

Boston Tigers, New England's top African-American baseball team, met Mansfield team on diamond in 1927

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MANSFIELD - Some believe that before the integration of Major League Baseball, New England lacked quality African-American baseball teams due to the relatively small black population in the region. That was not the case.

While Boston never had a “major” Negro League team, it had high quality semi-pro teams that drew big crowds wherever they went.

In the 1920s, the Boston Tigers were among the best African-American teams in New England. Based in Boston's South End, they were in high demand across the region. In August 1927 they made their way to Mansfield.

“The Tigers will be the first colored team to play on a Mansfield diamond,” reported the Mansfield News, “and the fact that they always inject plenty of pepper and comedy into their play should go a long way toward attracting a capacity crowd.”

The paper billed them as the “colored champions of the state.”

The first of their two appearances in Mansfield was on Thursday, Aug. 4, 1927. The venue was Fuller Field, located at the end of Wilson Place, where we would now find the Cedar Court elderly housing complex.



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THE MANSFIELD NEWS
FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 1927

**BOSTON TIGERS PIN
6-5 DEFEAT ON K. OF C.
AS RALLY FAILS**

Season's Biggest Crowd Sees
Colored Champs of New England Give Caseys First Licking This Year—Inability to Hit, While Tigers Collect 10 Bingles Causes Defeat.

Unable to place hits when hits meant runs, while their opponents touched Henry Stroppe for nine real bingles in seven innings and Frank Milliken of Walpole for one in the remaining three, of which five were doubles, the Knights of Columbus ball club suffered its first defeat of the

| | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|-----|----|---|
| Williams, c | 4 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| Totals | 30 | 6 | 10 | *26 | 10 | 3 |
| Mansfield Knights of Columbus | | | | | | |
| | ab | r | bh | po | a | e |
| Gaynor, ss | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Johnson, rf | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Bergeron, cf | 4 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Quinlan, lb | 3 | 2 | 2 | 14 | 0 | 1 |
| Gaffney, lf | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kimball, 3b | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Wedges, 2b | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Noonan, c | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Stroppe, p | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| Milliken, p | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Totals | 33 | 5 | 5 | 27 | 15 | 1 |
| *Kimball out, third strike bunt. | | | | | | |
| Innings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Boston | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Mansfield | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Two base hits—Barber 2, Moore 2, Garton, Quinlan. Sacrifice hits—Garton, Williams. Stolen bases—Moore, Quinlan, Gaffney. Base on balls by Martin 3, Stroppe 2. Struck out by Martin 7, Stroppe. Time 1 hr. 42 min. Umpires Gallipeau and Eaton. | | | | | | |

In the 1920s, the Boston Tigers were among the best African-American teams in New England. In August 1927 they made their way to Mansfield. *Provided By The Mansfield Historical Society From The Mansfield News*

Selectmen. The Knights had star players from neighboring towns, including North Attleboro, Walpole, and Brockton.

The Mansfield News billed the matchup as “one of the season’s classiest twilight attractions.” The first pitch was thrown at 6 p.m. The game took place in front of “the biggest crowd that Fuller’s park has accommodated in several seasons.” And the matchup did not disappoint.

The Tigers scored two runs in each of the first two innings to take a 4-1 lead. The Knights cut the lead to 4-3 in the bottom of the third, but a two-run Tigers sixth put the visitors up 6-3. Single runs by the Knights in the sixth and ninth innings proved too little as the home team went down to defeat by a score of 6-5.

Oscar Moore had four hits in four at bats to lead the Tigers to victory. The game was completed in one hour and 42 minutes.

It was the first defeat for the Knights of Columbus that year. Manager Bill Noonan still thought his team stood a decent chance of beating the champion

Some of the Tigers who came to Mansfield had been with the team for years. They included infielders Oscar Moore at first base and John Thomas at shortstop. In centerfield was the fleet-footed Moses Sisco. Rudolph Williams was the catcher. The remaining ballplayers were among the best in the region.

The Tigers would take on a team sponsored by the Mansfield Knights of Columbus. The “fast-stepping, undefeated” Knights felt good about their chances. They featured several Mansfield players including John Prescott, an effective pitcher who in later years would serve on the Board of

Tigers, so he arranged a second meeting three weeks later on Thursday, Aug. 25, 1927. This game would also take place at Fuller field at 6 p.m.

Noonan's instincts proved correct. In the second matchup John Prescott held the Tigers to just five hits as the Knights prevailed, 5-2. A four-run first inning got the Knights off on the right foot. The only significant rally by the Tigers earned them two runs in the fourth inning. John Thomas and Moses Sisco made some fine defensive plays for the visitors. The second game took just one hour and 24 minutes to complete.

The Tigers continued to play ball into the 1930s. Some of the players went on to distinguished careers in athletics.



O. A. Moore, Coach

Boston Tigers' Oscar Moore went on to coach baseball at Florida A & M University in Tallahassee. His teams won six conference championships in his 12 seasons as coach. He earned a doctorate in education and went on to chair the University's athletic department until 1973. Provided By The Mansfield Historical Society From The Florida A&M Yearbook, 1957

Moses Sisco worked for Boston University as a resident trainer. The school was forced to lay him off during the Great Depression but the student-athletes were so dismayed that he was quickly brought back. Sadly he contracted tuberculosis and died at a young age in 1940. The *Boston Globe* said "the diminutive trainer's name was a byword with college, school and amateur athletes at the [B.U.] Arena."

Oscar Moore went on to coach baseball at Florida A & M University in Tallahassee. His teams won six conference championships in his 12 seasons as coach. He earned a doctorate in education and

went on to chair the university's athletic department until 1973, remaining a professor thereafter. The A & M baseball field is named in his honor. Moore passed away in 1996 at the age of 87.