentrate on strictly hitting left handed. When the media asked him about his broken hand, he responded that he wasn't worried about it and he would be ready when the season started. Then he was asked was he worried about struggling through spring training like he had the year before. Sam's response was as follows:

"I don't expect to have any trouble at spring training like I had a year ago. After being up a year, I sort of know what to expect. I know most of the fellows now and I know my way around better and I won't be trying quite so hard to make good. There won't be so much pressure on me as there was last year and I think everything will work out fine."

Spring training was rough on all the Boston Braves players. A flu epidemic that started in late February spread throughout the camp with at least 15 players getting sick. Manager Southworth and several coaches contracted the illness. Besides nursing a bad throwing hand, Jethroe also caught the flu bug. Another distraction in spring training was centered around "The Jet's" speed. First there was an attempt to schedule a race between Sam and New York Giants' outfielder Bobby Thompson. Roy Campanella agreed to back Jethroe in a \$ 1,000 bet winner take all. The race was never held. Then there was the competition that the media stirred up between Jethroe and Puerto Rican speedster Luis Marquez. Manager Billy Southworth put a quick end to this saying that there would be "No intramural rivalries unless they help win a pennant." Southworth then had Jethroe and Marquez room together.

During spring training Jethroe had suffered through a broken hand, the flu, increased competition for his spot in the outfield and a slow start on the field. He was, to say the least, depressed and discouraged.

Prior to the start of the season the Boston Braves faced off against their cross town rival the Boston Red Sox in their annual "City Series" for the bragging rights of Boston. The Braves went down to the Red Sox by a score of 6-3. Even in their loss, Sam Jethroe had an excellent game. He went 4 for 5 with a homerun, one run scored and two runs batted in. Reportedly there was also a second game played but currently we have not found any details for that game.



Sam Jethroe
Bowman Baseball Card
1951

As part of their preseason preparation, the Boston Braves also played an exhibition game against Tulsa of the Texas League. The game was a real slugfest. The Braves scored 16 runs on 14 hits and Tulsa batters showed they could hit Major League pitching by pounding out 16 hits and scoring 11 runs. Sam led the Braves in hitting in the game. He went 4 for 6 with three runs scored, a double, a stolen base and three runs batted in.

Going into the 1951 season, Sam Jethroe was nursing a broken hand. This resulted in Sam Jethroe getting off to a slow start when the 1951 season opened for play. Jethroe got so depressed that he was ready to quit but Manager Billy Southworth talked him out of it. Early in the season Sam Jethroe and the Braves couldn't decide if Jethroe was going to switch hit, bat right or bat left during the season.

The below headline that appeared in the Boston Traveler on April 19th says it best:

What Price Basehit?

JETHROE OUT TO BAT RIGHT, PREFERS TO BAT LEFT, MAY BAT RIGHT, IF HE DOESN'T BAT LEFT

By TOM MONAHAN

Should Sam Jethroe bat left or right handed? Even Jethroe can't answer that question. Although he won the Braves first game of the year with a two-on home run as a right handed batter to beat the Giants yesterday, Sam thinks he has more power righty, likes to bat lefty and wants to bat righty.

Sam Jethroe's inconsistent hitting in spring training resulted in the team's management starting to look at the problems that Sam was having. Someone suggested that they have his eyes tested. The eye exam which was conducted in early June resulted in Sam wearing glasses. According to newspaper reports the glasses helped him significantly in the field but didn't help him at the plate. By July he wasn't wearing the glasses when he batted. The glasses seemed to have a very positive impact on his game. When Sam hit .330 for the second half of the season he reemerged as the gate attraction that he was in 1950.

In mid-May Manager Billy Southworth benched Jethroe and replaced him in centerfield with Luis Olmo first and then Luis Marquez. The primary reason for taking Jethroe out of the starting line-up was his poor defense play. Shortly after benching Jethroe, Southworth was replaced by Tommy Holmes. The "new" Braves manager wasted little time putting Sam Jethroe back in the regular starting line-up as the team's starting centerfielder. When Holmes was questioned by the media about his decision, his response was as follows: "That's where he will play until he proves otherwise to me."

Even with all of Jethroe's ups and down during the first part of the season, he did very well in the National League All Star voting. When the voting was over, Sam was in third place in the voting for centerfielders with 128,327 votes. Richie Ashburn (Philadelphia Phillies) was the leading vote getter with 246,155 votes to second place finisher Duke Snider (Brooklyn Dodgers) with 237,418 votes. Then for some strange reason, Sam was left off the National League All Star team.

In a very unusual move during the middle of the season on July 9th Tommy Holmes took his team to Hartford to play their Minor League team that played in the Eastern League. About 5,000 fans showed up at Bulkeley Stadium to see a very entertaining game. In a closely played contest, the Braves beat their AA opponent by a score of 7-6. Jethroe led a 12 hit attack by the Braves. Sam went 4 for 5 with a double, homerun, a stolen base and two runs batted in.

Jethroe ended up having an excellent season in 1951. He raised both his season's batting average and slugging percentage several points each to a .280 batting average and a .460 slugging percentage. In addition for the second straight season he led the National League in stolen bases with 35 steals which was the same number he had in his rookie season. "The Jet" had 35 of the team's 88 stolen bases for the season.

Sam's complete batting statistics for the 1951 season were as follows:

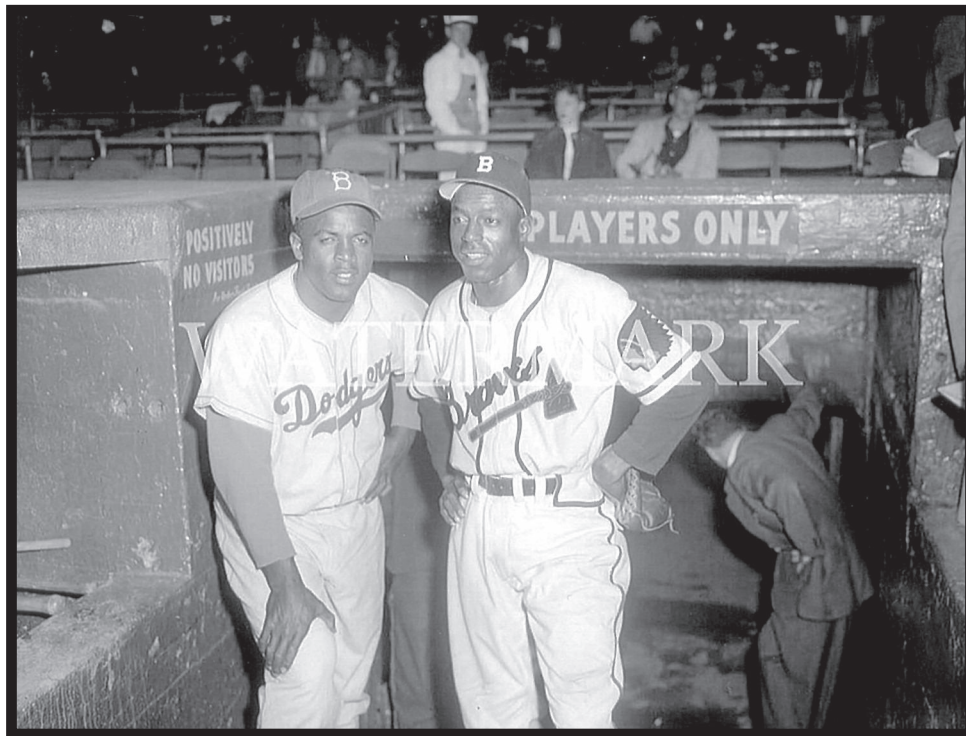
Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1951	Boston	148	572	101	160	29	10	18	65	35	.280	.460

The Boston Braves got solid hitting the entire season. In addition to Sam Jethroe, the following players provided the offensive spark for Boston: Walker Cooper (.313 w/ 18 HR and 59 RBI), Sid Gordon (.287 w/ 29 HR and 109 RBI), Bob Elliott (.285 w/ 15 HR and 70 RBI), Willard Marshall (.281 w/ 11 HR and 62 RBI) and Earl Torgeson (.263 w/ 24 HR and 92 RBI). Ebba St. Claire (.282), Sibby Sisti (.279) and Bob Addis (.276) were the primary utility players during the season.

Boston finished third in the National League in hitting with a .262 team batting average.

Warren Spahn was the ace of the pitching staff with a 22-14 (.611) record and a 2.98 ERA. Max Surkont (12-16 w/ 3.99 ERA), Vern Bickford (11-9 w/ 3.12 ERA), Chet Nichols (11-8 w/ 2.88 ERA) and Johnny Sain (5-13 w/ 4.21 ERA) rounded out the starting rotation. Other than Johnny Sain all of the other starting pitchers produced. From the bull pen only Phil Paine (2-0 w/ 3.06 ERA in 21 games) had a decent season. The Braves did, however, have the third ranked pitching staff during the 1951 season with a team 3.75 ERA.

As a team the Boston Braves only played mediocre baseball during the season. Billy Southworth started the season as the team's manager and was replaced by Tommy Homes when Braves management didn't seem to see the team keeping up with the "league's" leaders. Like the season before they finished in fourth place. The Braves this time had a losing record of 76-78 (.493). They were twenty and one half (20.5) games behind the National League champion New York Giants. Once the second half of the season began, the National League became a two team race between the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants. When the season ended the New York Giants (98-59) beat the Brooklyn Dodgers (97-60) by one game.



Jackie Robinson and Sam Jethroe

Jackie Robinson All Stars Shine

After the 1951 regular season, Sam Jethroe joined the Jackie Robinson All Stars for their post season barnstorming tour of the South. Besides Jethroe the Jackie Robinson All Stars also included Major League players Larry Doby (Cleveland Indians), Luke Easter (Cleveland Indians), Minnie Minoso (Chicago White Sox) and Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn Dodgers). The rest of the roster was filled in with Minor League and Negro League players. The primary opponents for Robinson's All Stars on the tour were Roy Campanella's All Stars, Indianapolis Clowns, Negro League All Stars and the New York All Stars. According to a newspaper report that appeared in the Times-Picayune of New Orleans on October 28th, the Robinson All Stars had played to 77,000 fans in the past week. Based on newspaper reports the Jackie Robinson All Stars

had a very successful post season. After barnstorming through the South the Jackie Robinson All Stars traveled to Texas and ended their tour in California.

When he returned home to Erie (PA), Sam Jethroe, as he described it, spent the rest of the winter shooting pool and working out at the local gym.



Boston Braves (1952)

(**Sam Jethroe** – seated second on right, **Billy Bruton** – middle row third from right, **George Crowe** – seated fourth from right and **Buz Clarkson** – back row third from left)

Jethroe Slumps at the Plate

The 1952 season started out on a negative note for Sam Jethroe. Initially he had been a hold out but finally signed his contract during the second week of February. Even before the season started, the media started touting Billy Bruton as the next centerfielder for the Boston Braves. Bruton was supposedly faster than Jethroe, a better hitter and was an excellent bunter. The issue of Bruton being faster than Jethroe was highly questionable and Bruton had never proven he could hit Major League pitching. On the other hand Sam was coming off a very good season. He had a .280 batting average, was credited with numerous game winning hits/plays and had led both “leagues” in stolen bases for the second straight year.

The Boston Braves held their spring training for the 1952 season in Bradenton (FL). Going into spring training Manager Tommy Holmes had a plan for Jethroe to significantly improve his game. With Jethroe’s excellent speed, Holmes wanted Sam to bunt at least once a game. From Holmes’ perspective this should result in Sam getting on base more often and then he could use his speed. During spring training Jethroe roomed with George Crowe and Billy Bruton lived next door. The trio got along very well with one another and took all their meals together. Even though Sam never did show the Braves that he could bunt, he did, however, have the best spring training of the three years he played for the Braves.

In late March Sam Jethroe injured his left wrist in a game played in Clearwater (FL) against the Philadelphia Phillies. Jethroe ran into the outfield fence chasing a long fly ball by Mel Clark. He was replaced in the game by Billy Bruton. Sam Jethroe returned to the line-up on March 27th.

When spring training had concluded, Sam “The Jet” Jethroe had retained his starting job as the Boston Braves centerfielder and was batting second in the batting order. Willard Marshall and Sid Gordon were the Braves’ other two starting outfielders for the 1952 season.

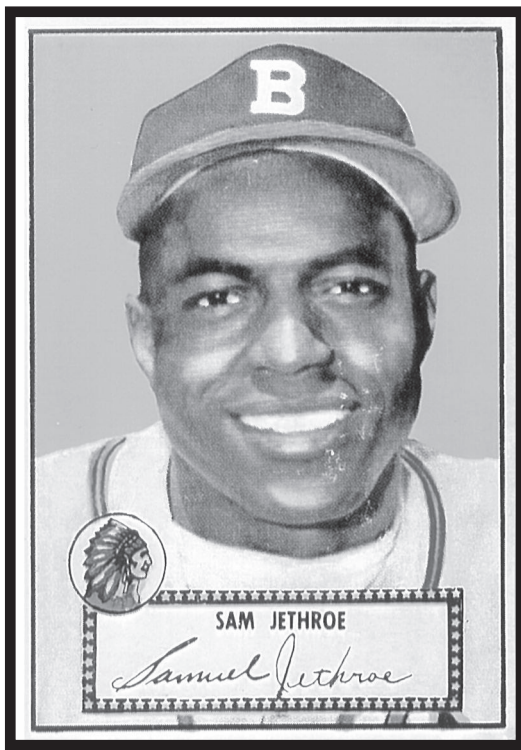
According to a headline that appeared in the Boston American on April 6th, Sam Jethroe was one of only four players (Sid Gordon, Warren Spahn and Vern Bickford were the other three) who had secured a final Major League roster spot. Newspaper reports were that Sam Jethroe was playing at the top of his game. His hitting was sharp and showed power. In the outfield his throws were strong and accurate. Sam attributes his improved game with a follow-up eye examination that diagnosed him as being near sighted. His manager Tommy Holmes had the following to say to a writer from the Boston American : “He’s headed for headlines and maybe greatness. He’s arrived.”

Braves Loaded With Top Talent

Only Jethroe, Gordon, Spahn, Bickford Secure

Boston American
04-06-52

Before the start of the 1952 season the Boston Braves played their annual exhibition two game series against the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park. As in years past the two games were billed as the “City Series” with the winner being considered the champion of Boston. Sam Jethroe was the hero of game two when he hit a three run home run. The Boston Red Sox prevailed in the series.



Sam Jethroe
Topps Baseball Card
1952

Sam Jethroe started the season on a high note in Lynchburg (VA) on April 7th in an exhibition game against the Brooklyn Dodgers in which he hit for the cycle (single, double, triple and homerun). He also drove in two runs and scored three runs in the game.

On the opening day of the National League season, Sam got off to a good start with his first homerun of the season. Three days later on April 20th against the Philadelphia Phillies he went 3 for 5 with another homerun, three runs scored and three runs batted in. By the first week in May he was the team’s lead-off hitter. In a double header against the St. Louis Cardinals, Jethroe went 2 for 5 in the first game and 3 for 4 in the second game. In the double header he had three runs scored, two doubles, a triple and a homerun. By the end of May Sam Jethroe was leading the Boston Braves in hitting and many of those hits came in clutch situations. According to an article that appeared in the May 27th edition of the Boston American, since the beginning of the 1952 season there were 41 men on base when Sam Jethroe came to bat and he drove in 12 of them. Up to this point in the season Sam was batting an impressive .293. Unfortunately this fast start would not last.

Jethroe Hits Cycle But Braves Lose, 8-4

LYNCHBURG, (AP)—The Brooklyn Dodgers whipped the Boston Braves, 8-4, here yesterday despite outfielder Sam Jethroe's feat of hitting a single, double, triple and home run in five times at bat.

Early in the season Sam Jethroe had to undergo intestinal surgery which had a significant negative impact on his playing ability during the season.

Shortly after the start of the 1952 season, Charlie Grimm replaced Tommy Holmes as the manager of the Braves on June 1st. According to Jethroe, Grimm was prejudice and didn't like him. One example of this was that Grimm publicly referred to Jethroe as "Sambo."

One of the highlights of the season for Sam Jethroe was hitting a grand slam off of Ernie Johnson of the Chicago Cubs. This was the first of his career during the regular season. Another highlight was hitting two homeruns in one game against the Philadelphia Phillies on August 13th.

After being in and out of the starting line-up under Charlie Grimm, the Braves finally reinstalled Sam in the starting line-up in mid-June. Jethroe responded by getting on base eight (8) straight times. From there on Grimm turned "The Jet" loose on the base paths in what Charlie called the "let him run" theory. On July 15th Sam was the Braves third leading hitter with a .267 batting average. Only Johnny Logan (.285) and Sid Gordon (.285) were hitting the ball better than Sam. As a team the Boston Braves had a meager .232 team batting average for the 1952 season.

After two very productive seasons with the Boston Braves, Sam Jethroe slumped and had a very disappointing season in 1952. His season batting average dropped almost 50 points from .280 in 1951 to .232 in 1952. According to Sam in an interview that appeared in the Milwaukee Journal and Sentinel on June 25th of 1953, the reason for his poor season hitting in 1952 was that he had gotten hurt sliding into a base at Cincinnati and didn't tell anyone.

Boston Daily Record

Boston, MA
04-08-52

The only bright spot in the season for Sam was that his 28 stolen bases were almost half of the team's 58 steals. Jethroe did play in 151 games and got 687 plate appearances (both were the most of any Brave), but his offensive numbers were all down across the board. At 35 years of age he just had a "bad" year. To Sam Jethroe's credit, Boston's team batting average was only one point higher at .233.

Two factors were speculated as to the reason for Sam Jethroe's hitting troubles in 1952. The first was that he had failing eye sight that had required him to start wearing glasses. The second was his age. During the season, rumors quickly started that Sam was significantly older (and they were right) than his age that had been reported when he was signed into "organized" baseball. The one factor this author goes back to was that he hit within one point of what the team batting

DODGERS (N)					BRAVES (N)				
	ab	h	po	a		ab	h	po	a
Reese, s	4	1	0	2	Klaus, s	4	0	1	2
Bridges, s	0	0	0	0	Jethroe, cf	4	4	4	0
Cox, s	4	1	0	1	Hoover, p	0	0	0	0
Morgan, s	0	0	0	0	Mathews, p	1	0	0	0
Snider, cf	3	2	2	0	Torgeson, l	2	1	9	1
Villms, cf	1	1	0	0	Walt's, l	3	0	1	0
Robinson, s	3	2	2	4	Marshall, r	3	0	1	1
Perger, s	1	0	1	1	Daniels, r	1	1	0	0
Pinella, c	4	1	5	0	Sisti, s	4	1	4	2
Pafko, l	3	0	1	0	El, Cl're, c	4	1	3	2
Abrams, l	1	1	2	0	Cusick, s	3	0	2	3
Hodges, l	3	1	1	0	eCrows, s	1	0	0	0
Purillo, r	4	0	3	0	Righetti, a	0	0	0	0
Erskine, p	2	1	0	2	Bickford, p	2	1	1	3
Walker, c	0	0	0	0	Jester, p	0	0	0	0
Thomas, n	0	0	0	0	Bruton, cf	2	0	1	1
Loes, p	1	0	0	1					
Total	34	11	27	11	Total	34	8	27	18
a Walked for Erskine in 6th.									
b Ran for Walker in 6th.									
c Slid into DP for Cusick in 5th.									
d Filled out for Hoover in 9th.									
Boston 2 0 1 0 0 0 1 0 0-4 9 3									
Brooklyn 3 0 2 1 0 0 2 0 0-8 11 1									
Runs—Cox 2, Snider 3, Robinson 2,									
Erskine, Klaus, Jethroe 3, E—Robinson,									
Rt. Cl're (2), Sisti, RBI—Snyder 2,									
Robinson, Campanella, Pafko, Reese,									
Jethroe 2, Marshall, Torgeson, 2BH—Cox,									
Reese, Robinson, Jethroe, 3BH—Jethroe,									
RR—Snyder, Jethroe, DP—Reese, Robin-									
son, Hodges; Robinson to Hodges, Ter-									
williger to Hodges, LOB—Brooklyn 7, Bos-									
ton 7, BH—Erskine 4, Bickford 6, Jester									
2, SO—Erskine, Loes 3, Bickford, Hoover,									
HO—Erskine, 6 in 5 innings; Loes, 4 in 4;									
Bickford, 7 in 6; Jester, 2 in 1; Hoover,									
in 2, WdP—Bickford, WP—Erskine,									

average was for the 1952 season. In reality most of the Boston Braves hitters had an off year at the plate during the season.

Another highlight of the 1952 season for Sam Jethroe occurred on June 7th when he hit a grand slam homerun. This was the last grand slam hit by a Braves player in Boston before the team relocated to Milwaukee for the 1953 season.

During the season the Braves were led by the hitting of Sid Gordon (.289 w/ 25 HR and 75 RBI), Johnny Logan (.283) and Eddie Matthews (.242 w/ 25 HR and 58 RBI).

The pitching staff didn't fare any better than the hitters in 1952. Only two teams, the Pittsburgh Pirates (4.65 ERA) and the Cincinnati Reds (4.01), had a higher ERA than Boston's team earned run average of 3.73 ERA. The pitching staff for the 1952 Braves included Warren Spahn (14-19), Jim Wilson (12-14), Max Surkont (12-13), Vern Bickford (7-12), Lew Burdette (6-11), Ernie Johnson (6-3) and Sheldon Jones

By late August of 1952 Sam Jethroe's batting average for the season had dropped to .251 (105 for 419) and Boston newspapers were starting to report that Billy Bruton would soon take Sam Jethroe's place in the outfield.

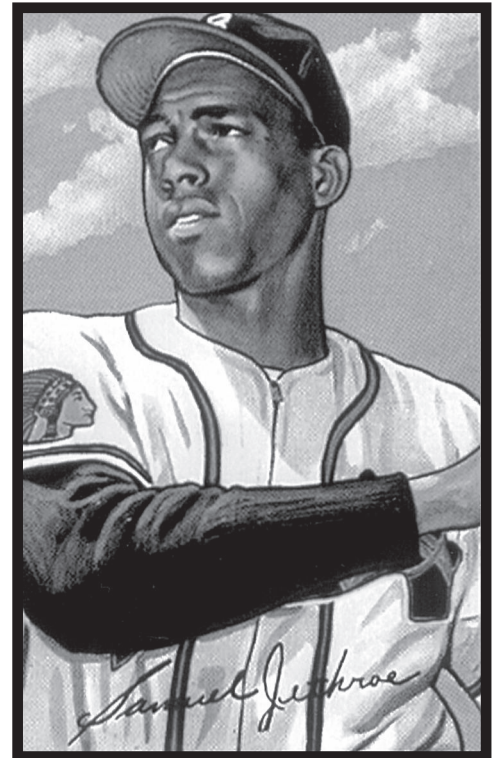
Bruton Looms as New Successor to Jethroe

Boston Daily Record
Boston, MA
08-20-52

As the season closed Sam Jethroe was battling Brooklyn's Pee Wee Reese for the stolen base title of the National League. On September 1st "The Jet" had stolen 23 bases for the season and was only one stolen base behind Reese for the National League title. With 27 stolen bases Reese increased his lead over Jethroe by two stolen bases by September 9th.

The Boston Braves finished in next to last place in the National League with a record of 64-89 (.418) and were 27.5 games behind the pennant winning Brooklyn Dodgers (96-57).

During the winter of 1952 newspapers across the country started speculating that Sam Jethroe's days with the Braves were limited and that Bill Bruton would be Boston's centerfielder in 1953. In addition Sam Jethroe was said to be in Manager Charlie Grimm's dog house and the Braves were looking to trade their speedster. Reportedly, Grimm made the following statement that Sammy is not his "type of player." On December 22nd the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published an article that Charlie Grimm had recently announced that newcomer Billy Bruton was his starting centerfielder for the 1953 Braves season.



Sam Jethroe
Bowman Baseball Card
1952

Sam Jethroe May Be Sold

NEW YORK — (ANP) — Reorganization of the Boston Braves baseball team now under way, has Charlie Grimm saying that Sammy Jethroe, for the past three years, center fielder for the Braves, is on the block. The manager is alleged to have said that Sammy is not his "type of player."

Ever since Branch Rickey unloaded Sammy on the "Three Little Shovels" as the then new owners of the Braves were called, there has been doubt that Jethroe would be the Big League star many hoped.

Sammy was known to be an averaged fielder, a poor thrower, but a dangerous man with a bat and holy terror once he got on base.

As a Brave, Jethroe enjoyed fair success. If he fails to stick this year, it will not be because he didn't try.

Sam Jethroe Goes Down to the Minors

Going into the 1953 season, everyone knew that there would be significant changes for the Braves. During the second half of the 1952 season the media focused on Sam losing his starting position in the outfield to newcomer Billy Bruton. There had even been talk of Jethroe being sold to another team or possibly being sent back down to the Minor Leagues. Even before spring training started, it seemed like everyone's job was on the line. Grimm was extremely unhappy with Jethroe's defensive play during the 1952 season. Del Crandall's return from the military meant that Walker Cooper's days as the Braves starting catcher were limited. Homerun slugger Joe Adcock, George Crowe and Hank Ertman were competing for the job at first base. In addition long time Braves power hitter Sid Gordon was not assured of a job when the regular season started. Then during the second week of March a bombshell hit Major League baseball when it was announced that Braves owner Lou Perini had received unanimous approval to move his franchise from Boston to Milwaukee (WI). In a domino effect the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association were moved to Toledo (OH).

Knowing that his job was on the line, Sam Jethroe signed his Braves contract for the 1953 season and returned it to General Manager John Quinn before the end of January of 1953.

Plain Dealer

Cleveland, OH
12-12-52

In late January a rumor hit the newspapers that the Braves were interested in trading for Pittsburgh Pirates slugger Ralph Kiner. According to a newspaper article that appeared in the Boston Record American on February 1st, the Braves proposed sending Sid Gordon, Sam Jethroe, Earl Torgeson, Sibby Sisti and a large amount of cash to the Pirates for Kiner. Nothing ever came out of the rumors out of Pittsburgh.

The 1953 Season Brings Changes for Jethroe and the Braves

When spring training opened in Bradenton (FL) for the Braves, they had six young outfielders in camp to challenge Sid Gordon, Sam Jethroe and Andy Pafko for their starting jobs. Billy Bruton, Luis Marquez, Jim Pendleton, Chuck Tanner, Bob Thorpe and Pete Whisenant made up this group of young ball players hungry to make the Major League roster for the Braves. To make matters even more stressful for Jethroe, Billy Bruton (Santurce, Puerto Rico) and Jim Pendleton (Cienfuegos, Cuba) entered spring training just after completing winter ball in the Caribbean. Both Bruton and Pendleton were said to have reported to spring training in great form like it was already midseason. When asked about the competition for outfield jobs, Manager Charlie Grimm was quoted in the Boston Herald on February 8th as follows:

"I'm going to give plenty of consideration to any of the young outfielders who can get those drives which have been dropping safely between our outfielders and killing the morale of our pitchers. There's nothing more discouraging to a pitcher who finally makes the batter pop up an easy fly and then turns around to see the blooper drop safely between slow-reacting outfielders. I figure if we can tighten up our outfield our pitching will be even better than a year ago. And it wasn't bad then."

According to Charlie Grimm, Sam Jethroe's defensive play had lost 16 games for the Braves during the 1952 season. From the very beginning it was obvious to everyone that Sam Jethroe was not going to play anymore games in centerfield for Grimm.

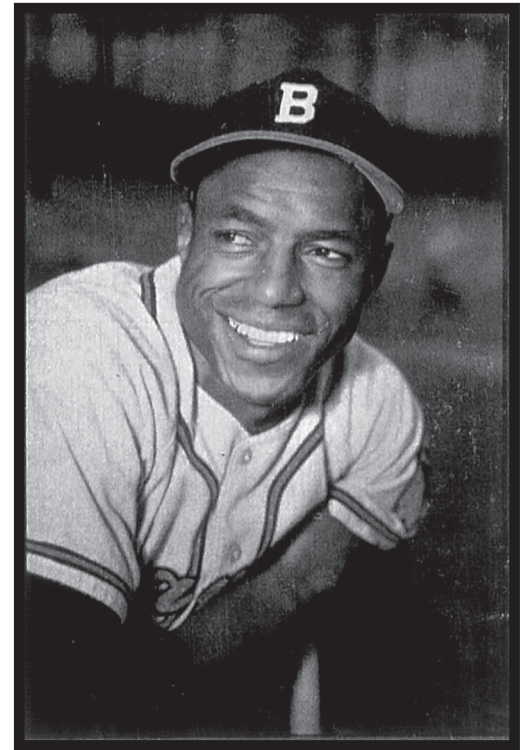
During the first week of March of 1953, Grimm put Billy Bruton in centerfield and moved Sam Jethroe to left field to share playing time with Sid Gordon. Jethroe played behind Gordon the entire spring training or played on Milwaukee's "B" team. The highlight of spring training for Sam was going four for four with a triple and four runs batted in for the Milwaukee Braves "B" team in a game played on March 28th against the Atlanta Crackers who were the Braves AA farm club in the Southern Association. The Braves trounced the Atlanta Crackers by a score of 16 to 9. To make matters even worse for Sam, Charlie Grimm also replaced Jethroe as the team's lead-off hitter with Billy Bruton. In addition Grimm identified Jim Pendleton as the backup for Bruton in centerfield. To Jethroe he was beginning to see the end of his career as a Boston/Milwaukee Brave.

Sam Jethroe Joins the Toledo Mud Hens

After a disappointing season with the Braves in 1952 and an unimpressive spring training in 1953 in which he was only used sparingly in exhibition games, Sam Jethroe was optioned to the Toledo Sox of the American Association who were the Braves AAA farm club. He was sent down on April 13th with a 24 hour recall. He was never recalled and would never play for the Braves in Milwaukee.

The decision to send Jethroe down was made easier because the Braves had former Negro Leaguers Billy Bruton and Jim Pendleton waiting in the wings. The fact that he led the National League in errors for an outfielder for his first three years in the "league" did not help his case for staying in the Major Leagues.

Toledo was managed by George Selkirk and then Tommy Holmes during the season. Immediately upon joining Toledo, he became their starting centerfielder and batted second in the order behind Chuck Tanner. Later in the season Jethroe was moved up as the lead-off man in the batting order.



Sam Jethroe
Milwaukee Braves
1953

Jethroe Gets Vital Homer

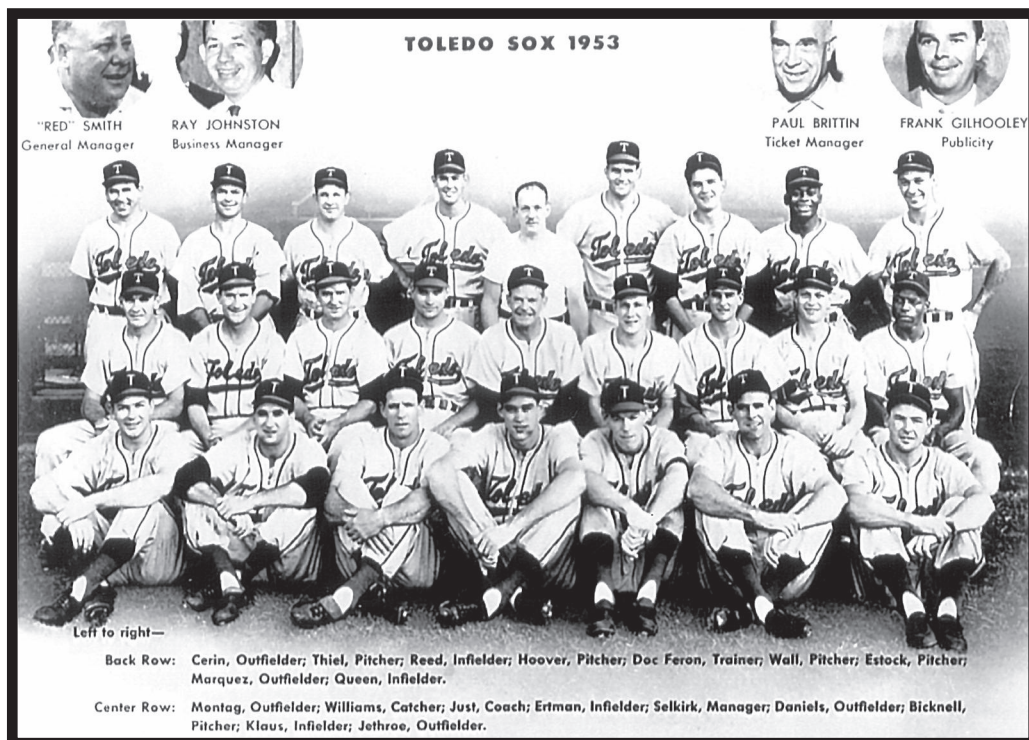
By The Associated Press.

SAM JETHROE'S 10th inning home run with a man on gave the Toledo Sox a 7-5 victory over Kansas City Tuesday night and kept the Sox hot on Indianapolis' heels in the American Association. However, the league-leading Indians maintained their game and half edge on the Sox by topping Louisville, 5-3.

The Toledo Sox fielded a strong team in 1953 and Sam Jethroe was an integral part of it. Sam Jethroe led the Sox in hitting with a .309 batting average and a .560 slugging percentage for the season. Jethroe also found his power to go along with his speed during the 1953 season in Toledo. He led the team in triples (10) and home runs (28). Jethroe also led the American Association in walks with 109 free passes and runs scored with 137. During the season Sam Jethroe's clutch hitting either tied or won several important games for the Toledo Sox. In short he was Toledo's best offensive player during the 1953 season.

Sam Jethroe Delivers for Toledo

Aberdeen Daily News
Aberdeen, SD
07-22-53



Toledo Sox (1953)

(Sam Jethroe – middle row first on right and Luis Marquez – back row second on right)

Sam Jethroe's complete statistics for his 1953 season with the Toledo Sox were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1953	Toledo	145	543	137	168	32	10	28	74	27	.309	.560

Other Sox players who contributed significantly at the plate during the 1953 season were former Negro Leaguer Luis Marquez (.292), Billy Reed (.290) and Billy Queen (.281).

The pitching staff for Toledo included Gene Conley (23-9 w/ 2.90 ERA), Charlie Bicknell (15-10 w/ 4.09 ERA), Murray Wall (10-8 w/ 3.04 ERA), Virgil Jester (9-10 w/ 4.73 ERA) and Gene Thompson (8-6 w/ 3.87 ERA).

In his first game of the season for Toledo, Sam Jethroe showed the Braves "organization" that he still had a lot left in the tank when he stole home in the first inning. For the game Sam went 2 for 3 with a double and two runs scored. Then a couple of days later in a game against Charleston, Sam hit his first homerun of the season which was a long blast over the centerfield fence to tie the game in the top of the ninth inning. The next day against Columbus he went 2 for 5 with another homerun, double and one run batted in. Another highlight of Sam's 1953 season in Toledo was hitting a homerun over the 472 foot left field fence at Swayne Field. This was the first time in the history of the ball park that this feat had ever been accomplished.

Towards the end of the regular season the American Association title race turned into a three team race for the "league" championship between Toledo, Kansas City and Louisville. Down the stretch Sam Jethroe produced at the plate for the Sox.

Some examples of Sam Jethroe's clutch hitting in the team's championship run are as follows:

- Jethroe and Wally Post both homered to beat the Kansas City Blues on August 3rd.
- Sam belted his 23rd homerun of the season with two runners aboard and Gene Conley picked up his 19th victory to beat St. Paul on August 13th.
- On August 25th in a critical game against Minneapolis, Sam went 4 for 6 with a triple and three runs scored.
- Jethroe drove in all three of Toledo's runs in a 3-2 win over Louisville in the American Association play-off series.
- In the next to last game in the finals against the Kansas City Blues, Sam Jethroe got three hits including a triple and homerun to keep Toledo alive in the series.



Jethroe Homers for Toledo

For his play during the season, Sam Jethroe was a unanimous selection and the leading vote getter to the 1953 American Association All Star team. Also representing the Toledo Sox on the All Star team were Gene Conley (P) and Billy Klaus (utility).

During the season, Sam Jethroe was confident about returning to the Milwaukee Braves. His play during the season in Toledo proved that he could still produce offensively and that he still possessed blazing speed that made him a threat every time he got on base.

In an interesting move that was reported by the Boston Traveler on September 4th, the Milwaukee Braves recalled the following six players: Gene Conley (P), Virgil Jester (P), Sam Jethroe (OF), Billy Klaus (INF), Luis Marquez (OF) and Jim Solt (C). The interesting part of the story was that the six players were not scheduled to report to the Milwaukee Braves before the next spring.

Milwaukee Journal and Sentinel

Milwaukee, WI
06-25-53

Sam Jethroe Is Confident He'll Be Back With Braves

TOLEDO, Ohio—(AP)—Sam Jethroe, \$100,000 outfielder whom the Braves bought from Montreal, thinks he will be back on the Milwaukee roster by the end of the season. He was sent here by the Braves at the beginning of the season to increase his confidence and to do something about the .232 batting average with which he finished last year.

At the moment Jethroe is batting less than .300, but he feels sure he can improve it.

"Every ballplayer hits a snag once in a while," he said Thursday, "and I always get over it. Two weeks ago I had a .320 average, but then I ran into this

little snag and now I've got to go back and check what I'm doing wrong. I hit the ball all right, but I keep hitting it at people."

Jethroe blamed an injury for his weak batting average last season.

"I got hurt sliding into a base during a double header at Cincinnati but didn't say anything about it. Feel fine now, though," he said.

Although he does not appear worried about his slump, he does worry a little about the Braves, saying: "They're going so good, they may not need me."

Jethroe spent 1950, 1951 and 1952 with the Braves.



Boston American

Boston, MA
09-28-53

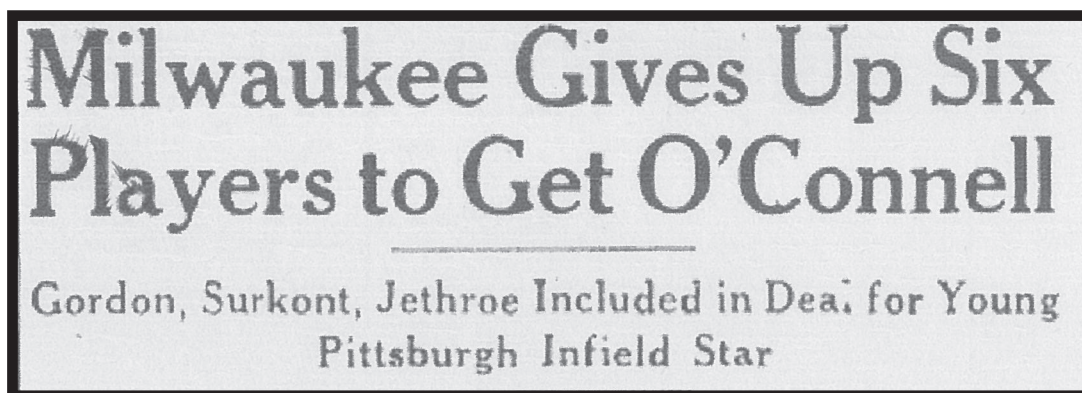
When the regular season closed Toledo prevailed with a record of 90-64 (.584). They edged out the Kansas City Blues (88-66) who ended the season two games out of first place and the Louisville Colonels (84-70) who were six games back. The Toledo Sox won the American Association title for one reason - they played solid "team" baseball. Toledo had the fourth best team batting average in the "league" with a .255 batting average. The Sox also had the second best pitching staff in the American Association with a team earned run average of 4.09. In addition the Toledo Sox was the best fielding team in the "league" with a .974 fielding average.

In the American Association play-off series, Toledo faced Louisville and Kansas City took on Indianapolis. Toledo beat Louisville four games to three and Kansas City defeated Indianapolis four games to two.

Toledo played Kansas City in the championship final with the winner advancing to the Junior World Series. Kansas City won the first three games by the scores of 5-2, 9-8 and 10-0. Toledo came back and won the next three by the scores of 8-3, 5-4 and 4-2. In the final game of the series the Kansas City Blues defeated the Toledo Sox by a score of 4-1.

Jethroe is Traded to the Pittsburgh Pirates

On December 26, 1953 Sam Jethroe was traded by the Milwaukee Braves with Larry Leslie, Sid Gordon, Curt Raydon, Max Surkont, Fred Waters and \$ 100,000 of cash to the Pittsburgh Pirates for Danny O'Connell. Even though Danny O'Connell was a top prospect of the Pirates, he never really lived up to everyone's expectations.



Springfield Union

Springfield, MA
12-27-53

A Short Lived Stay with the Pittsburgh Pirates

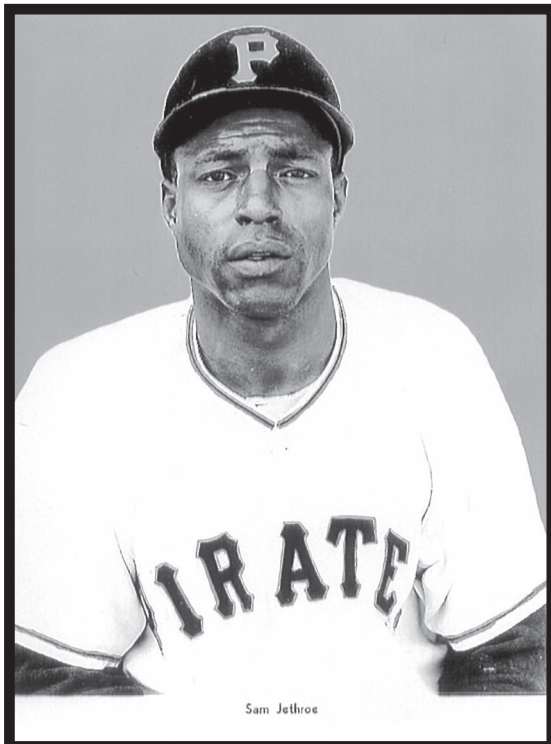
The first order of business for Sam Jethroe as a Pittsburgh Pirate was to have his eye sight checked. On January 2, 1954 General Manager Branch Rickey of the Pittsburgh Pirates scheduled Sam Jethroe for an eye examination. According to Rickey, if Sam passed the eye exam and was cleared to play he would join the Pittsburgh Pirates Major League club for spring training. The findings from the eye specialist (Dr. A.A. Kreiger) was that there was nothing wrong with Sam's eyes that a good pair of glasses wouldn't cure and that a change in glasses would give him normal vision. Kreiger's official diagnosis was a "moderate amount of myopia" or in laymen's terms Jethroe suffered from being nearsighted.



Curt Roberts, Fred Haney (Manager) and Sam Jethroe
Pittsburg Pirates
Forbes Field
April 1954

Spring training for the Pittsburgh Pirates began on March 1st. The initial problem for Sam Jethroe was that the Pirates had 11 outfielders in camp. According to an article that appeared in the Times-Picayune of New Orleans these outfielders were Cal Abrams, Carlos Bernier, Brandy Davis, Bobby Del Greco, Dick Hall, Gail Henley, Gene Hermanski, Sam Jethroe, Jerry Lynch, Hal Rice and Frank Thomas. With so many players at one position, everyone was limited on playing time. A review of newspaper accounts indicates that Sam Jethroe had some good games during spring training. The biggest disappointment for Jethroe during the 1954 Pirates spring training camp was that he was beaten by ex-Duke University athlete Brandy Davis in the sprints. Sadly, for the first time in his career Sam Jethroe was no longer the fastest man on his team. In one of the last games of spring training Sam Jethroe hit a three run homerun to lead Pittsburg to a 4-2 win over the Philadelphia Athletics.

Sam Jethroe Makes the Pittsburgh Pirates Opening Day Roster



When spring training camp broke, Sam Jethroe had made the opening day roster for the Pittsburgh Pirates of the National League. Unfortunately, he only appeared in two games during his short stay with the Pirates. Sam Jethroe played in his last Major League baseball game on April 15, 1954.

It is still a mystery as to why the Pirates would have put him on their Major League roster and then release after only two games. He had been a proven player in the past and two games does not seem to be a fair evaluation of his current level of talent or what he might have contributed to Pittsburg during the regular season.

Even though the Pittsburgh Pirates (53-101) were the worst team in the National League, Sam Jethroe did not fit into their plans for the season. When the Pirates released him, Sam knew he still wanted to play professional baseball, but little did he know that he would never return to the Major Leagues during the remainder of his career.

Sam Jethroe Signs with the Toronto Maple Leafs

After his extremely short stint with the Pittsburgh Pirates and even though he was still technically the property of the Pirates, Sam was signed by the Toronto Maple Leafs of the International League. Toronto was an independent ball club and not affiliated with any Major League club.

The Toronto Maple Leafs were a strong team that would vie for the International League title in 1954. Jethroe fit right in with the Maple Leafs as their starting centerfielder and lead-off hitter.



Toronto Maple Leafs (1954)

Toronto had a solid hitting team that was led by former Kansas City Monarchs catcher Elston Howard (.330 w/ 22 homeruns and 109 RBI), former Negro Leaguer Hector Rodriquez (.307), Bobby Wilson (.306), Sam Jethroe (.305), Billy DeMars (.299), Ed Stevens (.292 w/ 27 homeruns and 113 RBI), Loren Babe (.289), Lew Morton (.289) and Archie Wilson (.282). The Maple Leafs led the International League in hitting in 1954 with a .284 team batting average.

Sam Jethroe's complete hitting statistics for the 1954 Maple Leafs were:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1954	Toronto	154	593	113	181	36	8	21	84	23	.305	.499

During the 1954 season Sam Jethroe led the International League in the following four offensive categories: most runs scored (113), hits (181), total bases (281) and strikeouts (98).

Sam Jethroe started the season strong for the Maple Leafs and went 2 for 4 with a double and two runs batted in in his first game. Some of his other "big" games during the season were as follows:

- On June 17th against Ottawa, Sam went 4 for 5 with a run scored and two runs batted in. His two out single in the tenth inning provided the game winner for Toronto.
- On July 9th in a game against Richmond, Sam went 3 for 4 with a double, homerun, two runs scored and two runs batted in.
- Sam Jethroe paced a 15-7 win for Toronto over Richmond on September 11th. Sam collected 4 hits in 5 at bats. He also had a double and scored two runs.
- A two run homerun in the eighth inning broke a 7-7 tie in a play-off game against Syracuse. The play-off game was played on September 19th.

Former Kansas City Monarchs star pitcher Connie Johnson (17-8), Ed Blake (15-9), Rudy Minarcin (11-2) and former Negro Leaguer Bill Powell (10-8) comprised the starting rotation for Toronto. Former Negro Leaguer Frank Barnes (9-8) also pitched for the Maple Leafs in 1954. Ray Shore was the team's leading relief pitcher with an 8-2 record and 2.59 ERA. Toronto had the third best pitching staff with a 4.11 team ERA. The Syracuse Chiefs (3.85 ERA) and Rochester Red Wings (3.95 ERA) were the only two teams with a more effective pitching staff.

Sam Jethroe's play for the Toronto Maple Leafs was recognized by the Pittsburgh Pirates who still owned his contract on September 4th when they announced that he was one of the 17 players they were recalling to their Major League roster. Some of the other notable names on the call-up list were Elroy Face (P), Bill Hall (C), George Freese (3B) and Dale Long (1B). Sam Jethroe never went up to the Pirates during the regular season.

In mid-September the International League All Star team was announced and Sam Jethroe was one of the starting outfielders. Fellow Maple Leafs teammate and future New York Yankees great Elston Howard also made the team and was voted the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the International League. Maple Leaf third baseman Loren Babe also was selected to the team. A week earlier Toronto's Luke Sewell was named the "Manager of the Year."

The Toronto Maple Leafs finished the 1954 season with an outstanding record of 97-57 (.630) and won the International League championship by nine games over the Montreal Royals (88-66).

After the conclusion of the 1954 regular season the Toronto Maple Leafs advanced to the International League play-off series along with the second place Montreal Royals, third place Rochester Red Wings and fourth place Syracuse Chiefs. By winning the regular season the Toronto Maple Leafs faced the fourth place Syracuse Chiefs in the first round. Toronto was upset by Syracuse and lost the series winning only two games to four for the Chiefs. Montreal defeated Rochester four games to two. In the series finals Syracuse narrowly beat Montreal four games to three and moved on to the Junior World Series.



Toronto Celebrates Championship in the Locker Room

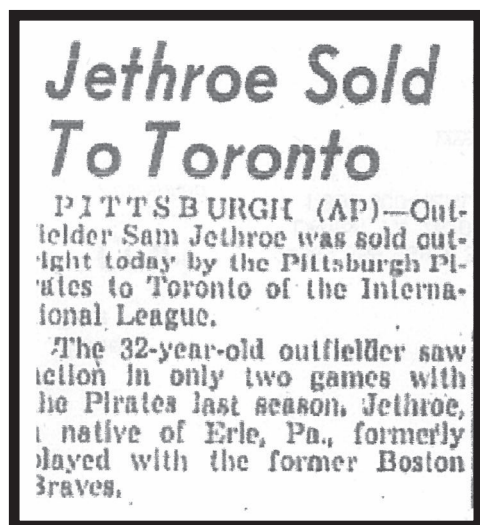
Jethroe Returns to Cuba

After a several year absence, Sam Jethroe returned to Cuba to play winter baseball. Jethroe played for the Cienfuegos Elefantes during the 1954-55 Cuban Winter League season. The seventy-two (72) game 1954-55 season started on October 14, 1954 and ended on February 7, 1955. Cienfuegos was managed by Regino Otero during the season.

Roberto Tapanes (.310), Bob Boyd (.306), Humberto Fernandez (.302), Harry Elliott (.298), Lorenzo Cabrera (.296) and Sam Jethroe (.276) led the Elefantes in hitting during the season. Sam Jethroe's hitting statistics for the 1954-55 season were disappointing by his standard. He only collected 27 hits in 98 at bats. He did have four homeruns, but only one double and two triples. The only positive note of Sam's offensive production for the Elefantes was scoring 21 runs in his limited playing time.

The pitching staff for Cienfuegos included Bob Habenicht (5-6), Frank Wooldridge (4-7), Jim Melton (3-9) and Armando Suarez (3-4).

Cienfuegos never competed for the "league" lead during the season. Almendares who was managed by Bobby Bragan ran away with the title with a 44-25 (.638) won-loss record. Cienfuegos finished the season in last place with a record of 27-42 (.391). Habana (36-33) ended the season in second place and Marianao (31-38) was in third place.



Boston American

Boston, MA
01-04-55

Even with \$ 150,000 in revenues from radio and television that was divided equally between the four clubs in the "league," all the teams reported that they suffered financially.

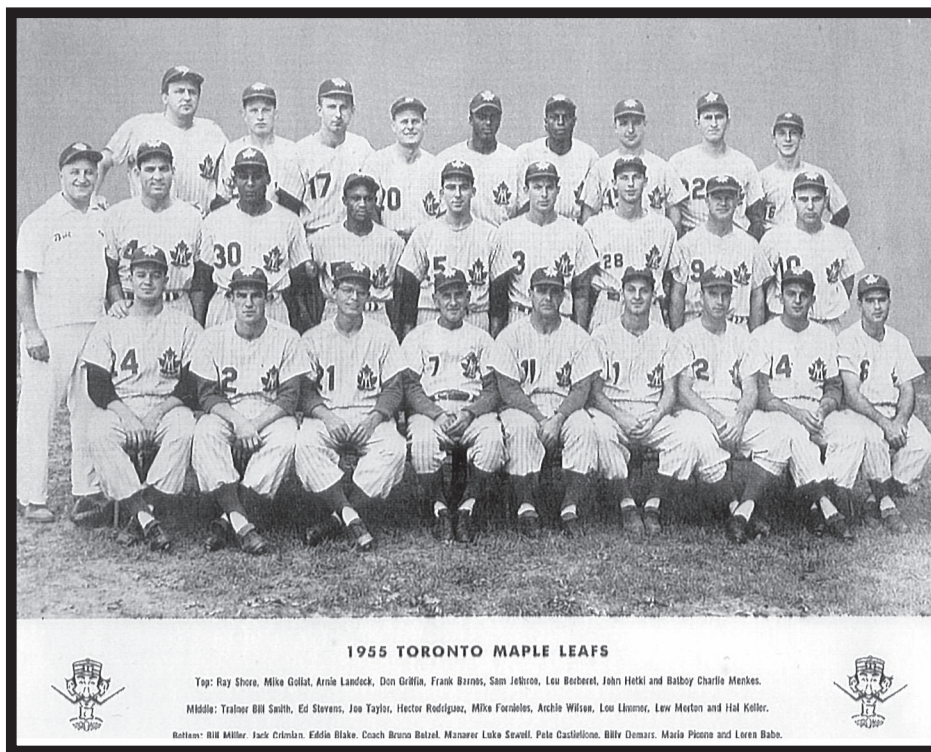
Sam Rejoins the Toronto Maple Leafs

Before the start of the 1955 season, Sam Jethroe's contract was "officially" sold by the Pittsburgh Pirates to the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Sam Jethroe returned to the Toronto Maple Leafs for the 1955 International League season as the team's starting centerfielder. He batted third in the order. The Toronto Maple Leafs had another good team and would battle the Montreal Royals all season for the "league" title. The Toronto Maple Leafs returned most of their starters from the 1954 championship team.

Archie Wilson (.319), Pete Castiglione (.293), Hector Rodriguez (.289), Loren Babe (.286), Lew Morton (.286), Joe Taylor (.286) and Billy DeMars (.283) paved the way in hitting for the Maple Leafs during the season. Jethroe struggled at the plate the entire season. He played in 145 games for Toronto and batted a disappointing .262 with an extremely low .410 slugging percentage. On a positive note, he did have 24 stolen bases. The Toronto Maple Leafs had the second best team batting average in the International League. The Montreal Royals had a .288 team batting average and the Toronto Maple Leafs posted a team batting average of .278.

The pitching staff for Toronto was anchored by Jack Crimian (19-6), Ed Blake (17-13), Ken Johnson (14-10) and Connie Johnson (12-2). Mario Picone (7-16 w/ 4.01 ERA) was a big disappointment for the team. Ray Shore who had been the big stopper out of the bull pen the season had a very disappointing season going 5-5 with a 4.05 ERA. At the end of the season the entire Maple Leafs pitching staff was ranked second in the "league" with a respectable 3.92 ERA. The Montreal Royals led the International League with a 3.64 team ERA.



Toronto Maple Leafs (1955)

(Sam Jethroe – back row fourth from right)

Jethroe started the 1955 season on a hot streak. On April 23rd Sam went 4 for 6 with two homeruns, six runs batted in, three runs scored and two stolen bases. Less than two weeks later Jethroe hit for the cycle (single, double, triple and homerun) in a 9-2 win over the Havana Sugar Kings. In the game he also scored three runs and had a one run batted in. A few days later Sam went 4 for 4 with three runs batted in during a game against Buffalo. Then on May 19th Sam hit two runs to give the Maple Leafs a 11-7 win over the Rochester Red Wings.

Jethroe Big Man In Leafs' Attack

(By The Associated Press)

One of the reasons the Toronto Maple Leafs are tied with the Montreal Royals for first place in the International League is the fine hitting of centerfielder Sam Jethroe.

Jethroe hit his ninth home run of the season with two on last night as the Leafs defeated the Rochester Red Wings 11-7 to tie Montreal. The Royals fought off late inning Buffalo rally to defeat the Bisons 10-8.

In other games, the Richmond Virginians came from behind to tip the Syracuse Chiefs 8-6 and the Columbus Jets knocked off the Havana Sugar Kings 6-2.

Toronto and Montreal have identical .667 percentages but on won-lost basis the Royals lead by one-half game.

Toronto exploded for six runs in the third, including Jethroe's

circuit blast. They held a comfortable 10-3 lead going into the eighth when the Red Wings scored once and added three more in the ninth.

Columbus Dispatch
Columbus, OH
05-20-55

Toronto	AB.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
Jethroe, 3b	3	3	2	1	3	0
Rodriguez, ss	4	1	0	1	4	0
Jethroe, cf	5	3	4	4	0	0
Berberet, c	5	2	3	4	0	0
Wilson, lf	6	2	3	2	0	0
Morton, rf	3	3	1	1	0	0
Gallat, 2b	5	1	4	3	4	1
Stevens, 1b	6	1	2	11	0	0
Hetki, p	3	0	1	0	2	0
Shore, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
E. Johnson	1	0	0	0	0	0
Crimian, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	43	16	20	27	13	1
COLUMBUS	AB.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
Verdi, 3b	5	1	1	2	1	1
Lopez, 2b	5	3	4	6	2	0
Taylor, lf	5	0	1	0	0	0
Rinkston, rf	4	2	2	3	0	0
Limmer, 1b	4	2	3	3	1	0
Wilhelm, ss	5	0	1	2	3	0
Del Querico, cf	4	1	2	1	0	0
Roark, c	5	0	1	5	2	1
Thels, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Freese, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scam	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lively, p	1	0	1	0	0	0
Little	1	0	0	0	0	0
Haag, p	0	0	0	0	1	0
Paechini	1	0	0	0	0	0
Miller, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brown	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	42	8	10	27	10	2
aGrounded out for Freese in 2nd.						
bFouled out for Lively in 5th.						
cGrounded out for Shore in 6th.						
dStruck out for Haag in 7th.						
eGrounded out for Miller in 9th.						
Toronto	060	203	221	16		
Columbus	210	221	001	9		
RBI—Limmer 4, Jethroe 6, Gallat 2, Berberet 2, Verdi, Babe, Lopez 2, Wilson 2, Morton, Crimian, Roark, 2B—Gallat, Berberet, Wilson, 3B—Limmer 2, HR—Jethroe, Berberet, Babe, Lopez, Limmer, Morton, Mason, 5B—Jethroe 2, S—Rodriguez, Crimian, P—Wilhelm, Lopez, Limmer, Gallat, Rodriguez, Stevens, Left—Toronto 10, Columbus 5, 5B—Thels 3, Lively 1, Haag 1, Hetki 1, Crimian 2, Miller 3GO—Hetki 2, Crimian 2, Haag 1, Miller 1, HO—Thels 3 on 1 st , Freese in 3 rd , Lively 6 in 3, Haag 4 in 2, Hetki 10 in 4, Shore 2 in 1, Crimian 4 in 4, Miller 4 in 2, Roark—Thels 3-1, Freese 3-0, Lively 2, Haag 5-4, Hetki, 7-7, Shore 0-0, Crimian 2, Miller 3-3, WP—Haag, Balk—Miller, W—Crimian (1-0), L—Thels (0-1), U—Limdata, Burch, Shulock. 3:01, A—5667 (including 3663 Knotters).						

Jethroe Has Big Game
4 Hits, 2 HR, 6 RBI, 2 SB

Columbus Dispatch
Columbus, OH
04-24-55

Jethroe Hits for Cycle

Sam Jethroe, the former centerfielder for the old Boston Braves, had a field day for Toronto of the International League last night. Sam hit for the cycle, a home run, triple, double and a single and scored three runs in leading Toronto to its 9-2 rout of Havana.

Boston American
Boston, MA
05-06-55

In late May the Toronto Maple Leafs were tied for first place with the Montreal Royals. The reason for their success according to the media was Sam Jethroe's "fine" hitting. However, Sam's hitting did not carry over to the second half of the season. Sam struggled at the plate during the majority of the second part of the 1955 season. According to newspaper reports the biggest part of Sam Jethroe's problem was a year long conflict between himself and Manager Luke Sewell.

There were few bright spots for Sam during the second half of the season. He did, however, experience a rare accomplishment when he hit an inside the park homerun against Columbus. In addition during a double header that Toronto played against the Havana Sugar Kings on July 19th, Sam went 3 for 5 in the first game and 2 for 4 in the second game against Havana. In the double header he collected two doubles, triple and stole two bases. Then the next day versus Syracuse he went 2 for 4 with a homerun and two runs scored.

At the end of the season Sam "The Jet" Jethroe tied for the lead in stolen bases with John Brandt (Rochester) and former Negro Leaguer Joe Caffie (Syracuse). Each player had 24 stolen bases.

The International League title came down to the last week of the season. The Montreal Royals (95-59) won the "league" championship by one half of a game over the Toronto Maple Leafs who had a won-loss record of 94-59 (.614).

When the play-off series started, the regular season champion the Montreal Royals played the fourth place Rochester Red Wings. Toronto was then left to play the Havana Sugar Kings. Rochester upset Montreal four games to one in their series and Toronto defeated Havana four games to one. In the Governors Cup Finals the Rochester Red Wings swept the Toronto Maple Leafs in four straight games. Rochester advanced to the Junior World Series.

Will Jethroe Return to His Old Form ?

After what was for Sam Jethroe a sub-par performance in 1955 and being 37 years old, Sam Jethroe's career seemed to be in jeopardy going into the 1956 season.

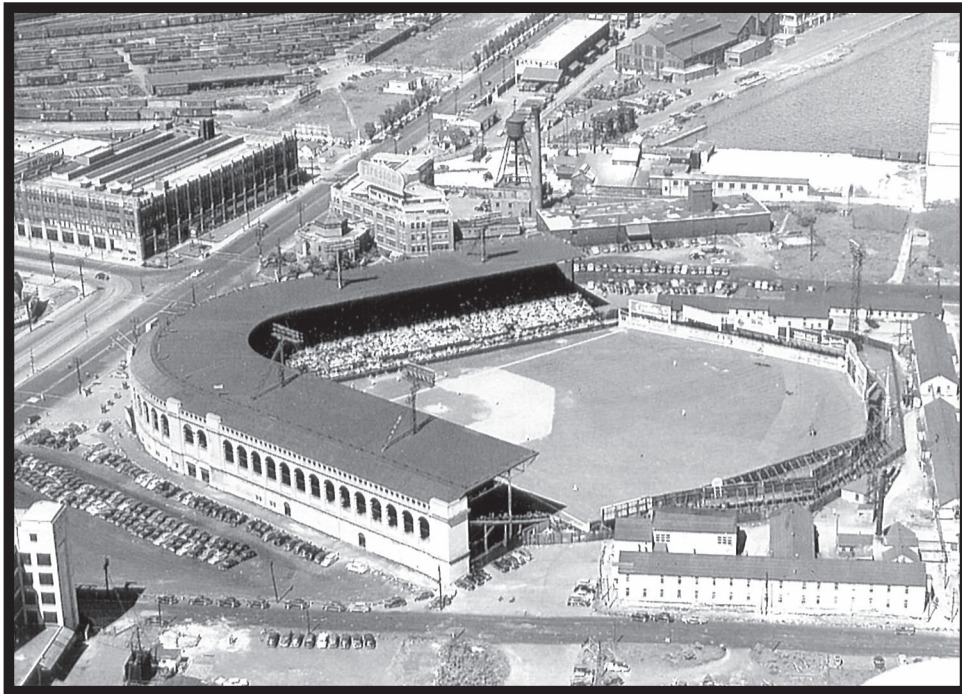
Archie Wilson (.301 w/ 18 homeruns and 84 RBI) led the team in hitting. Sam Jethroe was the second best hitter on the team with the following statistics for the 1956 season.

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1956	Toronto	149	567	105	163	25	4	19	68	22	.287	.446

Toronto Maple Leaf management had made a good decision and it paid off big for them by resigning Jethroe for the 1956 season.

Other Toronto hitters who contributed during the season were Carl Sawatski (.280 w/ 22 homeruns and 63 RBI), Mike Goliat (.278), Hector Rodriguez (.273), Billy Wilson (.272), Lew Morton (.268) and Loren Babe (.262).

Lynn Lovenguth (24-12 w/ 2.68) and Ed Blake (17-11 w/ 2.61 ERA) were the team's two top pitchers during the 1956 season. Don Johnson (15-9 w/ 3.53 ERA) and Ken Johnson (8-12) rounded out the starting rotation for the Maple Leafs.



Maple Leafs Stadium
Toronto, Canada

Sam Jethroe started the season off on a hot streak which put him back as the team's lead-off hitter. On April 19th Jethroe smacked a two run homerun to lead the Maple Leafs to a 3 to 1 win over the Richmond Virginians. Then a few days later he hit two homeruns and had six runs batted in. By late April newspapers were reporting that Sam had returned to his old level of performance and recaptured his lost youth. According to Sam he had regained his hitting touch by "laying off bad pitches." In an article that appeared in the Richmond Times Dispatch on April 20th, baseball great Luke Appling had the following to say about Sam Jethroe:

"Jethroe beats you more often and more ways than any other player in the league"

During the season Sam Jethroe had numerous multiple hit games. Some his big games during the 1956 season were the following:

- Jethroe hit two homeruns on June 29th to pace Toronto to a 9-4 victory over Havana.
- On July 4th “The Jet” showed off his old speed by stealing home in the first inning.
- When the Maple Leafs faced off against the Rochester Red Wings on July 15th, Sam went 3 for 5 with a homerun, two runs scored and two runs batted in to lead his team to a 6-5 win.
- Four days later on July 19th Jethroe went 2 for 4 with a double, triple and run scored. His play helped lead Toronto to a 3 to 2 victory over Buffalo.
- On August 6th Sam Jethroe in a double header against Montreal went 3 for 5 in game one with a triple, homerun and one run batted in. In the second game Jethroe went 3 for 4 with two runs scored and one run batted in.
- Then on August 14th he had another 3 for 4 hit game. This time it was against Columbus. One of his three hits was a homerun.
- In a play-off game against Rochester that was played on September 19th, Sam went 4 for 6 with a double, two homeruns, two runs scored and two runs batted in.
- Three days later he went 5 for 6 against the Rochester Redwings. He had a big homerun in the game.
- On September 23rd Jethroe hit a 375 foot game winning two run homerun to break a 3-3 deadlock with Rochester.

When the regular season ended Sam Jethroe was the International League leader in runs scored with 105. This was at least the tenth time in his career that he had led his league in runs scored which is a strong testament to his speed and base running abilities. He was also tied for second in the “league” for stolen bases. Les Johnston from Richmond led the “league” with 40. Sam Jethroe and Don Nicholas each had 22 stolen bases to tie for second place.

The 1956 International League was a four team race between the Toronto Maple Leafs, Miami Marlins, Montreal Royals and Rochester Red Wings. The final regular season standings for the 1956 International season were as follows:

International League (1956)

Team	Record	Pct.	Games Behind	Rank
Toronto Maple Leafs	86-66	.566	-	1 st
Rochester Red Wings	83-67	.553	2	2 nd
Miami Marlins	80-71	.530	5.5	3 rd
Montreal Royals	80-72	.526	6	4 th
Richmond Virginians	74-79	.484	12.5	5 th
Havana Sugar Kings	72-82	.468	15	6 th
Columbus Jets	69-84	.451	17.5	7 th
Buffalo Bisons	64-87	.424	21.5	8 th

With a combination of timely hitting, solid pitching and good defense, the Toronto Maple Leafs won the regular season championship.

TORONTO (1)						ROCHESTER (1)					
ab.r.h.o.a.						ab.r.h.o.a.					
Jethroe cf	8	4	5	4	0	Piazza 2b	4	0	0	5	7
Morton rf	5	2	4	1	0	Kasko ss	4	0	1	2	6
A. Wilson lf	6	0	0	3	0	Burgess cf	2	0	0	1	0
Sawatski c	2	3	1	3	1	Cunn'ham 1b	3	0	0	10	0
Goliat 2b	5	3	1	3	0	Green c	4	0	0	3	8
Babe 3b	5	1	2	0	3	Clark lf	4	0	0	3	0
Stevens 1b	2	0	0	9	3	Deal p	1	0	0	0	0
Rodriguez ss	3	0	2	1	4	Geiger a	2	0	0	0	2
Blake p	5	1	0	3	2	Van Noy 3b	3	1	1	0	2
						Phillips rf	3	0	2	3	0
Totals						30	14	15	27	13	
Totals						30	14	27	17		
Toronto						305	200	202	14		
Rochester						001	000	000	1		

E—Van Noy.
RBI—Babe, Blake, Jethroe, Morton 5, Phillips, Rodriguez, Sawatski. 2B—Babe, Morton 1, Van Noy, Phillips, Goliat, HR—Morton 2, Jethroe, Sawatski. SB—Jethroe, S—Stevens.
DP—Rodriguez ad Stevens; Geiger, Piazza and Cunningham; Piazza, Kasko and Cunningham; Kasko, Piazza and Cunningham. Left—Toronto, 9; Rochester, 5. BB—Deal 5, Blake 3, Geiger 5. SO—Deal 1, Blake 4, Geiger 1. HO—Deal, 6 in 3 innings; Geiger, 9 in 6. R&ER—Deal 2-5, Blake 1-1, Geiger 6-8. W—Blake (1-0). L—Deal (2-1). U—Roy, Sudol, Linjalata, Guzzetta. T—2:20, A—5:120.

Sam Goes 5 for 6 w/ HR in Play-Offs

Richmond Times Dispatch

Richmond, VA

09-22-56

During the 1957 season Sam Jethroe's numbers were down based on his standard but he still was productive both on and off the field. His complete batting statistics for the season were as follows.

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1957	Toronto	130	451	83	125	16	6	15	39	24	.277	.439

Even at 40 years of age he was still faster than any other player on his team. As a team, the Maple Leafs only stole 44 bases during the season and 24 of them are credited to Sam Jethroe.

Mike Goliat (.296 w/ 28 HR and 83 RBI), Rocky Nelson (.294 w/ 28 HR and 102 RBI) and Hector Rodriguez (.288) were the team's top hitters during the season. As a team the Toronto Maple Leafs posted a .260 team batting average for the 1957 season.

The starting pitching rotation for Toronto in 1957 included Humberto Robinson (18-7 w/ 2.95 ERA), Don Johnson (17-7 w/ 2.96 ERA), Jim Pearce (15-9 w/ 3.65 ERA), Ed Blake (8-9 w/ 5.54 ERA) and Johnny Schmitz (7-9 w/ 3.30 ERA).

Sam Jethroe started the 1957 season strong. He began the season batting in the second spot in the order, but shortly after the season started he was back in the lead-off spot where he remained for the rest of the year. Jethroe went 3 for 6 with a homerun and two runs scored against the Montreal Royals on May 25th. Then on May 30th he connected for two homeruns to lead the Maple Leafs over Buffalo. His hitting tapered off over the rest of the season but he still finished the year with a respectable .277 batting average.

Toronto manager Dixie Walker got the most out of his players during the season. With pitching dominating the 1957 International League season, the Maple Leafs team batting average of .260 was tied for the "league" lead with the Buffalo Bisons. The pitching staff for the Maple Leafs was ranked fourth in the "league" with a 3.93 ERA. Toronto and Havana Sugar Kings were tied for the "league" lead in fielding with a .978 fielding percentage.

In the first round of the International League play-offs, Toronto defeated Montreal four games to one and Rochester beat Miami four games to one. In a closely played Governors' Cup Finals, the Rochester Red Wings won the last two games of the series against Toronto to win the championship and a trip to the Junior World Series.

Sam Joins Toronto for Another Season

Going into the 1957 season everyone knew Sam Jethroe was reaching the end of his career but Toronto management and Jethroe felt that he had at least one more good year left in him. One big change for Sam going into the 1957 season was that he was moved from centerfield to left field.

Jethroe entered the 1957 International League more determined than he had ever been to prove himself on the field and reward Maple Leafs' management for the confidence they had shown in him.



Toronto Maple Leafs (1957)

(**Sam Jethroe** – back row third from right and **Hector Rodriquez** – seated third from right)

The 1957 regular season championship ended up as a two team race between Toronto and the Buffalo Bisons. When season play concluded, the Toronto Maple Leafs had won the regular International League season championship with a record of 88-65 (.575). They were a mere one half game ahead of the Buffalo Bisons (88-66). The Richmond Virginians (81-73) ended the season in third place and the Miami Marlins (75-78) were in fourth place.

Toronto played the Miami Marlins in the first round of the play-off series. Miami upset the “league” champions four games to two and advanced to the Governors’ Cup Finals to play the Buffalo Bisons who had defeated Richmond Virginians. Buffalo easily won the Governors’ Cup and represented the International League in the Junior World Series.

Sam Jethroe’s Baseball Finale

The 1958 season was Sam Jethroe’s last in professional baseball. His role on the team also went from starter to substitute player off the bench. Sam’s hitting performance in 1958 was the worst of his career. Father time had finally caught up with the fleet footed Samuel “The Jet” Jethroe. Sam only appeared in 68 games for the Maple Leafs during the season. He went 43 for 184 for a dismal .234 batting average with a .326 slugging percentage. This also was the first time in Jethroe’s career that he hit below the team batting average for the season. His five steals were also a season low.

Jethroe’s 1958 season was hampered by breaking a bone in his right foot when he was struck by a foul tip. Sam was out for over six weeks.

Toronto first baseman and future Major Leaguer Rocky Nelson (.326 w/ 43 HR and 120 RBI) was one of the top players in the International League during the season. The Toronto Maple Leafs offensive attack was also aided by the hitting of Tim Thompson (.303 w/20 HR and 53 RBI), Angel Scull (.283), former Negro League all star Milton Smith (.282), Archie Wilson (.274 w/ 18 HR and 74 RBI) and the always steady Mike Goliat (.270 w/ 22 HR and 70 RBI). As a team the Toronto Maple Leafs compiled a .257 team batting average.

Relief pitcher Bob Tiefenauer (17-5 w/ 1.89 ERA in 64 games) and Ernie Broglio (9-3 w/ 3.09 ERA in 16 games) were the only bright spots on the pitching staff for Toronto during the season. The pitching staff for Toronto in 1958 also included Jack Crimian (15-8 w/ 3.57 ERA), former Negro League hurler Pat Scantlebury (15-9 w/ 3.87), Ed Blake (9-6 w/ 3.54 ERA) and Rudy Minarcin (8-10 w/ 4.66 ERA). Unfortunately, the Toronto Maple Leafs had the lowest ranked pitching staff in the International League during the 1958 season. As a team the Maple Leafs had a team earned run average of 4.39 ERA.

When all was said and done the Toronto Maple Leafs had a good season. The Maple Leafs finished in second place in the final regular season standings with a record of 87-65 (.572). The Montreal Royals won the regular season title with a won-loss record of 90-63 (.588).

In the 1958 International League play-offs, Toronto met the third place Rochester Red Wings and defeated them four games to one in the first round of the play-offs. The Montreal Royals who won the regular season title by narrowly defeating the Columbus Jets four games to three, moved on to the Governors Cup Finals where they played Toronto. Montreal then easily beat Toronto winning four of the five games they played.

“The Jet” Retires

Sam Jethroe spent the last five (5) years of his career in the Minor Leagues at the AAA level with the Toronto Maple Leafs. Even though he played extremely well and led the International League several times in hits, runs scored and stolen bases, “The Jet” never made it back to the Major Leagues.

Life after Baseball

When he retired from baseball Sam and his wife Elsie settled in Erie (PA) where he worked at a local factory before opening Jethroe’s Bar and Restaurant which was considered a pretty good steakhouse and a local social gathering spot. The business did fairly well for several years before the Erie Redevelopment Authority forced him to sell the property. Sam and his wife decided to relocate their business. Unfortunately they chose a location in a “tough” area of town. After taking out a loan to open their new establishment the Jethroe’s realized they had made a mistake when they chose their new location. Drug dealing and gun fire were a common occurrence. After a shooting inside the bar resulted in a death, the bar and grill struggled significantly.

Immediately after retiring from professional baseball, he continued to play baseball in the local Glenwood Baseball League.

According to a newspaper report that appeared in the Boston Herald on August 8, 1970 Sam Jethroe also worked as an advertising executive in New York City in 1970.

Sam Jethroe’s playing career with the Boston Braves was “officially” recognized in 1980 when he received the “Ex-Braves Award” on January 24, 1980 at the Boston Baseball Writers Association annual dinner

In late 1994 tragedy struck when Jethroe’s home burned down. To make matters even worse he wasn’t insured. This forced Sam, his wife Elsie and their two grand children ages 10 and 16 to live in the bar. Financially things got so rough that Sam was forced to sell his Rookie of the Year Award for a mere \$ 3,500.00. The Boston Braves Historical Association raised \$ 21,000 to help out their former star ball player.

Owners grant some pensions to Negro League

By RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Sam Jethroe and about two dozen other former Negro Leagues players will become eligible for annual pensions of \$7,500 to \$10,000, baseball owners decided last week.

Jethroe, the 1950 National League Rookie of the Year, sued owners, claiming discrimination left him short of qualifying for baseball's pension plan. But the suit was dismissed last Oct. 4 by U.S. District Judge Sean McLaughlin in Erie, Pa.

Baseball's pension plan began in 1947. Depending on when a player was active, he needed four or five years of major league service back then to qualify. Since 1980, any player with at least one day in the majors qualifies for a pension.

"It's been on my mind for a long time, and it's something that's been long overdue," acting commissioner Bud Selig said Sunday in announcing the decision. "I spent a lot of time over the holidays thinking about it. It's just the right thing to do. It's a very

right thing to do. It's a very poignant story that needed to be rectified."

After spending several seasons in the Negro Leagues, Jethroe spent 3 years, 17 days with the Boston Braves and Pittsburgh Pirates. He then played seven years in the minor leagues.

Jethroe, who turns 75 today, hit .273 with 18 homers, 100 runs scored and a league-leading 35 stolen bases in 1950 for the Braves.

"This is something that I've been bringing up for a long time," said Chicago White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf, a member of the ruling executive council. "Of course, the union has always said no. Every time the union has been approached about this, they've been very negative."

"I got a call from (U.S. Sen.) Carol Moseley-Braun, a few months ago. She's a friend of a lawyer who represents Sam Jethroe. I got to thinking about how ridiculous it is. There are so few of these guys, and they really did get screwed. Not just the black guys, the white guys, too."

Reinsdorf then asked Selig to have the owners pay the money.

"I talked to Buddy and Buddy said, 'The hell with the union. If they don't want to do it, we should do it ourselves.'"

The decision by owners covers players who spent a total of four years or more in the major leagues and Negro Leagues combined, with at least one day in the majors.

The Infamous Lawsuit

In 1995 Sam Jethroe was part of a class action lawsuit filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania against Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association. The lawsuit was filed because Jethroe had been denied a pension by Major League Baseball. The denial of his pension was because Sam had just fallen short in the number of days required for a player's pension. Sam Jethroe had played 3 years and 17 days which did not qualify him for a pension. The pension plan required four years on an active Major League roster.

SAM JETHROE First black Boston ballplayer

ERIE, Pa. — Sam Jethroe, one of the first black baseball players in the major leagues and the oldest player to win rookie of the year honors, died Saturday of a heart attack. He was 83.

Jethroe, nicknamed "The Jet" for his speed, was the first black player on the Boston Braves when he made his major league debut in 1950. He was named Rookie of the Year that season at age 32. He batted .273 with 18 home runs.

Jethroe played three seasons for the Boston Braves (1950-52) and two games for the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1954. He ended his major league career with a .261 average, 49 homers and 181 RBIs.

In the 1990s, Jethroe helped lead the battle to open the major league's pension plan to former Negro Leagues players, saying he and others had been prevented from qualifying because of discrimination.

The pension plan originally required a player to have four or five years of major league service. Since 1980, any player with at least one day in the majors qualifies for a pension.

The basis of the lawsuit was that racial discrimination of the 1940's and 1950's had prevented or delayed many players from a career in Major League Baseball. The lawsuit was dismissed on October 4, 1996 by United States Court Judge Sean McLaughlin. The basis for the dismissal was that the claims were barred by the statute of limitations.

The importance of this legal action was that it motivated Major League Baseball and team owners to reevaluate their position on pensions for Negro League players. Major League Baseball implemented a pension plan for former Negro League players in 1997. The pensions to the Negro League ball players ranged from \$ 7,500 to \$ 10,000 per year. Sam Jethroe and about two dozen former Negro League players were among the first to receive a pension under this program.

Sam Jethroe through his attorney John Puttock was also involved in another law suit against Major League Baseball and Major League Baseball Properties. This legal action occurred in 1998. The lawsuit was filed in Alameda County Superior Court which was presided over by Judge Demetrios Agretelis. The contention of this lawsuit was that the black players had not received their fair share of pooled royalties for the sale of things like baseball trading cards, souvenirs, films and other areas where their names and/or likenesses were used. There were 384 former Negro League players named in the legal action. The suit was never fully resolved to the players' satisfaction.

Passing of a Legend

Sam Jethroe passed away on June 16, 2001 at a hospital in Erie, PA while recovering from pacemaker surgery. His reported cause of death was a heart attack. Before going into the hospital, Jethroe was already in poor health after suffering from a stroke and had other health related issues. Sam was 84 years old. Samuel Jethroe was laid to rest at the Erie Cemetery. He was survived by his wife Elsie who passed away on May 17, 2013.



Cleveland Buckeyes



Cleveland Buckeyes Sluggers (1947)

(Sam Jethroe – third from left)

Playing Career

Regular Season:

Year	Team	League
1938-1941	Numerous semi-professional teams in St. Louis area East St. Louis Colts St. Louis Giants	
1938	Indianapolis ABC's	Negro American League
1941	St. Louis Giants	St. Louis Municipal League
1942	Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes	Negro American League
1943-1948	Cleveland Buckeyes	Negro American League
1945	Try-out with Boston Red Sox	American League
1946	Vargas	Venezuelan League
1948	Sold by Cleveland Buckeyes to Brooklyn Dodgers (National League)	
1948-1949	Montreal Royals	International League
1949	Montreal Royals	Exhibition Game vs New York Giants
1950	Sold by Brooklyn Dodgers to Boston Braves (National League)	
1950-1952	Boston Braves	National League
1953	Toledo Sox	American Association
1954	Pittsburgh Pirates	National League
1954-1958	Toronto Maple Leafs	International League

Winter Leagues:

1942	Cincinnati-Cleveland Buckeyes	Spring Training – New Orleans (LA)
1942	Satchel Paige's All Stars	Barnstorming Team
1943	Cleveland Buckeyes	Game vs Honus Wagner's All Stars
1944-45	Kansas City Royals	California Winter League
1944-45	San Juan Senadores	Puerto Rican Winter League
1945	South	North-South Classic
1945	American All Stars	Venezuelan Exhibition Tour
1946	Satchel Paige's All Stars	Barnstorming Tour vs Bob Feller's All Stars
1946-47	San Juan Senadores	Puerto Rican Winter League
1947	Negro American League All Stars	Two Games vs Negro National League All Stars
1947	Cleveland Buckeyes	Negro League World Series
1947-48	Almendares Alacranes	Cuban Winter League
1948	Montreal Royals	Governors Cup Series
1948	Montreal Royals	Junior World Series vs St. Paul
1948-49	Almendares Alacranes	Cuban Winter League
1949	Almendares Alacranes	Caribbean World Series (Havana, Cuba)
1949	Montreal Royals	Spring Training - Vero Beach, FL
1949	Montreal Royals	Exhibition Game vs New York Giants (NL)
1949	Montreal Royals	Governors Cup Series
1949	Montreal Royals	Junior World Series vs Indianapolis
1950	Boston Braves	Spring Training – Bradenton, FL
1950	Boston Braves	City Series vs Boston Red Sox
1950	Major League All Stars	Game vs Jacksonville Eagles
1950	National League All Stars	Game vs American League All Stars
1950	National League All Stars (John Jachym & Bobby Riggs Tour)	Post Season Barnstorming Tour
1951	Boston Braves	Spring Training – Bradenton, FL
1951	Boston Braves	City Series vs Boston Red Sox
1951	Jackie Robinson's All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1951	Kansas City Royals	California Winter League
1952	Boston Braves	City Series vs Boston Red Sox
1952	Jackie Robinson's All Stars	Barnstorming Tour vs Negro League All Stars
1954-55	Cienfuegos	Cuban Winter League

**Boston Braves
National League**



Boston Braves

(left to right – Roy Hartsfield, **Sam Jethroe**, Earl Torgeson, Bob Elliott, Sid Gordon, Ebba St. Claire, Bob Addis, Johnny Logan and Vern Bickford)



Boston Braves

(Luis Marquez and **Sam Jethroe**)

Sam Jethroe – Career Hitting Statistics

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Negro Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1938	Indianapolis	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.333	.333
1942	Cincinnati	-	97	-	43	6	1	0	-	1	.443	.526
1943	Cleveland	36	142	28	44	12	4	1	14	5	.310	.472
1944	Cleveland	68	275	55	97	14	2	2	-	18	.353	.440
1945	Cleveland	56	214	61	84	10	10	3	37	21	.393	.575
1946	Cleveland	62	226	54	70	-	-	6	-	20	.310	-
1947	Cleveland	70	306	90	108	35	10	7	-	52	.353	.601
1948	Cleveland	47	186	61	55	13	4	5	30	29	.296	.489
	Total	340	1449	349	502	90	31	24	81	146	.346	.501

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Negro League World Series)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1945	Cleveland	4	15	-	5	0	1	0	-	0	.333	.467
1947	Cleveland	5	19	4	6	2	0	0	1	0	.316	.421
	Total	9	34	4	11	2	1	0	1	0	.324	.441

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Negro League All Star Games)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1942	West	2	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	.167	.167
1944	West	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
1946	West	2	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000	.000
1947	West	2	8	2	4	0	2	0	5	2	.500	1.000
	Total	7	24	5	5	0	2	0	5	3	.208	.375

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Non-League Games)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1942	Cleveland	1	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	.333	.667
1943	Cleveland	3	13	3	7	1	1	1	5	0	.538	1.000
1946	Cleveland	1	3	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	1.000	-
1947	Cleveland	1	5	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	.400	1.000
	Total	6	24	6	13	3	2	1	6	1	.542	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Minor Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1948	Montreal	76	292	52	94	19	11	1	25	18	.322	.473
1949	Montreal	153	635	154	207	34	19	17	83	89	.326	.520
1953	Toledo	145	543	137	168	32	10	28	74	27	.309	.560
1954	Toronto	154	593	113	181	36	8	21	84	23	.305	.499
1955	Toronto	145	485	88	127	16	4	16	66	24	.262	.410
1956	Toronto	149	567	105	163	25	4	19	68	22	.287	.446
1957	Toronto	130	451	83	125	16	6	15	39	24	.277	.439
1958	Toronto	68	184	20	43	11	0	2	18	5	.234	.326
	Total	1020	3750	752	1108	189	62	119	457	232	.295	.474

Career Statistics – Hitting (Post Season – Minor Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1948	Montreal	5	21	3	9	2	-	-	3	2	.429	-
1948	Montreal (championship)	4	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	1.000	-
1949	Montreal	1	5	2	2	-	-	1	1	-	.400	-
1949	Montreal (no box scores vs Rochester)	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-
1949	Montreal (no box scores vs Buffalo)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
1956	Toronto	3	17	7	10	1	-	4	5	1	.588	-
1957	Toronto	1	5	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	.200	-
	Total	11	52	13	26	5	-	9	9	3	.500	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Major Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1950	Boston	141	582	100	159	28	8	18	58	35	.273	.442
1951	Boston	148	572	101	160	29	10	18	65	35	.280	.460
1952	Boston	151	608	79	141	23	7	13	58	28	.232	.357
1954	Pittsburgh	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
	Total	442	1763	280	460	80	25	49	181	98	.261	.418

Career Statistics – Hitting (Exhibition Games - Major Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1943	Cleveland	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	4	-	-	-
1946	Paige All Stars	2	7	2	2	1	1	0	0	-	.286	.714
1949	Montreal	3	14	7	8	2	1	1	-	2	.571	1.071
1950	Boston	1	4	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	.500	.500
1950	National League	3	6	2	5	-	1	2	3	-	-	-
1951	Boston	4	21	5	13	2	-	3	9	2	.750	-
1951	Robinson All Stars	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1952	Boston	7	24	7	13	1	1	3	11	2	.542	-
1953	Boston	7	14	3	10	-	1	1	8	1	.714	-
1954	Pittsburg	4	8	2	5	1	-	1	4	-	.571	-
	Total	33	99	30	59	9	5	12	41	7	.596	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Exhibition Games - Minor Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	Montreal	4	18	7	11	3	1	1	-	2	.611	1.056

Career Statistics – Hitting (Winter Season – Puerto Rico)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1944-45	San Juan	-	161	37	55	-	7	1	27	-	.342	-
1946-47	San Juan	-	39	-	13	-	-	-	2	-	.333	-
	Total	-	200	37	68	-	7	1	29	-	.340	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Winter Season – Venezuela)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1945	American	14	59	16	20	5	1	3	7	-	.339	.610
1946	Vargas	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	11	-	-
	Total	14	59	16	20	5	6	3	7	11	.339	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Winter Season – Cuba)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947-48	Almendares	75	305	53	94	12	10	1	18	22	.308	.423
1948-49	Almendares	64	260	52	71	9	5	5	31	32	.273	.404
1954-55	Cienfuegos	25	98	21	27	1	2	4	13	6	.276	.449
	Total	164	663	126	192	22	17	10	62	60	.290	.419

Career Statistics – Hitting (Caribbean World Series)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	Cuba	6	25	6	8	2	3	0	5	3	.320	.640

Career Hitting Statistics (Totals)

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Negro League	371	1567	368	538	100	32	25	99	153	.343	.496
Negro World Series	9	34	4	11	2	1	0	1	0	.324	.441
Negro All Star Games	7	24	5	5	0	2	0	5	3	.208	.375
Non-League	6	24	6	13	3	2	1	6	1	.542	-
Minor Leagues	1020	3750	752	1108	189	62	119	457	232	.295	.474
Minor League Post Season	11	52	13	26	5	-	9	9	3	.500	-
Major Leagues	442	1763	280	460	80	25	49	181	98	.261	.418
Exhibition Games (ML)	33	99	30	59	9	5	12	41	7	.596	-
Exhibition Games (Minors)	4	18	7	11	3	1	1	-	2	.611	1.056
Puerto Rico	-	200	37	68	-	7	1	29	-	.340	-
Venezuela	14	59	16	20	5	6	3	7	11	.339	-
Cuba	164	663	126	192	22	17	10	62	60	.290	.419
Caribbean World Series	6	25	6	8	2	3	0	5	3	.320	.640
Total	2087	8,278	1650	2,519	420	163	230	902	573	.304	-



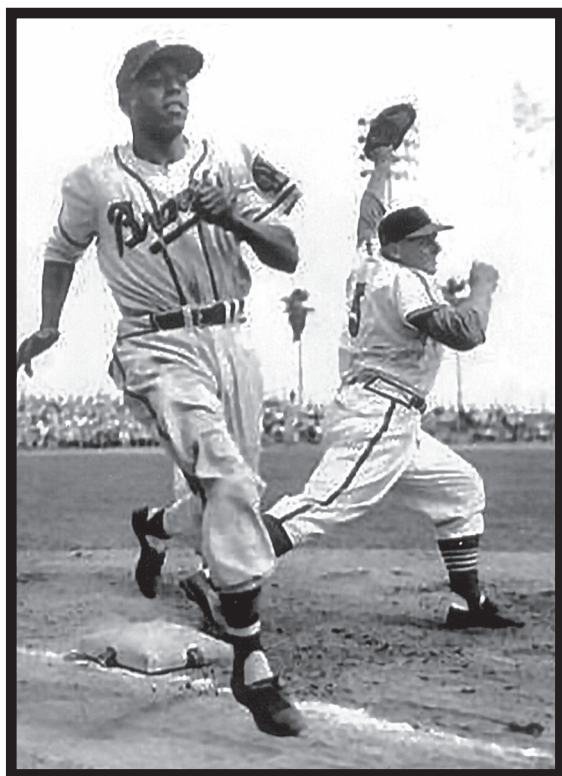
**Boston Braves (1952)
Spring Training**

(George Crowe, **Bill Bruton**, Jim Pendleton and **Sam Jethroe**)

Sam “The Jet” Jethroe - Amazing Speed on the Base Paths



Sam Steals Yet Another Base



Sam Legs Out a Base Hit



Terror on the Base Paths

Batting and League Leader – Hitting Titles

Category	Year	League	Number
Batting Average	1944	Negro American League	.353
	1945	Negro American League	.393
At Bats	1944	Negro American League	275
	1949	International League	635
Runs Scored	1944	Negro American League	55
	1944-45	Puerto Rican League	37
	1945	Negro American League	61
	1946	Negro American League	54
	1947	Negro American League	90
	1947-48	Cuban Winter League	53
	1949	International League	154
	1953	American Association	137
	1954	International League	113
	1956	International League	105
Hits	1944	Negro American League	97
	1947	Negro American League	108
	1949	International League	207
	1954	International League	181
Walks	1953	American Association	109
Total Bases	1944	Negro American League	121
	1945	Negro American League	123
	1947	Negro American League	184
	1949	International League	330
	1954	International League	296
Doubles	1943	Negro American League	8
	1944	Negro American League	14
	1947	Negro American League	35
Triples	1943	Negro American League	4
	1944-45	Puerto Rican League	7
	1946	Venezuelan League	5
	1947	Negro American League	10
	1949	Caribbean World Series	3
	1949	International League	19
Stolen Bases	1944	Negro American League	18
	1945	Negro American League	21
	1946	Negro American League	20
	1946	Venezuelan League	11
	1947	Negro American League	52
	1947-48	Cuban Winter League	22
	1948	Negro American League	29
	1948	International League	18
	1948-49	Cuban Winter League	32
	1949	International League	89
	1950	National League	35
	1951	National League	35
	1955	International League	24
	1957	International League	24

Assessing Sam Jethroe's Baseball Career

- **Speed was Sam “The Jet” Jethroe’s number one asset** as a baseball player. In addition to his great speed he was known for his exceptional acceleration. Most baseball historians and players who played with and against Sam Jethroe agree that he was one of the fastest ball players to have played the game. Negro League historians rate Jethroe’s speed close to or possibly even equal that of the great James “Cool Pappa” Bell. Sam Jethroe was without a doubt the fastest baseball player “black” or “white” of his time.

In the Negro American League Jethroe was considered the premiere base stealer of his time. Everyone in the ball park knew Sam was going to run when he got on base. The problem was no one could stop him from stealing the base. During his professional baseball career he led his “league” in stolen bases at least twelve (12) times.

Legendary Kansas City Monarchs catcher James “Joe” Greene played with and against all the great Negro Leaguers. He faced Sam Jethroe on numerous occasions and identified Sam Jethroe as the hardest player he ever saw to throw out and the toughest runner in baseball. Greene shared the following comments about the speedster in an interview with a Negro League researcher:

“you knew when he (Jethroe) got on he was going to run.”

“he would take long steps, long steps – he could zoom.”

In the interview Greene also recognized the speed of James “Cool Pappa” Bell and said that just like Bell, Sam Jethroe dominated the base paths.

Don Newcombe who played with and against him in the Negro Leagues, Minor Leagues and Major Leagues had the following to say about Sam Jethroe’s speed:

“he was the fastest human being I’ve ever seen.”

Former Kansas City Monarchs’ player and manager, Buck O’Neil had the following comments about Jethroe’s speed:

“the infield would have to come in a few steps or you’d never throw him out.”

During spring training in 1949 with the Montreal Royals, “The Jet” was hand timed at 5.9 seconds in the 60 yard dash. Arthur Mann, assistant to Brooklyn Dodgers president Branch Rickey, was so impressed with the feat that he arranged for a special exhibition which featured Jethroe taking on Barney Ewell who had won a gold medal and two silver medals in the 1948 Olympics. The race was held in late June in Montreal. Not only did Jethroe defeat Ewell, he destroyed the Olympic champion. Observers said that during the later part of the race Sam was pulling away from Barney and beat him by several yards. Sam Jethroe was timed at 7.4 seconds in the 75 yard dash.

Jethroe was a master at judging if a pitcher was taking too long to deliver a pitch. He was known to be able to score from second base on infield outs. “The Jet” was also known to have stolen second, third and home during the same at bat. Sam was also able to take as long a lead off the base as he wanted. According to Jethroe he got a large number of his steals from second to third while the pitcher was rubbin up the ball. Sam “The Jet” Jethroe drove both pitchers and catchers crazy and the fans loved it.

It was also not uncommon for Sam to steal home.

In the final analysis, Sam “The Jet” Jethroe’s base stealing philosophy and techniques were very simple – just outrun the baseball. Sam didn’t dart back and forth off the base, he didn’t take long leads and he didn’t play mind games with the pitcher or catcher. He

just took off and out ran the throw from the catcher. When asked about his philosophy of stealing, Sam Jethroe had the following to say:

“When I want to steal a base, the only ball player on the opposing club I worry about is the pitcher. He’s the only one who counts. The whole idea of stealing is to get the jump on the pitcher and the best way to get that jump is to know the pitcher. I study him.”

- Jethroe was an **excellent hitter**. According to research conducted by the Center for Negro League Baseball Research (CNLBR), Sam Jethroe compiled an impressive .346 batting average with a .501 slugging percentage during his Negro League regular season career. He also won the Negro League batting title in 1944 with a .353 batting average and again in 1945 with a remarkable .393 batting average.

In games against all levels of competition Jethroe posted a career batting average of .304 (2,508 for 8,260). These numbers come from analyzing primary source documentation.

Evaluating Jethroe’s Negro League career batting average and his batting average for individual seasons is easier than for most other Negro League players because we have found the Howe News Bureau year-end statistics for the years from 1944 to 1948. The Howe News Bureau kept and reported the “official” statistics for both the Negro American League and Negro National League. With the exception of the Seamheads Research team virtually all Negro League researchers use the Howe News Bureau statistics. Researchers, however, differ on Sam’s yearly batting averages for the 1942 and 1943 seasons. These differences result from different researchers having different games than each other. In addition some researchers only count “league” games while other researchers count both “league” and “non-league” games in their totals.

The chart below identifies by researcher (s) the yearly batting averages for his 1942 and 1943 Negro League seasons.

	CNLBR	Lester and Clark	Seamheads	John Holway	Lloyd Johnson	MacMillan Baseball Encyclopedia	James Riley	Difference
1942	.443	-	.305	.487	.487	.487	.487	182
1943	.310	.286	.310	.291	.286	.291	.286	24
At Bats	239	195	260	142	137	142	-	-
Hits	87	71	80	49	47	49	-	-
Batting Average	.364	.364	.308	.349	.343	.345	.343	56

(Note – CNLBR stands for the Center for Negro League Baseball Research.)

One interesting observation from reviewing this chart is that it seems that several of the early researchers/writers just copied existing research and did very little to no original primary research of their own.

- When evaluating Sam Jethroe as a hitter, there is a problem because we are **missing a significant amount of his hitting statistics**. Examples of missing data are as follows:
 1. Missing all of his hitting statistics for four years when he played semi-professional baseball for the East St. Louis Colts and St. Louis Giants from 1938-1941.
 2. In Negro League games we are still missing four seasons of runs batted in. In addition for the 1946 Negro American League (NAL) season we have no reporting for doubles, triples and slugging percentage.
 3. Sam appeared in nine Negro League World Series games and we don’t have runs scored or runs batted in for these games.

4. For the two seasons (1944-45 and 1946-47) that Sam played in Puerto Rico we are missing number of games played, doubles, stolen bases and slugging percentage. In addition for one season we are also missing triples and homeruns.
 5. For his 1946 season with Vargas in Venezuela we are missing all of his offensive numbers except triples and stolen bases. We have these two only because he led the “league” in these two categories.
 6. In 1946 he toured with Satchel Paige’s All Star against Bob Feller’s All Stars and we don’t have any of his batting statistics.
 7. When Sam played in the American Association and International League he could have played in as many as seventy-eight (78) play-off games and the Governors Cup games. We do not have box scores for the vast majority of these games.
 8. We are also missing his batting statistics when he played in eleven games during the Junior World Series.
 9. Other than the Satchel Paige All Stars, Sam Jethroe played for several other all star and barnstorming teams during the post season. Three examples are the National League All Stars (1950), Jachym & Riggs All Stars (1950) and Jackie Robinson’s All Stars (1952). We don’t really have any of those hitting statistics.
- Sam was a **dual threat offensively**. Not only did he hit for both power and average but he was a master at getting the clutch hit to win a ball game. In addition his speed was a force to be reckoned with by opposing teams throughout his career. In 2,087 games for which we have statistics Sam Jethroe had 420 doubles, 163 triples and 230 homeruns for 813 extra base hits in his career. His blazing speed enabled him to take the extra base when the opportunity presented itself and he was always a threat to steal. Sam stole at least 573 bases during his career.
 - Not only did Sam “The Jet” have amazing speed but he was also an **exceptional base runner**. His hitting and ability to draw a walk enabled him to get on base. When batting he was very skilled at taking an extra base when the opportunity presented itself. In addition when he was on base he was a very smart runner. Sam Jethroe played seventeen (17) years of professional baseball and led his league in runs scored during ten (10) of those seasons. In short he was a **run scoring machine**.
 - Jethroe was a **high profile player** during his career. This was especially true during the first two or three years of his Major League career. All eyes were on him every time he took the field. Naturally, if Sam made a big play offensively it made the headlines or was prominent in the news story. Conversely, if he made an error in the outfield, lost a ball in the sun or made a poor throw, it was also headline news.
 - Throughout his career in the Negro Leagues, Minor Leagues and Major Leagues, Sam “The Jet” Jethroe was a **clutch ball player**. If the team needed a hit, Sam generally came through. In addition if he needed to take an extra base or steal a base, he could be counted on to get the job done. He also came through with a tremendous number of game tying and game winning hits.
 - Sam Jethroe was a **winner and brought that winning spirit with him** to the various teams for which he played. He played on at least 14 championship teams. Over the course of his professional baseball career, he played on the following championship teams.

Year	Team	League
1945	American All Stars	Venezuelan Exhibition Series
1945	Cleveland Buckeyes	Negro American League
1945	Cleveland Buckeyes	Negro League World Series Champions
1946	Vargas	Venezuelan League
1947	Cleveland Buckeyes	Negro American League
1948	Montreal Royals	International League

Year	Team	League (continued)
1948	Montreal Royals	International League
1948	Montreal Royals	International League – Governors Cup
1948	Montreal Royals	Junior World Series
1948-49	Almendares Alacranes	Cuban Winter League
1949	Almendares Alacranes	Caribbean World Series I
1949	Montreal Royals	International League – Governors Cup
1950	Boston Braves	City Series Championship over Boston Red Sox
1953	Toledo Sox	American Association
1954	Toronto Maple Leafs	International League
1956	Toronto Maple Leafs	International League

- During his playing career, Sam Jethroe was **named to numerous all-star teams**.

Year	League
1941	St. Louis Municipal League
1942	Negro American League (West)
1944	Negro American League (West)
1946	Negro American League (West)
1946-47	Cuban Winter League
1947	Negro American League (West)
1947-48	Cuban Winter League
1949	International League
1953	American Association
1954	International League

(Note – This is not considered to be a complete list of all the all-star teams to which he was selected.)

- **Offensively the only area in which he struggled was in strikeouts.** For the years of 1950-1953 when he played with the Boston Braves, Sam Jethroe was ranked in the top four players in strikeouts in the National League.
- **Defensively he was considered only a mediocre outfielder.** His speed and range were his strong points playing in the outfield. However he was known for having a weak throwing arm, far too often misjudged fly balls and had difficulty when handling ground balls. His speed bailed him out on a regular basis. In regards to supposedly a weak arm, Sam Jethroe finished second to Carl Furrillo who had a legendary throwing arm in two different years for assist by an outfielder. From this researcher's perspective, he may have been overly criticized for his defensive skills. Especially like the comment a Boston sports writer published:

“Jethroe can carry the ball back to the infield faster than he can throw it.”

During his three years as a starting outfielder for the Boston Braves of the National League, he led the “league” in errors (1950 -12, 1951-10 and 1952-13).

On a positive note he did lead the National League in double plays with six (6) for an outfielder in his rookie season. He also led the American Association in put outs by an outfielder in 1953 with 408 and again in 1954 with 415. In 1956 he led the International League in putouts by an outfielder with 351.

- Sam Jethroe is **credited with integrating the Boston Braves** of the National League in 1950. Some baseball historians also credit him along with Curt Roberts with integrating the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1954. While it is true that they were both on the opening day roster, Roberts was actually the first to play in a Major League game for the Pirates.
- Samuel “The Jet” Jethroe was a **true pioneer in the history of black baseball in America**.

Integrating the Major Leagues

Sam Jethroe had the honor to be the first African American player to integrate the Boston Braves of the National League.

In 1988 the Boston Herald published the following list of first black player to integrate all 16 Major League teams. Jethroe made his Major League debut with the Boston Braves on April 18, 1950.

PIONEERS: THE ORIGINAL 15 A list of each team's first black player, and the date of his debut:

DODGERS: Jackie Robinson, 4-15-47

INDIANS: Larry Doby, 7-5-47

BROWNS: Henry Thompson, 7-17-47

GIANTS: Henry Thompson, 7-8-49

BRAVES: Sam Jethroe, 4-18-50

WHITE SOX: Sam Hairston, 7-21-51

ATHLETICS: Bob Trice, 9-13-53

CUBS: Ernie Banks, 9-17-53

PIRATES: Curt Roberts, 4-13-54

CARDINALS: Tom Alston, 4-13-54

REDS: Nino Escalera, 4-17-54

SENATORS: Carlos Paula, 9-6-54

YANKEES: Elston Howard, 4-14-55

PHILLIES: John Kennedy, 4-22-57

TIGERS: Ossie Virgil, 6-6-58

RED SOX: Pumpsie Green, 7-21-59

Of the 16, two are in the Hall of Fame: Robinson and Banks. Five are dead, all of them by their 55th birthday: Robinson, Thompson, Roberts, Paula and Howard.

Boston Herald

Boston, MA

02-08-88

Selected Career Highlights

- Over his professional baseball career Sam Jethroe compiled a career batting average of .346 and a slugging percentage of .501 in the Negro Leagues. He compiled a batting average of .303 in games against all levels of competition.
- He played for the West squad in the East-West All Star game in 1942, 1944, 1946 and 1947.
- Jethroe won the Negro American League batting title in 1944 (.353) and 1945 (.393).
- Sam Jethroe led the Cleveland Buckeyes to a Negro American League championship and Negro League World Series title in 1945.
- He led the Negro American League in stolen bases in 1944 (18), 1945 (21 SB), 1946 (20 SB) and 1947 (52 SB).
- Sam broke the all-time International League record for stolen bases in 1949 with 89 steals.
- Jethroe led the Cleveland Buckeyes to the 1947 Negro American League title.
- In 1948 which was his first year in “organized” baseball, Sam Jethroe helped lead the Montreal Royals to the International League title, Governor’s Cup championship and Junior World Series title.
- Sam Jethroe helped lead the Almendares Alacranes to the 1948-49 Cuban Winter League championship and the 1949 Caribbean World Series title.
- Behind two game winning homeruns, Sam Jethroe led the Montreal Royals to a victory over the Buffalo Bisons to win the International League Governors’ Cup in 1949.
- In 1950 Sam Jethroe integrated the Boston Braves of the National League.
- Sam Jethroe was named the National League Rookie of the Year in 1950. He is the oldest player to ever win this award.
- “The Jet” led the National League in stolen bases in 1950 (35 SB) and 1951 (35 SB).
- Jethroe led the International League in runs scored in 1949 (154), 1954 (113) and 1956 (105).
- He was a member of the Toledo Sox team that finished the regular 1953 American Association season in first place.
- He also led the American Association in runs scored with 137 in 1953.
- Jethroe was the starting centerfielder for the 1954 and 1956 Toronto Maple Leafs teams who were the International League regular season champions.
- Sam Jethroe’s law suit against Major League Baseball (MLB) was instrumental in getting MLB and team owners to provide a pension for former Negro League ball players.
- Sam Jethroe was inducted into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame in 2007.

Sam “The Jet” Jethroe

From the Negro Leagues to the Major Leagues



Cleveland Buckeyes (1947)



Boston Braves (1951)

(left to right – Roy Hartsfield, **Sam Jethroe**, Earl Torgeson, Bob Elliott, Sid Gordon, **Luis Marquez**, Walker Cooper, Johnny Logan and Vern Bickford)