Negro League Star Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe Dies at 103

Former Negro League baseball star Theodore Roosevelt "Double Duty" Radcliffe, lost his battle with cancer in Chicago August 11, 2005. Radcliffe was 103.

Born July 7, 1902 in Mobile, Alabama, Radcliffe spent his formative years playing "ragball" with Satchel Paige. As a teenager, Radcliffe hitchhiked to Chicago to pursue his dreams and signed with the semi-professional Illinois Giants in 1919 for a $100 monthly salary.

Radcliffe formally entered the Negro League in 1928 playing for the Detroit Stars, but it was with the Pittsburgh Crawfords that Radcliffe's talent was truly noticed and appreciated. In the Negro League World Series in 1932, Radcliffe played both games of a double-header catching a Satchel Paige shutout in the opener and pitching a shutout of his own in the second. This incredible feat prompted sportswriter Damon Runyon to tag Radcliffe with the nickname "Double Duty," going on to write that Radcliffe "was worth the price of two admissions." Radcliffe made appearances in six East-West All-Star games, making three appearances as a pitcher and three as a catcher while batting .308.

Radcliffe played on three of the finest Negro League teams, enjoying stints with the St. Louis Stars in 1930, the Homestead Grays in 1931, and the Pittsburgh Crawfords in 1932. Radcliffe produced strong numbers as a double threat, batting .283 and pitching a 10-2 record with the Stars; batting .298 and pitching 9-5 with the Grays; and a stupendous .325 batting average and 19-8 pitching record for the 1932 Crawfords.

During his career, Radcliffe played for or coached 30 teams and was responsible for 4,000 hits and 400 home runs. As a pitcher, Radcliffe is credited with winning 500 games and collecting 4,000 strikeouts. Radcliffe's humor and personality was immortalized with Ty Cobb's recollection that Radcliffe once wore a chest protector that read "Thou Shall Not Steal."

In 1943, Radcliffe served as player/manager for the Jamestown Red Sox, becoming the first African-American to manage professional white players. Radcliffe won the MVP award from the Negro American League in 1943. At age 42, Radcliffe appeared in the 1944 East-West All-Star game, and with his mother in attendance, hit a home run into the Comiskey Park stands delivering a 7-4 victory to his West team.

Radcliffe was inducted into Milwaukee's Yesterday's Negro League Baseball Players Wall of Fame in 1997. He was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the State of

Illinois Historical Committee and was recognized for his contributions to the game of baseball. In 2002, Radcliffe entered the Illinois Department of Aging Hall of Fame.

Even at an advanced age, Radcliffe never strayed far from his field of dreams. At age 96, he became the oldest man to appear in a professional game when he threw a single pitch in a Schaumburg Flyers game. For the last five years, from age 99-103, Radcliffe has thrown out the ceremonial first pitch for the Chicago White Sox at U.S. Cellular Field.

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