"Colored Championship" Series

Over the course of the history of black baseball in the United States, there has always been the need for there to be a "number one" team or to have a "champion" of colored baseball. Championship series in colored baseball have been played as long as there have been two teams to vie for the distinction and title of being the "Champion of Colored Baseball."

It is important not to confuse a "Colored Championship" with a Negro League World Series Champion. Many if not most "Colored Championship" series were played between two self appointed teams, while the Negro League World Series was played against the champions from two different formalized leagues. From 1924 to 1927 the Negro League World Series was a post season championship series that was played between the Negro National League champions and the Eastern Colored League champions. Then in latter years, there was also a Negro League World Series played from 1942 to 1948 when the champions of the Negro American League (NAL) met the champions of the Negro National League (NNL).

The following summaries represent some (definitely not all) of the "Colored Championship" series that have been played over the years.

"Colored Championship" Series (1867-1899)
(Summaries)

1867 Brooklyn Uniques vs Philadelphia Excelsiors

The first recognized "Colored Championship" game occurred in October of 1867 when the Brooklyn Uniques played the Philadelphia Excelsiors. The game was played at the Satellite Grounds in Brooklyn, New York. The one game championship contest was called in the seventh inning because of darkness. Philadelphia won the game by a score of 42-35 and gained the distinction of being the first "Colored Champion" of black baseball in the United States. It is important to note that there were at least three different scores (42-35, 42-37 and 37-24) reported for the game, but all three accounts have the Philadelphia team as the winner.

"Colored Champions" – Philadelphia Excelsiors

1869 Chicago Uniques vs Philadelphia Pythians

In 1869 Octavius Catto who ran the Philadelphia Pythians baseball club along with Jacob C. White, Jr. promoted a baseball game he dubbed the "World Colored Championship" between his club and the Chicago Uniques. The Philadelphia Pythians won the game by a score of 9-1. The victory also allowed the Philadelphia Pythians to finish their season with an undefeated record of 11-0.

"World Colored Champions" – Philadelphia Pythians

1885 Cuban Giants

During the 1885 season the Cuban Giants were billed as the "Colored Champions" in the newspapers. In a short article that appeared in the New York Tribune on October 5, 1885 the Cuban Giants were referred to as the "Colored Champions."

The team was managed by Stanislaus K. Govern.

"Colored Champions" – Cuban Giants

1887 Trenton Cuban Giants vs Gorhams of New York
Pittsburg Keystones
Louisville Falls Citys

The Cuban Giants entered the 1887 season as the "Colored Champions of the United States." During the season the Cuban Giants played a series of games over the course of the season against the Gorhams of New York and the Pittsburg Keystones to determine which team would have the best claim for the title of "colored champions" for the 1887 season.

Ambrose Davis, owner of the Gorhams of New York, challenged the Cuban Giants to a championship series. The two teams played six games against each other over the course of the season. Four games were played at Trenton (NJ) and two games were played in Newburgh (NY) at the Gorhams home field. The Cuban Giants won five of the six games that the two teams played against each other. Govern's Giants won their five games by the scores of 16-3, 6-0, 8-5, 17-3 and 6-2. The Gorhams lone victory came at Newburgh by a score of 6-4.

The Cuban Giants also played the Pittsburg Keystones in seven games during the season. The Giants won six of the seven games. They destroyed the Keystones by the scores of 22-2, 24-2, 19-3, 18-4, 24-0 and 19-6. The first three wins were at Trenton, the fourth win was at Hoboken and the last two games were played at Maspeth (NY) and Pittsburg (PA). The Pittsburgh Keystones lone victory was at Pittsburg when they beat the Cuban Giants in a tight game by the score of 3-2.

The Falls Citys of Louisville (KY) was also considered another top black team in 1887. They played the Cuban Giants twice late in the season. The Cuban Giants won both games by the scores of 12-6 and 17-4.

In short, Cos Govern's team thoroughly dominated all of the top black teams in the East during the 1887 season. The Cuban Giants were considered the undisputed "Colored Champions of America" by the media.

"Colored Champions" – Cuban Giants (Trenton)

1888 Tournament – Cuban Giants, Pittsburgh Keystones, New York Gorhams and Norfolk Red Stockings

J.M. Bright (part owner of the Cuban Giants) proposed a tournament to be held to determine the 1888 "Colored Championship" and donated a silver baseball as the grand prize to go to the winning team. Four teams were selected to play for the title. They were Cuban Giants, Pittsburgh Keystones, New York Gorhams and Norfolk Red Stockings. The surprise team of the tournament was the Pittsburgh Keystones who were the only team who were not considered professional. Pittsburgh was managed by Walter S. Brown. On the field the Keystones were led by Weldy Walker (brother of Moses "Fleetwood" Walker) and Sol White (member of National Baseball Hall of Fame). Over the course of the tournament, the only two games that the Keystones lost were to the Cuban Giants who would win the tournament. The final standings for the tournament were:

Tournament Standings (1888)

Cuban Giants	1st Place
Pittsburgh Keystones	2nd Place
New York Gorhams	3rd Place
Norfolk Red Stockings	4th Place

"Colored Champions" – Cuban Giants

1889 Cuban Giants vs Harrisburg

According to noted Negro League historian, Sol White, the three best black teams in the country in 1889 were the Cuban Giants, Gorhams of New York and Harrisburg.

At the end of the regular season both the Cuban Giants and Harrisburg claimed to the title of "Colored Champions."

According to Sol White in his book Sol White's History of Colored Baseball, Harrisburg was eventually considered the "Colored Champions."

"Colored Champions" – Harrisburg

1889 Cuban Giants (Trenton) or Gorhams of New York

Over the previous two seasons the Cuban Giants and Gorhams of New York were without question the top two black teams in the East and two of the best if not the best in the entire country. The Cuban Giants were considered the "Colored Champions" in 1886 and 1888. The Gorhams of New York won the championship in 1887. There is some question, however, to which team was considered the "Colored World's Championship" in 1889. At least one Negro League researcher credits the Gorhams with being the "Colored World's Champions." The Center for Negro League Baseball Research (CNLBR) does not support this position. Our research strongly supports the position that the Cuban Giants should be considered the "Colored World's Champions" for the 1889 season. Our position is based on the following facts:

1. Both teams played in the Middle States League in 1889. The Middle States League was part of "white" organized baseball in 1889 and featured baseball that was played at very competitive professional level. The Cuban Giants were in the "league" during the entire season. The Gorhams only played in the Middle States League from late June to August 20th. During this period the Cuban Giants and the Gorhams played each other in four (4) "league games. The results of these games were as follows:

Date	Score	Winning Team
08-01	4-3	Gorhams
08-07	9-0	Cuban Giants
08-07	7-1	Cuban Giants
08-11	9-2	Cuban Giants

The Cuban Giants dominated the Gorhams in Middle States League play by beating them three of the four times they played each other in "league" games.

2. The Cuban Giants were a dominate force in the Middle States League the entire season. They were in the pennant race from opening day to the last day of the season and according to some researchers should have been awarded the "league" title. The Gorhams on the other hand were only mediocre at best and played below .500 baseball for their tenure in the "league." The last published Middle States League standings that included both the Cuban Giants and Gorhams was on August 15th in the Trenton Evening Times. According to the Trenton newspaper the Cuban Giants had a record of 46-14 (.712) in "league" play and the Gorhams are credited with a record of 14-19 (.424).

   In short the Cuban Giants dominated their Middle States League opponents and the Gorhams couldn't even hold their own. The fact that both teams played in the Middle States League enables us to ore accurately compare the won-loss records of the Cuban Giants and Gorhams because they played against the same opponents.

3. Box scores have also been found for three (3) games that the Cuban Giants and Gorhams of New York played against each other on an exhibition or independent basis.

Date	Score	Location	Winning Team
04-21	19-16	Long Island, NY	Cuban Giants
08-11	9-2		Cuban Giants
09-07	20-9	Hoboken, NJ	Cuban Giants

There is no question that we are still missing several games that the two teams played against each other during the 1889 season. One game in particular for which we have found newspaper ads but no box score or a newspaper reporting of the results should have been played sometime around April 24th at Woodside Park in Stamford, CT.

4. In summary box scores have been found for seven (7) games that the Cuban Giants and Gorhams played against each other in 1889. The Cuban Giants won six (6) of these games.

5. Current research has not revealed primary source documentation or newspaper coverage that presents a "championship" game or series between any two black

teams not withstanding the Cuban Giants and Gorhams of New York for the 1889 title.

6. The records speak for themselves. The Cuban Giants had an extremely impressive won-loss record and in games against the Gorhams or common opponents, the Cuban Giants had a far superior record than the Gorhams.

In short, it is our contention that the Cuban Giants should be considered the "Colored World's Champions" for the 1889 season.

"Colored Champions" - Gorhams of New York

1896 Cuban Giants (Cuban X-Giants) vs Page Fence Giants

It is important to note that when E.B. Lamar, Jr. took his team west to play the Page Fence Giants and later the Chicago Unions in two different "championship series," his team (Cuban X-Giants) was referred to as the "Cuban Giants" in the newspapers. This can be very confusing because John M. Bright's "original" Cuban Giants team was still playing in the East.

After the regular season, E.B. Lamar, Jr., contacted the Page Fence Giants who were considered the best black team in the West to a series for the title of "Colored Championship of the World."

The Page Fence Giants from Adrian (MI) were an extremely powerful team that had been founded by John "Bud" Fowler in 1895. The team was built around the hitting of Grant "Homerun" Johnson and the pitching of George Wilson. Black baseball star Charlie Grant was added to the Page Fence Giants team to bolster A.S. Parson's roster.

The rosters for the Cuban Giants (Cuban X-Giants) and the Page Fence Giants that played in the "Colored World's Championship" series was as follows:

Page Fence Giants		**Cuban X-Giants**	
A.S. Parsons	Mgr	S.K. Govern	Mgr
George Taylor	1B	Ed Wilson	1B
Charlie Grant	2B	Sol White	2B
Homerun Johnson	SS	John Nelson	SS
William Binga	3B	Andrew Jackson	3B
Pete Burns	C	Bob Jackson	C
Chappie Johnson	OF	Oscar Jackson	OF
Vasco Graham	OF	Milton Dabney	OF
Walker	OF	Frank Miller	OF
Bill Holland	P	George Stovey	P
Fred Van Dyke	P	William Selden	P
George Wilson	P	Frank Hinson	P

The Cuban Giants (Cuban X-Giants) and Page Fence Giants were scheduled to play a fifteen (15) game series for the championship title. According to a newspaper article that appeared in the Daily Telegram of Adrian (MI) the schedule for the series was as follows:

Date	Location	Date	Location
09-13	Lima, OH	09-21	Buchanan, MI
09-14	Montpelier, OH	09-22	Adrian, MI
09-15	Hudson, OH (2 games)	09-23	Adrian, MI
09-16	Quincy, IL	09-24	Adrian, MI
09-17	Lansing, MI	09-25	Cairo, IL
09-18	Lansing, MI	09-26	Hastings, MN
09-19	Allegan, MI		
09-20	South Bend, IN		

The Adrian newspaper also identified that during their trip to the West the Cuban Giants would play a two game series on Labor Day in Detroit (MI) against a semi-professional team that would represented by the best baseball talent in Detroit.

With George Wilson on the Mound for the Page Fence Giants, the western ball club defeated the Cuban Giants by a score of 8 to 6 in the opening game of the series. To aid his cause, George Wilson also hit a homerun in the game. About 2,000 fans attended the game in Lima (OH). The game that was supposed to be played in Montpelier was rained out. When the series moved to Hudson they were supposed to play a double header but the morning game couldn't be played because of a damp field. A crowd of over 1,000 fans arrived at the ball park for the afternoon game that the Cuban Giants won by a score of 20-14 over the Page Fence Giants. On September 17th the two teams arrived in Lansing (MI) to play two games at Elton Park. The Page Fence Giants won the first game by a score of 5 to 2. George Wilson his second win of the series for the Page Fence Giants and George Stovey took the loss for the Cuban Giants. Off the momentum of their win the previous day, the Page Fence Giants destroyed the Cuban Giants by a score of 26 to 6. The Cuban Giants went down 15 to 7 in Allegan and 10 to 7 in South Bend. According to the Bay City Times of Bay City (MI) after several losses the Cuban Giants rebounded and won their game in Buchanan with the Page Fence Giants by a score of 3 to 2. The next stop for the series was in Adrian (MI) which was the home of the Page Fence Giants. On September 22nd the Cuban Giants won the game by a score 8 to 2.

Another victory (8 to 5 win for the Cubans) over the Page Fence Giants brought the Cubans within one game of being tied. A second game was played in Adrian on September 23rd. George Wilson beat the Cubans for the third time and led his Page Fence Giants team to an 8 to 5 win. The last game for which a box score has been found was a 17-8 win for the Page Fence Giants. The Page Fence Giants hitters hammered Bill Selden for eighteen hits and seventeen runs. The Cubans got to Bill Holland for ten hits and eight runs.

Box scores and line scores have been found for eleven (11) games in the Cuban Giants-Page Fence Giants series. In these eleven games the Cuban Giants won four games and the Page Fence Giants won six games. A summary for these box scores is as follows:

Date	Location	Score	Winning Team	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
09-13	Lima, OH	8-6	Page Fence Giants	George Wilson	-
09-14	Montpelier, OH	Games was rained out.			
09-15	Hudson, OH	Game cancelled because of damp field.			
09-15	Hudson, OH	20-14	Cuban Giants	-	-
09-17	Lansing, MI	5-2	Page Fence Giants	George Wilson	George Stovey

09-18	Lansing, MI	26-6	Page Fence Giants	-	-
09-19	Allegan, MI	15-7	Page Fence Giants	-	-
09-20	South Bend, IN	10-7	Page Fence Giants	-	-
09-21	Buchanan, MI	3-2	Cuban Giants	-	-
09-22	Hartford, MI	8-2	Cuban Giants	-	-
09-23	Adrian, MI	8-5	Cuban Giants	-	-
09-23	Adrian, MI	8-5	Page Fence Giants	George Wilson	George Stovey
09-24	Adrian, MI	17-8	Page Fence Giants	Bill Holland	Bill Selden
09-25	Cairo, IL	-	-	-	-
09-26	Hastings, MN	-	-	-	-

Reportedly, the Page Fence Giants won the title by taking ten (10) of the fifteen (15) games played.

"Colored Champions of the World" – Page Fence Giants

1896 Cubans (Cuban X-Giants) vs Chicago Unions

After losing their "championship series" to the Page Fence Giants, Lamar didn't let that stop him from promoting another "championship series." This time the opponent for the Cuban Giants (really the Cuban X-Giants) was the Chicago Unions. According to the Daily Inter Ocean of Chicago (IL) the Cuban Giants and Chicago Unions were to meet for a two game series at Union Ball Park which was located at the corner of Thirty-Seventh and Butler streets. The games were scheduled to be played on November 3rd and 4th.

According to an article that appeared in the Daily Inter Ocean on October 3, 1896 the starting line-up for the two teams was as follows:

Chicago Unions		**Cuban Giants (Cuban X-Giants)**	
W.S. Peters	Manager	S.K. Govern	Manager
Harry "Mike"Moore	1B	Banks	1B
George Hopkins	2B	Andrew Jackson	2B
Albert Hackney	SS	Winslow Terrill	SS
Harry Hyde	3B	C. Jackson	3B
Robert Footes	C	Bob Jackson	C
Ed Woods	RF	Bill Selden	RF
"Big Bill" Smith	CF	Oscar Jackson	CF
Willis Jones	LF	John Patterson	LF
Harry Buckner	P	George Stovey	P

The first game was played on November 3rd. Even though they got out hit (Cubans – 10 and Unions – 12), the Cuban Giants breezed to a 16 to 5 win. The Cuban Giants were aided by nine Chicago Unions errors and three hit batsmen. John Paterson led the Cuban Giants with three hits and two runs scored. Frank Miller was the winning pitcher and Harry Buckner took the loss for the Unions.

The second game was played on the afternoon of November 4th. Led by two home runs by W. Jackson the Cuban Giants narrowly beat the Unions. The score in the game was 11 to 9 in favor of the Cubans. Bill Selden got the win for Lamar's Cubans. With their victory the Cuban Giants (Cuban X-Giants) claimed this version of the "Colored Championship of the World."

"Colored Champions of the World" – Cuban Giants (Cuban X-Giants)

1897 Genuine Cuban Giants vs Cuban X-Giants

The Genuine Cuban Giants played the Cuban X-Giants in a three game series on successive Sundays for the "Colored Championship of the East." This championship series was played on the Weehawken Grounds in Weehawken, New Jersey. The Cuban X-Giants won the series two game to one for the Genuine Cuban Giants.

"Colored Championship of the East" - Cuban X-Giants

1899 Cuban X-Giants vs Chicago Unions

The Cuban X-Giants (Champions of the East) met the Unions of Chicago (Champions of the West) for the 1899 "Colored World Championship." Negro League Hall of Fame player and baseball historian Sol White considers this series as the first "real" championship series between teams from the East and West. The two teams played fourteen games in and around Chicago for the championship title.

The staring line-ups for the two teams were as follows:

Cuban X-Giants		**Chicago Unions**	
Ed Wilson	1B	Bill Wakefield	1B
Frank Grant	2B	George Hopkins	2B
Sol White	SS	William Monroe	SS
Andrew Jackson	3B	Harry Hyde	3B
Robert Jordan	C	Robert Foots	C
William Selden	OF	Robert Jackson	C
William Jackson	OF	Bill Holland	OF
Charles Howard	OF	Mike Moore	OF
John Nelson	P	Willis Jones	OF
William Selden	P	Bill Holland	P
Bill Williams	P	William Horn	P
		Bert Jones	P

The Cuban Giants won nine of the fourteen games and claimed the championship

"Colored World Champions" - Cuban X-Giants

1899 Columbia Giants (Chicago) vs Chicago Unions

While the Cuban X-Giants and Chicago Unions were playing their championship series, the Columbia Giants of Chicago issued challenges to both the winners and losers of the series. The Columbia Giants had a very strong team in 1899. The primary reason is that the 1899 Columbia Giants team fielded virtually the same line-up as the Page Fence Giants team that had broke up after the 1898 season. Both the Chicago Unions and Cuban X-Giants accepted the Columbia Giants challenge.

The first team to play the Columbia Giants was the Chicago Unions. The two teams met in a five game series to determine the "Championship of Chicago." The line-ups for both teams were as follows:

Columbia Giants		**Chicago Unions**	
Al Garrett	Mgr	William S. Peters	Mgr
George "Chappie" Johnson	1B	Mike Moore	1B
Charlie Grant	2B	George Hopkins	2B
Grant "Homerun" Johnson	SS	Bill Monroe	SS
William "Bill" Binga	3B	Harry Hyde	3B
Pete Burns	C	Bob Jackson	C
John "Pat" Patterson	OF	Willis Jones	OF
Sherman Barton	OF	Bill Holland	OF
Hill	OF	Lou Reynolds	OF
George Wilson	P	Bill Holland	P
Joe Miller	P	Bert Jones	P
Harry Buckner	P	Bill Horn	P

The Columbia Giants won the first two games of the series by scores of 4-2 and 6-0. George Wilson won game one and Joe Miller picked up the win in the second game for the Columbia Giants. Besides the two hit shut out pitching of Joe Miller, game two was highlighted by homeruns by Chappie Johnson and Homerun Johnson. The Columbia Giants then went on to sweep the next three games to be crowned "Colored Champions of Chicago." The Unions could not even manage one victory in the series.

"Colored Champions of Chicago" – Columbia Giants

1899 Columbia Giants vs Cuban X-Giants

With their humiliating defeat of the Chicago Unions, the Columbia Giants were now ready to take on the "World Champion" Cuban X-Giants. The Cuban X-Giants traveled back out West in September of that year to play the series. The eleven game series was played in Chicago (IL) and several towns in Michigan. The Cuban X-Giants won the series by winning seven of the eleven games played.

"Colored World Champions" - Cuban X-Giants