

“Play-Off Championship” Series

The schedules for most Negro League seasons were played in two halves with a winner being declared for each half of the season. If different teams each won one half of the season or if the season ended in a dispute over who should be crowned the “league” champion, a Play-Off Series was held.

It is important not to confuse a Play-Off Series with a Colored Championship Series or the Negro League World Series. The Play-Off Series was played between teams from the same formalized league. 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 (ECL) 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).

“Play-Off Championship” Series (Summaries)

1925 Kansas City Monarchs vs St. Louis Stars (Negro National League)

After the 1925 regular Negro National League season, the Kansas City Monarchs, winners of the first half of the season, met the St. Louis Stars, winners of the second half of the season, in a Play-Off Series to determine which team would be crowned the Negro National League champion.

The Kansas City Monarchs finished the regular season with a record of 62-23 (.729) which was the best record in the Negro National League for the entire season. The Monarchs were led by the hitting of Wilber “Bullet” Rogan (.374), Hurley Mc Nair (.365), Newt Joseph (.335), Walter “Dobie” Moore (.333) and Newt Allen (.307). Even with six starters in the line-up hitting over .300 for the season, the real strength of the Monarchs team was their pitching staff. Kansas City boasted the following starting rotation for the 1925 season: Wilber “Bullet” Rogan (20-2), Nelson Dean (11-3), William Bell (10-3) and Bill Drake (10-4). Bullet Rogan was considered the best pitcher in Negro League baseball in 1925.

The St. Louis Stars finished the season with a record of 71-27 (.724). Candy Jim Taylor (Manager of the St. Louis Stars) had a starting lineup in which all but one of the starters hit over .300 for the season.

St. Louis Stars (1925)

1B	Willie Bobo	.352	OF	Frog Redus	.381
2B	Eddie Watts	.314	OF	James Bell	.348
SS	Willie Wells	.270	OF	Branch Russell	.311
3B	Dewey Creacy	.394			
C	Mitch Murray	.387			
C	Fat Barnes	.359			

The St. Louis Stars also had an excellent pitching staff that included Roosevelt Davis (17-3), Percy Miller (12-2), Logan “Slap” Hensley (11-3) and William Ross (11-7).

The first three games of the series were played in St. Louis. Game one was played on September 19th. The Monarchs took game one by a score of 8-6. Kansas City was paced by three homeruns hit by Newt Allen, Frank Duncan and Dobie Moore. Bullet Rogan picked up the win in game one for the Monarchs and Slap Hensley took the loss for St. Louis. The St. Louis Stars rebounded and took games two and three by the scores of 6-3 and 3-2. The series was moved to Chicago for the final four games. Bullet Rogan opened the series in Chicago on September 26th win a 5-4 victory over the Stars. In the game Rogan collected four hits and drove in the winning run in the bottom of the ninth inning. The St. Louis Stars came back in game five with a tough 2-1 victory to take a one game lead in the series. With a must win situation in game six, William Bell pitched the Monarchs to a 9-3 victory to even the series at three games apiece. Jose Mendez (Manager of the Kansas City Monarchs) sent Bullet Rogan to the mound for his third start of the series. Rogan did not disappoint and pitched a 4-0 shut out for the win and the Negro National League championship title.

The Kansas City Monarchs and St. Louis Stars played two more games against each other after the series. These two games did not count in the Play-Off Series for the Negro National League title. William Bell (Kansas City Monarchs) won the first game 9-3 and Bullet Rogan (Kansas City) won the second game 3-0.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Loosing Pitcher
1	St. Louis	Sept 19 th	Kansas City	8-6	Bullet Rogan	Slap Hensley
2	St. Louis	Sept 20 th	St. Louis	6-3	Roosevelt Davis	Nelson Dean
3	St. Louis	Sept 23 rd	St. Louis	3-2	G. Brown	William Bell
4	Chicago	Sept 26 th	Kansas City	5-4	Bullet Rogan	Percy Miller
5	Chicago	Sept 27 th	St. Louis	2-1	G. Brown	Bill Drake
6	Chicago	-	Kansas City	9-3	William Bell	Roosevelt Davis
7	Chicago	-	Kansas City	4-0	Bullet Rogan	G. Brown

Top Hitters for the Series:

Kansas City Monarchs – Bullet Rogan (.455), Newt Allen (.407), Dink Mothell (.400) and Hurley McNair (.375)
 St. Louis – Willie Bobo (.407), James Bell (.303) and Dewy Creacy (.303).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

Kansas City Monarchs – Bullet Rogan (3-0 w/ 3.00 ERA) and William Bell (1-1 w/ 2.08 ERA)
 St. Louis – G. Brown (2-1) and Roosevelt Davis (1-1)

Negro League National League Champion (1925) – Kansas City Monarchs

1926 Kansas City Monarchs vs Chicago American Giants (Negro National League)

The 1926 Negro National League season was hotly contested between the Kansas City Monarchs who won the first half of the season and the Chicago American Giants who won the second half of the season. The Kansas City Monarchs finished the season with the best record in the Negro National League. The Monarchs were 57-21 (.731) and the Chicago American Giants were 57-23 (.713) during the regular season. The two teams met in mid September to decide who would be crowned the Negro National League champion and play the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants (Eastern Colored League champion) in the Negro League World Series.

Jose Mendez managed the Monarchs and had both a strong hitting team and excellent pitching. The Kansas City Monarchs were led by the hitting of Tom Young (.394), Walter "Dobie" Moore (.390), Cristobal Torriente (.371), Bullet Rogan (.329) and Wade Johnston (.292). William Bell (19-4), Chet Brewer (14-1) and Bullet Rogan (14-4) were the team's top pitchers.

The Chicago American Giants were managed by Rube Foster and Dave Malarcher. Even though Chicago did not have as strong a hitting team as Kansas City, they did have four starters who hit over .300 for the season. The leading hitters for the American Giants were Jim Brown (.333), Jelly Gardner (.329), Johnny Hines (.328) and Sandy Thompson (.312). Webster McDonald (11-4), Bill Foster (11-5), George Harney (11-6) and Rub Currie (8-4) anchored the Chicago pitching staff.

The first four games of the series were played in Kansas City. Game was played on September 18th. The Kansas City Monarchs got off to a fast start in the series by winning the first three games by scores of 4-3, 6-5 and 5-0. Bullet Rogan was the pitching star for Kansas City by posting wins in the first two games. Rube Currie (Chicago) took the mound against Jose Mendez (Kansas City) in game four which was a must win for the American Giants. Currie pitched a good game and hit a game winning two run double in the eighth inning to secure the victory for Chicago. The series was moved to Chicago for game five. Bullet Rogan (Kansas City) faced Bill Foster (Chicago) in a duel of two of the best pitchers in the Negro National League. A six run fourth inning drove Foster from the mound and led to an 11-5 victory for the Monarchs. The Kansas City Monarchs now had a lead of four games to one and only needed one more victory to clinch the pennant.

In one of the most dramatic comeback in the history of post season play, the Chicago American Giants won the final four games of the series. Rube Currie shut out the Monarchs in game six by a score of 2-0. The American Giants rallied for two runs in the bottom of the ninth inning of game seven for a 4-3 victory. Games eight and nine (if necessary) were scheduled as a double header on September 29th. Game eight pitted Bullet Rogan against Bill Foster. Both pitchers turned in brilliant pitching performances. Chicago prevailed with a 1-0 victory with the lone run being scored in the bottom of the ninth inning with two outs. Ironically both pitchers went back on the mound to pitch their second game in the same day. Bill Foster pitched his second straight shutout of the day and beat the Monarchs 5-0 for the Negro National League title.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Loosing Pitcher
1	Kansas City	Sept 18 th	Kansas City	4-3	Bullet Rogan	Bill Foster
2	Kansas City	Sept 19 th	Kansas City	6-5	Bullet Rogan	George Harney
3	Kansas City	Sept 20 th	Kansas City	5-0	Chet Brewer	Webster McDonald
4	Kansas City	Sept 21 st	Chicago	4-3	Rube Currie	Jose Mendez

5	Chicago	Sept 25 th	Kansas City	11-5	Bullet Rogan	Bill Foster
6	Chicago	Sept 26 th	Chicago	2-0	Rube Currie	Chet Brewer
7	Chicago	Sept 28 th	Chicago	4-3	George Harney	Chet Brewer
8	Chicago	Sept 29 th	Chicago	1-0	Bill Foster	Bullet Rogan
9	Chicago	Sept 29 th	Chicago	5-0	Bill Foster	Bullet Rogan

Top Hitters for the Series:

Kansas City Monarchs – Bullet Rogan (.583), Lemuel Hawkins (.357) and Cristobal Torriente (.355).
Chicago – Johnny Hines (.323), Jelly Gardner (.320) and Dave Malarcher (.308).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

Kansas City Monarchs – Bullet Rogan (3-2 w/ 3.33) and Chet Brewer (1-2 w/ 2.00 ERA)
St. Louis – Rube Currie (2-0 w/ 0.95 ERA), Bill Foster (2-2 w/ 0.84 ERA) and George Harney (1-1).

Negro League National League Champion (1926) – Chicago American Giants

1927 Chicago American Giants vs Birmingham Black Barons (Negro National League)

The Chicago American Giants won the first half of the Negro National League season and the Birmingham Black Barons behind the play of rookies Roy “Red” Parnell (outfield) Satchel Paige (pitcher) came on strong to win the second half of the season. Chicago had the best record in the Negro National League for the season. The American Giants posted a won-loss record of 63-30 (.677). The Birmingham Black Barons finished the season with a 55-43 (.561) record. The Black Baron’s record was only good enough for fourth place in the league, but their performance for the second half of the season gave them the second half title.

The Chicago American Giants were led by the hitting of Walter “Steel Arm” Davis (.385), Pythian Russ (.350), Nat Rogers (.342) and Larry Brown (.316). The American Giants pitching staff included Bill Foster (21-3), Webster McDonald (10-5) and Willie Powell (9-4). Dave Malarcher managed the Chicago American Giants.

The Birmingham Black Barons had five hitters who hit over .300 for the season. Red Parnell (.429), Sam Streeter (.381), Willie Owens (.310), Clarence “Spoony” Palm (.304) and George McAllister (.300) were the team’s top hitters. Harry Salmon (14-6), Sam Streeter (14-12), Bob Poindexter (10-12) and Satchel Paige (8-4) were the nucleus of the Black Baron’s pitching staff.

Game one of the Play-Off Series was played in Birmingham on September 20th. Bill Foster the ace of the Chicago pitching staff pitched a five hit shut out for a 5-0 victory. In game two Chicago scored six runs in the top of the eighth inning to secure a 10-5 win. Steel Arm Davis and Pythian Russ both hit homeruns in game two. Game three was played in Chicago on September 25th. Bill Foster posted his second win of the series with a 6-4 victory. Willie Powell (Chicago) pitched game four and closed out the series with a 6-2 win.

The Black Barons hitters were totally shut down in the series. Birmingham hitters went 18 for 98 for a .183 team batting average. Red Parnell who was the leading hitter in the Negro National

League with a .429 batting average during the regular season could only manage two hits in sixteen plate appearances for a .125 batting average for the series. If weak hitting wasn't bad enough, Birmingham pitchers couldn't contain the Chicago American Giants hitters. The Chicago American Giants hitters went 39 for 120 for a .325 team batting average for the series.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Loosing Pitcher
1	Birmingham	Sept 20 th	Chicago	5-0	Bill Foster	Sam Streeter
2	Birmingham	Sept 21 st	Chicago	10-5	Willie Powell	Harry Salmon
3	Chicago	Sept 25 th	Chicago	6-4	Bill Foster	Bob Poindexter
4	Chicago	Sept 26 th	Chicago	6-2	Willie Powell	Sam Streeter

(Note – According to research by Larry Lester and Dick Clark there was a fifth games played in this series.)

Top Hitters for the Series:

Chicago – Nat Rogers (.538), Steel Arm Davis (.438), Jim Brown (.438), Dave Malarcher (.333) and Stanford Jackson (.333).

Birmingham – Reuben Jones (.333), Pinky Ward (.333) and Spoony Palm (.286).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

Chicago – Bill Foster (2-0) and Willie Powell (2-0).

Birmingham – Harry Salmon (0-1), Bob Piondexter (0-1) and Sam Streeter (0-2).

Negro League National League Champion (1927) – Chicago American Giants

1928 Chicago American Giants vs St. Louis Stars (Negro National League)

The St. Louis Stars won the first half of the 1928 Negro National League season and the Chicago American Giants won the second half of the season by barely beating out the Kansas City Monarchs. St. Louis finished the regular season with a 66-26 (.717) record and Chicago had a regular season record of 54-37 (.593). They met in late September to decide which team would be the champions of the Negro National League.

St. Louis under manager Candy Jim Taylor dominated play in the Negro National League during the regular season with both strong hitting and excellent pitching. The Stars line-up did not have a weak spot at the plate. St. Louis was led by future National Baseball Hall of Fame players James “Cool Pappa” Bell, George “Mule” Suttles and Willie Wells. Seven of the nine starting St. Louis players had batting averages over .300 for the 1928 season.

St. Louis Stars (1928)

1B	George “Mule” Suttles	.372	OF	Wilson “Frog” Redus	.345
2B	Johnny Russell	.253	OF	James Bell	.332
SS	Willie Wells	.353	OF	Branch Russell	.286
3B	Dewey Creacy	.327	Utility	Willie Bobo	.519
C	Henry Williams	.302			
C	Spoonny Palm	.301	P	Roosevelt Davis	.320

The St. Louis Stars also featured a strong pitching staff that included: Ted Trent (21-2), Logan “Slap” Hensley (13-5), Roosevelt Davis (11-1) and Luther McDonald (11-6). Ted Trent was the leading pitcher in the Negro National League during the 1928 season.

Dave Malarcher managed the Chicago American Giants. The leading hitters for Chicago were Pythian Russ (.405), Walter “Steel Arm” Davis (.353), Reuben Jones (.333), Buck Miller (.306), Johnny Hines (.303) and Sanford Jackson (.301). Pythian Russ won the Negro National League batting title in 1928. Chicago had basically the same starting rotation in 1928 as they had on their 1927 championship team. The American Giants pitching staff included Bill Foster (14-10), George Harney (10-5), Willie Powell (10-9) and Harold Treadwell (6-5).

The 1928 Play-Off Series began on September 22nd in Chicago. The first four games were played in Chicago before the series moved to St. Louis for games five through nine.

Chicago won the first two games by the scores of 7-3 and 3-0. Bill Foster picked up the victory for the American Giants in game one and Willie Powell shut out the Stars for the win in game two. St. Louis won games three and four by the scores of 6-4 and 5-4. The series was tied at two games apiece when the series moved to St. Louis. Bill Foster (Chicago) faced off against Slap Hensley (St. Louis) in the opening game (game five) in St. Louis. Pythian Russ broke a 3-3 tie in the top of the eighth inning with a solo homerun as the American Giants went on to win the game by a score of 5-3. Game six of the series was a real slugfest with the Stars prevailing by a score of 12-7. St. Louis collected twelve hits in the game and Chicago banded out ten. The victory by St. Louis in game six tied the series at three games apiece. The Chicago American Giants regained control of the series with a 9-7 victory in game seven. St. Louis tied the series up again by taking game eight. Game nine featured each team’s ace pitcher. Bill Foster started for Chicago and Ted Trent for St. Louis. Willie Wells (St. Louis) was the hero of the game with two homeruns as he led the Stars to a 9-2 and the Negro National League championship title.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Loosing Pitcher
1	Chicago	Sept 22 nd	Chicago	7-3	Bill Foster	John Williams
2	Chicago	Sept 23 rd	Chicago	3-0	Willie Powell	Ted Trent
3	Chicago	Sept 24 th	St. Louis	6-4	Slap Hensley	Harold Treadwell
4	Chicago	Sept 25 th	St. Louis	5-4	Luther McDonald	Bill Foster
5	St. Louis	Sept 29 th	Chicago	5-3	Bill Foster	Slap Hensley
6	St. Louis	Sept 30 th	St. Louis	12-7	John Williams	Bob Miller
7	St. Louis	Oct 2 nd	Chicago	9-7	Harold Treadwell	John Williams
8	St. Louis	Oct 4 th	St. Louis	19-4	Slap Hensley	Harold Treadwell
9	St. Louis	Oct 5 th	St. Louis	9-2	Ted Trent	Bill Foster

Top Hitters for the Series:

Chicago - Pythian Russ (.407), Steel Arm Davis (.367), Bobby Williams (.348) and Johnny Hines (.345).
 St. Louis – James “Cool Papa” Bell (.407), Mule Suttles (.333), Spoony Palm (.333), Willie Wells (.320), Dewey Creacy (308) and Johnny Russell (.286).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

Chicago – Bill Foster (2-2), Willie Powell (1-0) and Harold Treadwell (1-2).
 St. Louis – Slap Hensley (2-1), Luther McDonald (1-0), Ted Trent (1-1) and John Williams (1-2).

Negro League National League Champion (1928) – St. Louis Stars

1929 There was no Play-off Series in 1929. The Kansas City Monarchs won both halves of the Negro National League season. They finished the regular season with a record of 62-17 (.785). The St. Louis Stars finished a distant second with a 59-33 (.641) record.

Negro League National League Champion (1929) – Kansas City Monarchs