



John "Buck" O'Neil: The Rookie, The Man, The Legacy 1938

Phil S. Dixon

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The summer of 1938 was a pivotal year for baseball and American history. In that same year, John Jordon "Buck" O'Neil, was a rookie first baseman playing his first season in the Negro American League. Born in Carrabelle, Florida, raised in Sarasota and nicknamed Buck, it had taken five years and five different teams before the Kansas City, Monarchs finally signed O'Neil to a contract. Before he could get the starting assignment, though, O'Neil had to dethrone one of the Negro Leagues' hardest hitting first basemen, Eldridge Mayweather. In 1938, a time when African-American hall of fame ballplayers worth millions could be purchased for pennies on the dollar, times were hard and the baseball was tough. Kansas City's Monarchs were a blend of youth and maturity, and one of the best teams in the Negro American League. Oddly, Kansas City, in spite of winning records against every team in the Negro American League, failed to win the first-half or second-half pennant. For the first time ever John "Buck" O'Neil, Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe and James "Gabby" Kemp and many others are united together to speak on this celebrated season. With interviews from Monarchs' Hall of Fame players Willard "Sonny" Brown and Hilton Smith, along with Monarchs' greats Newt Allen and Byron "Mex" Johnson and many others, readers are taken on a road trip around America. Along the way readers, just as the team did in 1938, come in contact with segregation and racism as the book helps everyone to relive the glory days of the Negro Baseball Leagues while experiencing the hardships of life in America. Illustrated with over forty historic photographs, John "Buck" O'Neil, the rookie, the man, the legacy 1938 is a welcome addition to every baseball fans reading list.

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