

“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)

1930 St. Louis Stars vs Detroit Stars (Negro National League)

The St. Louis Stars won the first half of the Negro National League season and finished the year with a record of 66-22 (.750) which was the best overall record in the league for the entire season. The Detroit Stars started off the season poorly, primarily because their best player (Norman “Turkey” Stearnes) had jumped the team and signed with the New York Lincoln Giants. Detroit finished the first half of the season with a losing record but when Stearnes returned, the Detroit Stars caught fire and edged out the St. Louis Stars by a half a game for the second half of the season title. Detroit had a season record of 50-33 (.602) which was the second best record in the league for the entire season.

St. Louis boasted a strong hitting attack and had excellent pitching. The Stars had three players that batted over .400 for the season. They were George “Mule” Suttles (.422), Henry Williams (.408) and Willie Wells (.403). In addition all but one player from the starting line-up hit over .300 for the season. The Stars line-up and their season batting averages for the 1930 season were as follows:

St. Louis Stars (1930)

1B	George Giles	.333	OF	James “Cool Pappa” Bell	.362
2B	Johnny Russell	.309	OF	Branch Russell	.324
SS	Willie Wells	.403	OF	Frog Redus	.300
3B	Dewey Creacy	.285	Utility	Mule Suttle	.422
C	Henry Williams	.408	Utility	John Williams	.317

The Stars also got exceptional pitching from Slap Hensley (18-7), Ted Trent (12-2), Leroy Matlock (10-3), Ted Radcliffe (9-3) and Joe Strong (8-3). Slap Hensley won the most games of any other pitcher in the Negro National League during the 1930 season.

Bingo DeMoss the manager of the Detroit Stars was faced with some real challenges during the season. The loss of Turkey Stearnes at the beginning of the season crippled his hitting attack. Huck Rile (.323) was the only other player on the Stars team that hit over .300 for the season. When Turkey Stearnes returned to the team he hit .339 for the rest of the Negro National League season. Detroit did have a solid pitching staff that included Andy Cooper (15-6), Ted Shaw (11-5), Nelson Dean (10-8), Al “Gunboat” Davis (9-7) and Willie Powell (8-9).

The Play-Off Series for the Negro National League title started on September 13th with the first three games being played in St. Louis. The series moved to Hamtramck which is a suburb of Detroit for the four remaining games. St. Louis went into the series with a decided disadvantage. Their ace pitcher, Andy Cooper, had arm problems and was only available for limited action in the final game of the series.

St. Louis edged out a 5-4 victory in the first game with Ted Trent getting the win and Nelson Dean taking the loss. The Detroit Stars rebounded and won game two by the score of 11-7. Turkey Stearnes was the hitting star for Detroit. He had gone 3-4 (with a homerun) in game one and had not cooled down for game two. In game two, Stearnes went 5-5 with a homerun, double and stolen base. St. Louis sent Ted Trent to the mound to start game three. Trent limited Stearnes to one hit in four at bats and the St. Louis Stars went on to a 7-2 victory. Detroit won games four and five to take a three games to two lead in the series. St. Louis was faced with a must win situation in game six and responded with a 4-3 victory. The victory was secured when James “Cool Pappa” Bell singled in what would be the winning run with two outs in the top of the eighth inning. The series was now tied at three games a piece. The St. Louis Stars sent Roosevelt Davis to mound to start game seven of the series. The Detroit Stars countered with Nelson Dean. Turkey Stearnes went into game seven batting .517 with 3 homeruns and 11 runs batted in. Davis completely shut him down (Stearnes went 0-5 at the plate). Willie Wells delivered with a 3-4 performance to lead St. Louis to a 13-7 victory. Game seven would prove to be the final game of the series as heavy rains in the Detroit area washed out the rest of the series. The St. Louis Stars claimed the Negro National League title.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	St. Louis	Sept 13 th	St. Louis	5-4	Ted Trent	Nelson Dean
2	St. Louis	Sept 15 th	Detroit	11-7	Willie Powell	Joe Strong
3	St. Louis	Sept 16 th	St. Louis	7-2	Ted Trent	Al Davis
4	Hamtramck (MI)	Sept 17 th	Detroit	5-4	Nelson Dean	Slap Hensley
5	Hamtramck	Sept 21 st	Detroit	7-5	Willie Powell	Ted Radcliffe
6	Hamtramck	Sept 22 nd	St. Louis	4-3	Slap Hensley	Al Davis
7	Hamtramck	Sept 22 nd	St. Louis	13-7	Roosevelt Davis	Nelson Dean

Top Hitters for the Series:

St. Louis – Willie Wells (.400), Ted Radcliffe (.357), George Giles (.346), John Russell (.333), Frog Redus (.333), Branch Russell (.292), Mule Suttles (.291) and James Bell (.280).
 Detroit – Turkey Stearnes (.441), Huck Rile (.344), Spoony Palm (.322) and Crush Holloway (.313).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

St. Louis – Ted Trent (2-0), Roosevelt Davis (1-0) and Slap Hensley (1-1).
 Detroit – Willie Powell (2-0), Nelson Dean (1-2) and Al Davis (0-2).

Negro National League Champion (1930) – St. Louis Stars

1931 There was no Negro National League Play-Off Series held. The St. Louis Stars won both halves of the Negro National League season. They posted a record of 45-11 (.804) during the regular season and finished 14 ½ games ahead of the Cleveland Cubs who finished the year in second place with a record of 29-24 (.547).

Negro National League Champion (1931) – St. Louis Stars

1932 Chicago American Giants vs Nashville Elite Giants (Negro Southern League)

The Negro Southern League was considered the only “Major League” in Negro League baseball in 1932. The Nashville Elite Giants won the first half of the season and the Chicago American Giants won the second half of the season. The Chicago American Giants finished the regular season with the best record in the Negro Southern League. The American Giants were 34-7 (.829) during the 1932 baseball season. The Monroe Monarchs had the second best overall won-loss record in the league at 33-7 (.825). The Nashville Elite Giants faltered in the second half of the season and finished the year at 24-15 (.615).

The Chicago American Giants were managed by Dave Malarcher and fielded a strong team. Nat Rogers (.322), E.C. “Pop” Turner (.310), Sandy Thompson (.308) and Norman “Turkey” Stearnes (.297) were the team’s top hitters. The real strength of Chicago during the 1932 Negro Southern League season was their pitching staff. Bill Foster (19-8), Willie Powell (14-6) and Melvin “Putt” Powell (14-7) were the team’s top pitchers in 1932. These three pitchers were also the top three pitchers in wins in the Negro Southern League for the season.

Joe Hewitt managed the Nashville Elite Giants and struggled all year with his team’s hitting and pitching. Black Bottom Buford (.375) and Burnis “Wild Bill” Wright (.300) were Nashville’s only two players to hit .300 for the season. The Elite Giants pitching staff also struggled. Henry “Red” Wright (9-5) and Jim Willis (7-7) were the two best pitchers on the Nashville staff.

The Chicago American Giants and the Nashville Elite Giants met in early September in Chicago to start the Play-Off Series. The first three games were played in Chicago. Nashville won two of the first three games behind the pitching of Jim Willis to take a one game lead when the series moved to Nashville. Chicago rebounded and won two of the next three games to tie the series. In game seven, Chicago sent their ace Bill Foster to the mound to face Jim Willis who had already won two games in the series. Backed by two homeruns each from Steel Arm Davis and Turkey Stearnes plus one from Nat Rogers, the Chicago American Giants powered to a 10-5 victory. Both teams sent the same two pitchers back to the mound to start game eight. Foster won his second game in two days by defeating Jim Willis and the Elite Giants by a score of 9-2. The victory gave the Chicago American Giants the Negro Southern League championship.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
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Only a limited number of box scores have been found for the series. Game details and statistics for hitting and pitching are not presented because they are too limited to provide an accurate representation of individual players and team performance.

Negro Southern League Champion (1932) – Chicago American Giants

1932 There was no Negro National League season played in 1932.

1933 Negro National League

The 1933 Negro National League season was one of change, controversy and turmoil.

- Cole's Chicago American Giants saw their park burn down and were forced to temporarily relocate to Indianapolis (IN) and play out of Perry Park.
- Originally, the Pittsburgh Crawfords claimed the title for first half of the season, but this was challenged by Cole's Chicago American Giants.
- The Homestead Grays were expelled from the league during the summer for using a player who was under contract with another team (Detroit).
- The Cleveland Giants dropped out of the league before the end of the season.
- In August, the Columbus Blue Birds replaced Cleveland.
- No Play-Off Series was held between the winners of the first half of the season and the winners of the second half.

The final overall standings for the Negro National League for the 1933 season were as follows:

Negro National League (1933)

	Games	Record	Pct.
Cole's American Giants	51	37-14	.725
Pittsburgh Crawfords	55	38-17	.691
Nashville Elite Giants	49	27-22	.551
Homestead Grays	20	11-9	.550
Baltimore Black Sox	22	11-11	.500
Detroit Stars	49	19-30	.388
Columbus Blue Birds	42	16-26	.381
Akron Tyrites	11	2-9	.182
Cleveland Giants	16	2-14	.125

Initially the Pittsburgh Crawfords claimed the title for the first half of the season. This was challenged by Cole's Chicago American Giants because they claimed wins in two suspended games against the Baltimore Black Sox. This according to the American Giants gave them a better record or at least a tie with the Pittsburgh Crawfords. According to research by Larry Lester and Dick Clark, Cole's Chicago American Giants finished the first half of the season with a record of 21-7 (.750) and the Pittsburgh Crawfords had a record of 20-8 (.714). No Play-Off Series was held to settle the controversy.

The Nashville Elite Giants tied the Pittsburgh Crawfords for the title for the second half of the season. The Pittsburgh Crawfords were led by the hitting of Oscar Charleston (.388), Josh Gibson (.352), James "Cool Papa" Bell (.339), Ted Page (.321), Bill Perkins (.311) and Judy Johnson (.281). The Crawfords also had an extremely strong pitching staff in 1933. Bertrum Hunter (14-4), Leroy Matlock (11-4) William Bell (7-3) and Satchel Paige (7-0) and Sam Streeter (7-4) were the team's top pitchers.

The Nashville Elite Giants top hitters were Sammy Hughes (.347), Tommy Dukes (.343), Sam Bankhead (.341) and Burnis “Wild Bill” Wright (.328). Percy Miller (10-2) was the ace of Nashville’s pitching staff.

A three game Play-Off Series was scheduled to decide the second half championship. Pittsburgh took game one by a score of 5-4 in twelve innings. Leroy Matlock who came on in relief of Satchel Paige got the win and Jim Willis took the loss for Nashville. Bertrum Hunter beat the Elite Giants in game two by a score of 3-1. The box score for game three has yet to be uncovered. Pittsburgh claimed the second half title with their victory over Nashville in the second half of the season Play-Off Series.

No Play-Off Series was played between the winner of the first half of the season and the winner of the second half of the season. After the Play-Off Series with Nashville, Negro National League President, Gus Greenlee, who also owned the Pittsburgh Crawfords awarded the Negro National League pennant to the Crawfords.

Negro National League Champion (1933) – Pittsburgh Crawfords

1934 Chicago American Giants vs Philadelphia Stars (Negro National League)

The official standings for the 1934 Negro National League season were that the Chicago American Giants won the first half of the season and that the Philadelphia Stars won the second half. The Philadelphia Stars finished the regular season with a record of 25-13 (.658) and the Chicago American Giants had a won-loss record of 28-15 (.651). The Chicago American Giants won the first half of the 1934 Negro National League season and the Philadelphia Stars won the second half with a record of 11-4 (.733). The two teams met in an eight game championship series to crown a Negro National League champion.

Dave Malarcher’s (manager) Chicago American Giants had arguably the best hitter in Negro League baseball in Norman “Turkey” Stearnes (.398 batting average and 13 homeruns in league play). In addition Malarcher could rely on the bats of Larry Brown (.380), Alec Radcliffe (.316), Johnny Hines (.312), Willie Wells (.264) and George “Mule” Suttles (12 homeruns). Ted Trent (12-6), Willie Powell (6-4), Bill Foster (6-5) and Sug Cornelius (5-12) made up the team’s starting pitching rotation.

The Philadelphia Stars were managed by Webster McDonald who was also one of the team’s two best pitchers. Jud Wilson (.333) led the team in hitting. Biz Mackey (.299) and Chaney White (.295) helped support the Stars hitting attack. However, the real strength of the Stars was its top two pitchers. Slim Jones (21-7) led the league in wins and Webster McDonald had an excellent 12-4 won-loss record.

The Negro National League Play-off for the 1934 season started on September 14th with the first four games being played in Chicago before the two teams traveled to Philadelphia.

Bill Foster (Chicago) beat Rocky Ellis (Philadelphia) 4-3 in game one on Mule Suttles run scoring single in the top of the ninth inning. Games two and three were played four days later (September 16th) as a double header in Chicago. Ted Trent (Chicago) shut out the Stars by a score of 3-0 in the first game of the doubleheader and Webster McDonald (Philadelphia) beat Bill

Foster in the second game by a score of 5-3. Game four was a pitching duel between Willie Powell (Chicago) and Rocky Ellis (Philadelphia) that ended in 2-1 victory for Chicago. Powell limited the Stars to five hits and Ellis gave up only four hits while taking the loss.

Ten days later (September 27th) game five was played in Philadelphia at Passon Field. Rocky Ellis (Philadelphia) beat the American Giants 1-0 to get the Stars to within one game of Chicago. Game six was played on September 29th and resulted in a 4-1 win for Philadelphia. Cliff Carter got the win for the Stars and Ted Trent took the loss for the American Giants. Controversy surrounded game six when Philadelphia Stars' third baseman Jud Wilson allegedly hit umpire Bert Gholston which should have meant immediate ejection. Wilson much to the surprise of everyone was allowed to remain in the game. A similar incident occurred later in the game when Stars' catcher Ameal Brooks pushed another umpire and was not ejected. The Stars walked away with the victory and the series was now tied at three games apiece.

Prior to the start of game seven, Dave Malarcher protested the incident of Jud Wilson hitting Gholston in game six to Negro National League Commissioner Rollo Wilson. The team owners and umpires met with Commissioner Wilson to discuss the incident. Gholston told the Commissioner that he had wanted to eject Jud Wilson but that Jud threatened him and that he (Golston) buckled under the pressure. Ed Bolden then informed Rollo Wilson that if Jud Wilson (no relation) were suspended that Philadelphia would not play game seven. Commissioner Wilson gave in to Bolden's threat and the series was ordered to resume.

Game seven wasn't played until October 11th and ended up proving nothing as it ended in a 4-4 tie. Webster McDonald sent his ace (Slim Jones) to the mound for the deciding game eight of the series. Jones was up to the challenge and pitched a five hit 2-0 shutout of the American Giants. The victory gave the Philadelphia Stars their first ever Negro National League title.

In a side note both the American Giants and the Stars both filed protests over games seven and eight. Philadelphia claimed that Chicago had used an ineligible players and Chicago claimed that the two games should not have been played at night. The "league" upheld the Philadelphia Stars series win.

A summary for the 1934 Negro National League Championship Series is as follows:

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	Philadelphia	Sept 12 th	Chicago	4-3	Bill Foster	Rocky Ellis
2	Chicago	Sept 16 th	Chicago	3-0	Ted Trent	Slim Jones
3	Chicago	Sept 16 th	Philadelphia	5-3	Webster Mc Donald	Bill Foster
4	Chicago	Sept 17 th	Chicago	2-1	Willie Powell	Rocky Ellis
5	Philadelphia	Sept 27 th	Philadelphia	1-0	Rocky Ellis	Bill Foster
6	Philadelphia	Sept 29 th	Philadelphia	4-1	Cliff Carter	Ted Trent
7	Philadelphia	Oct 11 th	Tie	4-4	-	-
8	Philadelphia	Oct 12 th	Philadelphia	2-0	Slim Jones	Sug Cornelius

Top Hitters for the Series:

Chicago – Turkey Stearnes (.375), Joe Scott (.300) and Larry Brown (.231).

Philadelphia – Jud Wilson (.400), Ameal Brooks (.375), Biz Mackey (.368) and Pete Washington (.357).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

Chicago – Ted Trent (1-1 w/ 2.84 ERA), Willie Powell (1-0) and Bill Foster (1-2 w/ 2.00 ERA).
Philadelphia – Cliff Carter (1-0 w/ 1.00 ERA), Webster Mc Donald (1-0 w/ 3.44 ERA), Slim Jones
(1-1 w/ 1.59 ERA) and Rocky Ellis (1-2 w 2.86 ERA).

Negro National League Champion (1934) – Philadelphia Stars

1935 Pittsburgh Crawfords vs New York Cubans (Negro National League)

The Pittsburgh Crawfords had the best record in the league with a 42-15 (.737) record and easily out distanced the competition during the 1935 baseball season. The Columbus Elite Giants had the second best won-loss record with a 28-21 (.571) record and the New York Cubans finished in third place with a 29-24 (.547) record. Pittsburgh won the first half of the season and the New York Cubans rebounded from a dreadful start to win the second half of the season.

The Pittsburgh Crawfords were managed by Oscar Charleston and featured four players (James “Cool Pappa” Bell, Oscar Charleston, Josh Gibson and Judy Johnson) that would go on to be elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The Crawfords star studded lineup featured the hitting of Pat Patterson (.376), Josh Gibson (.355 and a league leading 16 homeruns), Jimmie Crutchfield (.327) James “Cool Pappa” Bell (.320), Sam Bankhead (.298) and Oscar Charleston (.294). Pittsburgh also had an excellent pitching staff that included Leroy Matlock (17-0), Roosevelt Davis (12-4) and Bertrum Hunter (7-6).

The New York Cubans were managed by Latin great Martin Dihigo. Alejandro Oms (.396), Lazaro Salazar (.390), Dick Lundy (.337) and Martin Dihigo (.335) were the Cubans leading hitters. The starting rotation of the pitching staff for New York included Martin Dihigo (7-3), Luis Tiant (7-5), Johnny Taylor (6-4) and John “Neck” Stanley (3-6).

Game one of the Play-Off Series was held in Paterson (New Jersey) and played on September 13th. The New York Cubans started Frank Blake who had only seen limited action during the regular season. Blake responded to Dihigo’s confidence in him and pitched a four hitter for 9-3 victory. Game two of the series was moved to New York City and pitted John “Neck” Stanley (New York) against Sam Streeter (Pittsburgh). Stanley silenced the powerful Crawfords bats and coasted to a four hit 4-0 shutout victory. Crawfords ace Leroy Matlock who was undefeated during the season took the mound for game three. Leroy pitched a five hit 3-0 shutout with Johnny Taylor taking the loss for New York. Cuban manager Martin Dihigo named himself the starter for game four which was played in Pittsburgh on September 18th. Leroy Matlock started game four for the Crawfords on only two days rest. The Cubans scored a 6-1 victory to win the game and end Leroy Matlock’s pitching streak at 22 wins (4 in 1934 , 17 in 1935 and 1 in the play-offs) without a loss. The Pittsburgh Crawfords entered game five was a must win situation. Pittsburgh scored the winning run in the bottom of the ninth inning to take a 3-2 victory over New York. Roosevelt Davis was the winning pitcher and Frank Blake took the loss. Down 6-3 going into the bottom of the ninth of game seven, the Pittsburgh Crawfords scored four runs off Martin Dihigo for a 7-6 victory. The win by Pittsburgh evened up the series at three games apiece. Game seven was a slugfest and went back and forth. It was highlighted by four homeruns. The Cubans got two (one each from Rap Dixon and Clyde Spearman) and the Crawfords got two (one each from Oscar Charleston and Josh Gibson). Pittsburgh scored three runs in the top of the ninth inning to take an 8-5 lead. New York could only score two runs in the bottom of the ninth to

come up one run short and an 8-7 loss. The victory by Pittsburgh gave them the Negro National league championship title.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	Paterson (NJ)	Sept 13 th	New York	9-3	Frank Blake	Harry Kincannon
2	New York City	Sept 13 th	New York	4-0	Neck Stanley	Sam Streeter
3	New York City	Sept 15 th	Pittsburgh	3-0	Leroy Matlock	Johnny Taylor
4	Pittsburgh	Sept 18 th	New York	6-1	Martin Dihigo	Leroy Matlock
5	Pittsburgh	Sept 19 th	Pittsburgh	3-2	Roosevelt Davis	Frank Blake
6	Philadelphia	Sept 22 nd	Pittsburgh	7-6	Jimmie Crutchfield	Martin Dihigo
7	Philadelphia	Sept 23 rd	Pittsburgh	8-7	Roosevelt Davis	Luis Tiant, Sr.

Top Hitters for the Series:

Pittsburgh – Josh Gibson (.407), Oscar Charleston (.370) and Sam Bankhead (.269).
New York – Clyde Spearman (.345), Rap Dixon (.333) and Showboat Thomas (.323).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

Pittsburgh – Roosevelt Davis (2-0), Jimmie Crutchfield (1-0) and Leroy Matlock (1-1).
New York – Neck Stanley (1-0), Frank Blake (1-1) and Martin Dihigo (1-1).

Negro National League Champion (1935) – Pittsburgh Crawfords

1936 Pittsburgh Crawfords vs Washington Elite Giants (Negro National League)

The Washington Elite Giants won the first half of the Negro National League 1936 season with a record of 14-10 (.583). Washington faded in the second half of the season. The Pittsburgh Crawfords won the second half of the season with a record of 20-9 (.690). Pittsburgh also had the best overall record for the season. The final standings for the 1936 Negro National League season were as follows:

Negro National League (1936)			
	Games	Record	Pct.
Pittsburgh Crawfords	60	36-24	.600
Newark Eagles	59	30-29	.508
New York Cubans	45	22-23	.489
Washington Elite Giants	45	21-24	.467
Philadelphia Stars	55	25-30	.455
Homestead Grays	49	22-27	.449
New York Black Yankees	21	7-14	.333

Researchers differ as to whether or not there was a play-off at the end of the season. Negro League researcher, John Holway), in his book The Complete Book of the Negro Leagues: The Other Half of Baseball History contents that Washington beat Pittsburgh by a score of 2-0 in a one game play-off. Holway has Andy “Pullman” Porter (Washington) defeating Sam Streeter (Pittsburgh). Holway also pointed out in his book that that several key players did not play in the

game. According to Holway Oscar Charleston, Satchel Paige and Bill Perkins did not play for the Pittsburgh Crawfords and Burnis "Wild Bill" Wright did not play for the Washington Elite Giants. No box score has been found to support this game.

Negro League researchers, Larry Lester and Dick Clark, in their book The Negro Leagues Book identify that Washington won the first half of the season and Pittsburgh won the second half. Lester and Clark also say that there was no play-off at the end of the season.

What is clear is that the Pittsburgh Crawfords clearly had the best team over the course of the entire season.

1937 Kansas City Monarchs vs Chicago American Giants (Negro American League)

The Kansas City Monarchs won both halves of the 1937 Negro American League season, but a Play-Off series was held when the Chicago American Giants disputed the first half of the season being awarded to Kansas City.

The Kansas City Monarchs were led by the hitting of Bullet Rogan (.410), Jesse Brooks (.395), Newt Allen (.389), Willard Brown (.361) and Bill Simms (.318). The Monarchs also boasted a very strong pitching staff that included Hilton Smith, Bullet Rogan and Andy Cooper.

Candy Jim Taylor managed the Chicago American Giants. Even though he had a weak hitting team (Paul Hardy was the only player to hit .300 for the season), Taylor had an outstanding pitching staff that included seasoned veterans Bill Foster, Ted Trent, Willie Powell and Sug Cornelius.

The 1937 Negro American League Play-Off Series got underway on September 8th with the first game being played in Dayton, Ohio. Hilton Smith started for the Monarchs and Sug Cornelius started for Chicago. The Monarchs got off to a quick start and scored four runs in the top of the first inning, but Sug Cornelius buckled down and shutout the Monarchs the rest of the way. Chicago scored two runs in the seventh and two runs in the eighth to tie the game. The American Giants won the game in the bottom of the tenth inning when Bill Hoskins doubled and Jack Marshall singled him home for a 5-4 win. Marshall's single in the tenth was his fourth hit of the game. Sug Cornelius got the win and Monarch's relief pitcher Floyd Kranson took the loss. Kansas City manager Andy Cooper took the mound in game two and faced off against Bill Foster. Chicago struck for two runs in the first inning and then Cooper shut down the American Giants for the next sixteen innings. The Monarchs scored their two runs in the top of the seventh inning. The game ended in a 2-2 seventeen inning tie. Game three was played in Milwaukee on September 13th and 14th. The reason the game was played over a two day time frame was that when the Monarchs scored three runs in the top of the eighth inning, the American Giants disputed the runs and refused to take the field. Kansas City eventually won the game 8-7. The Monarchs then won game four that was played in Indianapolis by a score of 6-3. The series then moved to Kansas City for the final game of the Play-Off Series. It was a hard fought low scoring affair. The Monarchs prevailed by a score of 2-1 when in the bottom of the ninth inning with two outs and a runner on first base, Willard Brown lined a double to right to drive in the winning run. The win enabled the Kansas City Monarchs to claim the first ever Negro American League championship title.

A summary for the 1937 Negro American League Championship Series is as follows:

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	Dayton (OH)	Sept 8 th	Chicago	5-4	Sug Cornelius	Floyd Kranson
2	Chicago	Sept 12 th	Tie	2-2	-	-
3	Milwaukee	Sept 13 th	Kansas City	8-7	Hilton Smith	Gross
4	Indianapolis	Sept 15 th	Kansas City	6-3	-	-
5	Kansas City	Sept 17 th	Kansas City	2-1	Hilton Smith	Sug Cornelius

Top Hitters for the Series:

Kansas City – Ted Strong (.421), Willard Brown (.400), Jesse Brooks (.364), Bill Simms (.313) and Hilton Smith (.300).

Chicago – Bill Hoskins (.500), Jack Marshall (.381), Subby Byas (.357), Alec Radcliffe (.333) and Herman Dunlop (.300).

Leading Pitchers for the Series:

Kansas City – Hilton Smith (2-0).

Chicago – Sug Cornelius (1-1).

Negro American League Champion (1937) – Kansas City Monarchs

1938 Memphis Red Sox vs Atlanta Black Crackers American Giants (Negro American League)

The Memphis Red Sox won the first half of the season and the Atlanta Black Crackers won the second half of the season. During the regular season the Kansas City Monarchs had the best overall won-loss record in the Negro American League with 32-15 (.681), the Memphis Red Sox finished in second place with a record of 29-19 (.604) and the Atlanta Black Crackers came in third with a 21-14 (.600) record.

Ted “Double Duty” Radcliffe managed the Memphis Red Sox. Neil Robinson (.368), Nat Rogers (.339) and Ducky Davenport (.338) were the team’s top hitters during the season. The Red Sox pitching staff included Porter Moss, Ted Radcliffe, Bob Madison and Woodrow Wilson.

The Atlanta Black Crackers had a long history in the Negro Southern League and played their only season in the Negro American League in 1938. Nish Williams manage the Black Crackers. The leading hitters for Atlanta were Dan Reaves (.377), Thomas “Pee Wee” Butts (.360), Joe Greene (.333) and William Davis (.314).

The Memphis Red Sox won the Play-Off Series by defeating the Atlanta Black Crackers in both of the games they played.

Negro American League Champion (1938) – Memphis Red Sox 1939 Kansas City Monarchs vs St. Louis Stars (Negro American League)

The Kansas City Monarchs won the first half of the 1939 Negro American League season and the St. Louis Stars won the second half. Kansas City also finished the regular season with the best overall record in the league. The unofficial final standings for the Negro American League in 1939 were:

Negro American League (1939)

	Games	Record	Pct.
Kansas City Monarchs	42	28-14	.667
Chicago American Giants	39	23-16	.590
St. Louis Stars	34	20-14	.588
Cleveland Bears	33	17-16	.515
Toledo Crawfords	19	8-11	.421
Memphis Red Sox	36	15-21	.417
Indianapolis ABCs	12	2-10	.167

After the conclusion of the regular season, the Kansas City Monarchs (winners of the first half of the season) played the St. Louis Stars (winners of the second half of the season) in a play-off series to crown a Negro American League champion. Originally there were to have been seven games played in the series but when St. Louis failed to obtain a ball park in their home city, the series was changed to the best of five games.

According to the Afro American newspaper, the first two games of the series were played in Oklahoma before the two teams moved to Kansas City. The Monarchs started strong by winning the first three games. The Stars took game behind a 1-0 shutout win by Ossie Brown. Game five of the play-off series was played in Kansas City on September 4th. The Monarchs won the final game of the series by a score of 7-0 and took the series four games to one to claim the Negro American League pennant.

A summary for the 1939 Negro American League Championship Series is as follows:

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	Oklahoma City	Aug 31 st	Kansas City	4-1	Hilton Smith	Walter Calhoun
2	Muskogee, OK	Sept 1 st	Kansas City	7-2	Andy Cooper	Chip McAllister
3	Kansas City	Sept 3 rd	Kansas City	6-5	Hilton Smith	Theo Smith
4	Kansas City	Sept 3 rd	St. Louis	1-0	Ossie Brown	Willie Hutchinson
5	Kansas City	Sept 4 th	Kansas City	7-0	-	-

Kansas City finished the season with the best overall record in the “league” and also won the play-off championship series.

Negro American League Champion (1939) – Kansas City Monarchs

1939 Four-Way Negro National League Play-Off Series

Baltimore Elite Giants vs Newark Eagles (Negro National League) Homestead Grays vs Philadelphia Stars (Negro National League)

Baltimore Elite Giants vs Homestead Grays (Negro National League)

In 1939, Colonel Jacob Rupert who owned the New York Yankees donated a trophy to be awarded to the winner of a Play-Off Series that matched up the four best teams in the Negro National League against each other. The four top teams in the Negro National League at the end of the 1939 season were the Homestead Grays, Newark Eagles, Baltimore Elite Giants and Philadelphia Stars.

The first round of the Play-Off Series matched the Baltimore Elite Giants against the Newark Eagles and the Homestead Grays against the Philadelphia Stars.

The Homestead Grays won both halves of the Negro National League season in 1939 and finished the year with the best overall record. Homestead had a league record of 33-14 (.702) for the season.

The final standings for the Negro National League for 1939 were as follows:

Negro National League (1939)

1939	Games	Record	Pct.
Homestead Grays	47	33-14	.702
Newark Eagles	49	29-20	.592
Baltimore Elite Giants	46	25-21	.543
Philadelphia Stars	63	31-32	.492
New York Black Yankees	36	15-21	.417
New York Cubans	27	5-22	.185

The starting lineups for the four teams involved in the Play-Off Series and the players 1939 statistics are as follows:

Position	Baltimore Elite Giants		Homestead Grays		Newark Eagles		Philadelphia Stars	
1B	James "Red" Moore	.289	Buck Leonard	.397	George "Mule" Suttles	.282	Jim West	.239
2B	Sammy T. Hughes	.325	Sam Bankhead	.292	Dick Seay	.185	Pat Patterson	.331
SS	Thomas Butts	.551	Jelly Jackson	.218	Willie Wells	.355	Jake Dunn	.229
3B	Felton Snow	.256	Henry Spearman	.263	Leonard Pearson	.351	Jud Wilson	.276
C	Roy Campanella	.245	Josh Gibson	.341	Biz Mackey	.256	Bill Perkins	.300
OF	Wild Bill Wright	.398	Vic Harris	.215	Monte Irvin	.365	Roy Parnell	.274
OF	Henry Kimbro	.289	Speed Whatley	.302	Ed Stone	.439	Gene Benson	.319
OF	Bill Hoskins	.333	Jerry Benjamin	.250	Fred Wilson	.340	Clyde Spearman	.200
P	Bill Byrd	15-4	Edsall Walker	6-2	Leon Day	17-7	Henry McHenry	10-5
P	Jonas Gaines	2-1	Ray Brown	6-3	Jesse Brown	7-0	Sam Thompson	5-5
P	Emery "Ace" Adams	2-1	Tom "Speck" Roberts	3-1	Max Manning	4-4	Roy Welmaker	4-1
P	Andy Porter	1-0	Roy Partlow	2-5	Harry Cozart	0-1	Web. McDonald	5-7

Baltimore Elite Giants vs Newark Eagles (Negro National League)

George “Mule” Suttles led the Newark Eagles to an 8-6 victory in game one of the series with the Baltimore Elite Giants. Suttles connected with two homeruns and a single in the game. Game two of the series moved from Newark to Philadelphia and was played on September 9th. Leon Day (Newark Eagles pitcher) could not contain the Baltimore Elite Giants hitters and gave up nine runs in the first six innings. Mule Suttles connected with his third homerun of the Play-Off Series in the game. Baltimore won the contest by a score of 11-3. Games three and four were played as doubleheader in Baltimore on September 10th. The Elite Giants won both games. They won the first game by a score of 7-3 with Bill Byrd getting the victory and the second game 5-2 with little-used Baltimore pitcher Willie Hubert picking up the victory to clinch the first round of the Play-Off Series for the Elite Giants.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Loosing Pitcher
1	Newark	Sept 6 th	Newark	8-6	Max Manning	Ace Adams
2	Philadelphia	Sept 9 th	Baltimore	11-3	-	Leon Day
3	Baltimore	Sept 10 th	Baltimore	7-3	Bill Byrd	Harry Cozart
4	Baltimore	Sept 10 th	Baltimore	5-2	Willie Hubert	Max Manning

Homestead Grays vs Philadelphia Stars (Negro National League)

Game one of the series between Homestead and Philadelphia was played on September 9th in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Stars won the slugfest by a score of 12-9. The hot hitting of both teams carried over to games two and three that were played the next day in Cleveland as a double header. The Homestead Grays won the first game by a score of 15-9 and the second game by a score of 6-4. Roy Welmaker got the Stars back in the series in game four as he defeated Edsall Walker 5-3 in Philadelphia on September 13th. Behind the shutout pitching of Ray Brown and three hits by Buck Leonard, the Homestead Grays took the fifth and deciding game of the series by a score of 3-0. The win enabled Homestead to move on to play the Baltimore Elite Giants who had defeated the Newark Eagles a few days before.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Loosing Pitcher
1	Philadelphia	Sept 9 th	Philadelphia	12-9	-	-
2	Cleveland	Sept 10 th	Homestead	15-9	-	-
3	Cleveland	Sept 10 th	Homestead	6-4	-	-
4	Philadelphia	Sept 13 th	Philadelphia	5-3	Roy Welmaker	Edsall Walker
5	Philadelphia	Sept 14 th	Homestead	3-0	Ray Brown	Cooper

Baltimore Elite Giants vs Homestead Grays (Negro National League)

The championship Play-Off Series between the Baltimore Elite Giants and the Homestead Grays began on September 16th with game one being played in Philadelphia. After the Grays put up two runs in the bottom of the first inning, the game turned into a pitching duel between Roy Partlow (Homestead) and Bill Byrd (Baltimore). Sam Bankhead and David “Speed” Whatley each had three hits for Homestead. The Grays won game one by a score of 2-1 with Roy Partlow getting the victory and Bill Byrd the loss. Games two and three were scheduled as doubleheader in Baltimore. The Elite Giants took game one by a score of 7-5. Game two was a five inning 2-2 tie that was called because of darkness. The two teams moved back to Philadelphia for game four. Behind a four hit (homerun, two doubles and a single) day by Roy Campanella, the Elite Giants coasted to a 10-5 victory in game four to give themselves a lead of two games to one in the series. Game five of the series was played the next day (September 24th) in New York City. Baltimore

scored the only two runs of the game in the bottom of the seventh inning to claim a 2-0 victory and the Negro National League Play-Off Championship title and trophy. Jonas Gaines (Baltimore) pitched a shutout for his second victory in the Play-Off Series.

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

Top Hitters for the Series: (Statistics are not complete. Several box scores are still missing.)

Baltimore - Sammy T. Hughes (.488), Bill Hoskins (.467), Henry Kimbro (.444), Wild Bill Wright (.382), Roy Campanella (.310) and Thomas "Pee Wee" Butts (.280).

Homestead – Buck Leonard (.444), Josh Gibson (.364), David "Speed" Whatley (.333) and Sam Bankhead (.304).

Newark – Biz Mackey (.500), Fred Wilson (.467), Dick Seay (.333) and George "Mule" Suttles (.267).

Philadelphia – Roy "Red" Parnell (.444), Gene Benson (.429) and Marvin Williams (.333).

Leading Pitchers for the Series: (Statistics are not complete. Several box scores are still missing.)

Baltimore – Jonas Gaines (2-0), Bill Byrd (2-1) and Willie Hubert (1-0).

Homestead - Roy Partlow (2-1), Ray Brown (1-0) and Tom Parker (1-1).

Newark - Max Manning (1-1), Leon Day (0-1) and Harry Cozert (0-1).

Philadelphia – Roy Welmaker (1-0).

National League Play-Off Champion (1939) – Baltimore Elite Giants