

RICKWOOD TALES

Rickwood Calendar 1/1/25 to 3/21/25

Please like our Facebook Page for updates about events at the park: www.facebook.com/friendsofrickwood.com

- **Miles College:** Feb. 7, 8, 11 (DH), 19 (DH), 26 (DH), 28; March 1, 4, 15 (DH), 16, 19
- **Shades Valley HS:** Feb. 14, 17, 20; March 18, 21, 22
- **William Carey:** Feb. 12
- **MLB Youth Clinic:** March 9
- **Rickwood College Classic (UAB v. Troy):** March 18

Get Your Rickwood Gear!

Caps, t-shirts, jackets, posters, books, coffee mugs, and other Rickwood merchandise are available for purchase at <http://rickwood.com/shop/>



MATT ADAMS SMASHES 15 HOMERS EN ROUTE TO HOME RUN DERBY CROWN

On Sunday, October 27, 2024, Rickwood Field hosted its third annual Home Run Derby. Fans were excited to see the old ballpark, which was still gleaming from the renovations that were made before last summer's MLB game, including a major league quality field.

Participants included: **Nick Copen**, a pitcher and first baseman for Miles College, who put up astounding numbers for the Golden Bears last season, leading the team in most offensive categories, including a .435 batting average, a .526 on-base average, a .676 slugging percentage, four home runs, and 36 RBIs; **Brian Jordan**, who hit 184 homers, stole 119 bases, and posted a solid 105 OPS+ over 15 seasons as an outfielder for the Cardinals, Braves, Dodgers, and Rangers; **Jacque Jones**, who played 10 years with the Twins, Cubs, Tigers, and Marlins, and hit 165 home runs

during his career; **Corky Miller**, a catcher who played for the Reds, Twins, Red Sox, Braves, and White Sox and recorded 131 professional home runs during his 17 seasons in the minors and majors; **Brady Clark** who spent nine seasons as a big leaguer with the Reds, Mets, Brewers, Dodgers, and Padres hitting 36 homers and posting a lifetime on-base percentage of .358; **Matt Adams** who played 10 years in the majors with the Cardinals, Braves, Nationals, and Rockies hitting 118 homers; and **Mike Jacobs** who played for the Mets, Marlins, Royals, and Diamondbacks during his seven seasons as a first baseman, while clubbing 100 career home runs.

The Derby was preceded by a free three-hour youth baseball clinic, which was put on by the MLB Players Alumni Association. Former big leaguers Johnny Estrada, Edgar Olmos, Jason

Rogers, Brandon Dickson, Brian Barton, Matt Guerrier, David Williams, and Steve Woodard taught baseball fundamentals to the kids as well as life skills.

After an autograph session before the Derby, the players briefly took batting practice. Ron "Papa Jack" Jackson and Chris Hammond were on hand to offer advice to the hitters and meet with the fans.

Jackson's nephew, CBS-42's Sports Anchor Dee Jackson performed triple-duty calling the play-by-play while also providing color commentary and interviewing players throughout the contest. Miles College baseball players and kids who attended the MLB clinic helped by shagging fly balls.

- Continued on Page 2

BARONS RETURN TO RICKWOOD ON JUNE 4, 2025!

We are excited to announce that the 2024 Southern League Champion Birmingham Barons will return to Rickwood Field on Wednesday, **June 4, 2025**, for a game against the Rocket City Trash Pandas. Both teams will wear throwback uniforms in a tribute to the Negro Leagues.

Last year the Barons hosted the Montgomery Biscuits at the ballpark in an exciting hotly contested matchup that the Biscuits won, 6-5. The game was bittersweet as fans learned that Willie Mays had died earlier that day.

The game was part of Major League Baseball's celebration of the Negro Leagues, which included a celebrity softball game on Juneteenth, and the MLB game between the Giants and the Cardinals on June 20.

Next year's game between the Barons and Trash Pandas is scheduled for 12:30 PM. Hall of Fame pitcher Jim Kaat will throw out the first pitch and sign autographs for fans.

Kaat won 283 games during his 25-year career in the big

leagues, while registering a 3.45 lifetime ERA and striking out 2,461 over 4,530 and 1/3 Major League innings pitched. He also has a connection to Rickwood.

As a 20-year-old, Kaat appeared in games at the ballpark during the 1959 season as a member of the Chattanooga Lookouts in the Southern Association. However, the first time he played at the ballpark was not on the mound. On May 21, 1959, he appeared as a pinch runner in a game for the Lookouts against the Barons.

HOME RUN DERBY

Continued from Page 1

The contest closely mimicked MLB's annual event. Once again, each player was given three minutes to hit in the first round with the top four sluggers automatically moving onto to the next round. However, this year two of the bottom three hitters in the first round were given a second chance to advance with an additional one-minute elimination round.

Nick Copen, a right-handed contact hitter, was the Derby's lead-off hitter. Although he drilled balls all over yard, none cleared the fence. Lefty Matt Adams found Rickwood's right field bleachers to his liking as he crushed six homers, including a couple of balls that skipped off the grandstand's roof. Although Corky Miller was better known for defense during his career, he hit two of the longer blasts during the first round, which sailed over the left field wall, as he was the only righty to advance. The next two hitters, Brady Clark and Brian Jordan made plenty of contact during their first round, which

kept the outfield shaggers on their toes. However, neither was able to hit a home run. The final two hitters, Jacque Jones and Mike Jacobs, both left-handers, hit four long balls each into Rickwood's short porch in right field.

In the Reprieve Round, Copen, Jordan, and Clark had only one minute each to stave off elimination. Although there were a few close calls, no homers were hit. The semi-finals matched Jones versus Jacobs on one side of the bracket and Miller v. Adams in the other.

Jones, who won a bronze medal with the U.S. Olympic baseball team in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, opened the semi-final round by hitting a Derby-high seven home runs. Jacobs, who hit a career high 32 homers for the Marlins in 2008, nearly matched him, but fell just short with five dingers, as Jones advanced to the championship round.

Miller, one of the few catchers to steal home in his only career stolen base attempt, crushed four round-trippers in the other semi-final. Adams, who hit 15 or more home runs eight times during his MLB career, mashed five taters to defeat Miller and complete the championship slate. Incredibly, there was still one minute and 43 seconds remaining on the clock when he clicked the round.

After hitting so many long blasts in the previous round, Jones finally began to show some fatigue as he opened the championship round with three home runs. Adams stayed in the groove. This time he only needed four homers to win the title and hit them in just one minute and 11 seconds to win Rickwood's third annual Home Run Derby. Rickwood's Executive Director Gerald Watkins presented Adams with a championship plaque, which he proudly held high.

We look forward to continuing the tradition and are already planning next year's Derby.

"Adams stayed in the groove. This time he only needed four homers to win the title and hit them in just one minute and 11 seconds to win Rickwood's third annual Home Run Derby."





rickwood field

Home Run Derby
Lineup - 3 minutes

1	Nick Copen
2	Matt Adams
3	Corky Miller
4	Brady Clark
5	Brian Jordan
6	Jacque Jones
7	Mike Jacobs

Matt Adams
4
01:49

UAB HOSTS TROY IN THIRD ANNUAL RICKWOOD COLLEGE CLASSIC ON MARCH 18



“We are excited to announce that the Rickwood College Classic will return on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 1:00 PM as UAB will host the Troy Trojans.”

In 2022, UAB won the inaugural Rickwood College Classic over Birmingham-Southern College, 10-4. The Panthers got revenge against the Blazers the following season winning the second College Classic, 13-3, in a game that was called after seven innings because of the 10-run rule. There was no game in 2024 because of the renovations at the ballpark for the MLB game. We are excited to announce that the Rickwood College Classic will return on **Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 1:00 PM** as UAB will host the Troy Trojans.

Last year, Troy finished with an overall record of 37-22 (.627) including an 18-12 (.600) record in the Sun Belt Conference, which was good for a third-place finish. UAB will look to improve on an overall record of 26-29 (.473) including a 13-14 (.481) record and fifth place finish in the American Athletic Conference.

SWAC TOURNAMENT COMING TO RICKWOOD

“... the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) will hold its annual baseball tournament at Rickwood Field from May 21 to May 25, 2025.”

The Friends of Rickwood are thrilled to announce that the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) will hold its annual baseball tournament at Rickwood Field from **May 21 to May 25, 2025**. In addition, the ballpark will host the SWAC tournament through 2029.

The SWAC was founded in 1920, which makes it nearly as old as our favorite ballpark. The league is known as the premier athletic conference for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Teams in the SWAC have been playing base-

ball since the league's inception. However, the conference's baseball tournament did not begin until 1949 and was only played briefly through the 1951 season.

The SWAC's modern tournament started in 1977 and has been played continuously ever since. All twelve member schools compete in baseball. The top four finishers from each division will participate in the two-bracket, double-elimination tournament. Southern University (19) and Jackson State University (13)

have won the most championships. Texas State University (5), Grambling State University (5), Prairie View A&M University (3), and Alabama State University (2) are the other schools with multiple SWAC baseball tournament titles.

With the SEC baseball tournament being played the same week at the Met, Birmingham will truly be the college baseball capital of the world. We are looking forward to exciting SWAC baseball at America's Oldest Ballpark over the next five years.

RICKWOOD'S CHAMPIONSHIPS: THE 1936 BIRMINGHAM BLACK BARONS

If you wander over by the third-base side of the grandstand, you will notice that the Friends of Rickwood have commemorated the championship clubs that have called America's Oldest Ballpark home from 1910-1987. This series remembers those seasons.

1936 was a great summer for baseball at Rickwood Field. The Birmingham Barons won the Southern Association playoffs and appeared in the Dixie Series. Not to be outdone, the Birmingham Black Barons were champions of the Negro Southern League.

Information about the 1936 Birmingham Black Barons is entirely derived from two books by Bill Plott, *Black Baseball's Last Team Standing: The Birmingham Black Barons, 1919-1962* and *The Negro Southern League*. Thanks to Plott's tireless research the stories of the early years of the Black Barons have been preserved.

Plott concluded that this was one of the best Black Barons teams ever assembled. The club was managed by Andrew Walker and was led by outfielder David Whatley, third baseman Parnell

Woods, and outfielder Herman Howard. The pitching staff was led by Jack "Dizzy" Burton, "Pop-Eye" Collins, Robert Walker, and Harry Barnes.

In addition to the play on the field, fans were treated to upgrades to Rickwood, including field lights. On June 14, fans packed the ballpark for the first Black Barons game under the lights at Rickwood.

In *Last Team Standing*, Plott concluded that the Black Barons, who finished with an official league record of 25-8 (.758), won the Negro Southern League pennant. Whatley had a monster season, which the *Birmingham News* described as "nothing short of sensational." He finished with a .545 slugging percentage as the Black Barons most valuable player. According to Plott,

"That championship run was due, unquestionably, to David Whatley. In 19 games for which box scores are available, Whatley had 31 hits in 77 at-bats for a .402 batting average. His three doubles, two triples, two home runs, 18 runs scored, and two stolen bases, add-

ed up to one of Birmingham's all-time greatest individual seasons.

Whatley had a lot of support, though. Birmingham had a team batting average of .308. Other high individual batting averages were compiled by Johnny Cowan, .391; Harry Barnes, .330; Jim Canaday, .338; Parnell Woods, .316; and Fred Bankhead, .314."

Unfortunately, the newspaper accounts of Black Barons' games were inconsistent at best. The coverage ended altogether in August with the Black Barons solidly in first place. Plott notes that it was truly the end of an era for Birmingham and the league. This was the last season the Black Barons played in the Negro Southern League as the club moved to the Negro American League for the rest of its existence. The NSL ceased operations until 1945.

Because of Bill Plott's hard work, the 1936 Black Barons will always be remembered as the NSL champions.

"In Last Team Standing, Plott concluded that the Black Barons, who finished with an official league record of 25-8 (.758), won the Negro Southern League pennant."



Photo: The Birmingham News, Alabama Media Group/AL.com.

“DUSTING ’EM OFF”: FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Looking back...

2024 may be the second most important year in the history of America’s Oldest Baseball Park; second only to 1910 when the ballpark was first opened.

This time last year Rickwood Field was full of heavy equipment and all sorts of tradesmen preparing for three amazing days in June.

From October of 2023, until June 18, 2024, Rickwood saw the complete overhaul of the playing surface. New dugouts were constructed, new outfield walls adorned with colorful graphics, netting replaced chain link fencing, and handicapped seating was installed.

While we were watching the transformation of our ballpark, we took time away to host our first annual Rickwood Classic golf tournament. The tournament was held at the Greystone Golf and Country Club where over 20 former big league stars joined us to support this huge fundraiser.

In May and June, our campus was surrounded by a fence with colorful graphics, and our parking lots were converted into a “fan plaza.” Temporary clubhouses were brought in to accommodate the players and coaches, and for three days Rickwood Field and Birmingham became the center of the baseball universe. Rickwood was constantly featured on TV,

radio, and podcasts, and celebrities were everywhere. For all of us with the Friends of Rickwood, it was more than a dream come true.

We always boast that 182 baseball Hall of Famers played at Rickwood. Now, there have been a few more baseball legends who visited our ballpark for the festivities. Derek Jeter, David Ortiz, John Smoltz, and Joe Torre came to take part in MLB’s Tribute to the Negro Leagues. Many other former big leaguers such as CC Sabathia, Albert Pujols, Jake Peavy, Ken Griffey Jr., and Barry Bonds, joined the party.

Continued on Page 10

“This time last year Rickwood Field was full of heavy equipment and all sorts of tradesmen preparing for three amazing days in June.”



In our last issue, we published photos of displays commemorating the rich history of baseball in Birmingham, which were recently installed at Regions Field. Due to space limitations, we were unable to include them all. The above-display highlights the Barons’ history from 2009 to the present including the opening of Regions Field in Birmingham in 2013 and the Barons’ Southern League title the same year, as well as this year’s MLB game at Rickwood Field. Of course, with the Barons’ championship this season, the display will have to be updated to show off the club’s latest SL pennant. It’s a good problem to have!

DID YOU KNOW?



“But, did you know that approximately 230 exhibition games involving major league teams were played at Rickwood from 1911 until 1986?”

On June 20, 2024, the St. Louis Cardinals defeated the San Francisco Giants, 6-5, before a sellout crowd in the first regular season MLB game in the history of Rickwood Field as the teams paid tribute to the Negro Leagues and Willie Mays. But, did you know that approximately 230 exhibition games involving major league teams were played at Rickwood from 1911 until 1986? These games were played against the Barons, other big-league clubs, and all-star teams. The Philadelphia Phillies held spring training at Rickwood in 1911. After playing some intrasquad practice games, the Phillies played the Birmingham Barons on March 11 in the first big league exhibition game at the ballpark. Longtime Baron Bill McGilvray’s first inning home run for Birmingham started things off as the Barons nipped the Phillies, 4-3. Rickwood hosted the Chicago White Sox in the last major league exhibition game at the ballpark on April 6, 1986. Once again, the Barons used the long ball to power the offense as Tom Moritz, Mike Taylor, and Mike Yastrzemski all hit round-trippers in the 5-3 win.

BECOME A FRIEND OF RICKWOOD

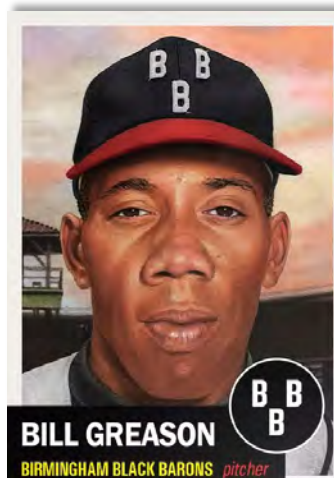
The Friends of Rickwood is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which was formed in 1992, and is dedicated to preserving America’s Oldest Ballpark. Anyone can become a Friend of Rickwood by donating to the Friends.

We have four levels of membership for individuals and each level will receive a certificate and a window sticker. In addition: (1) Level 2 is a “Rookie” for a \$25 donation (and gets a certificate and a sticker); (2) Level 3 is a “Veteran” for a \$50 donation (and also gets a cus-

tom patch); (3) Level 3 is a “Gold Glover” for a \$100 donation (and also gets a Rickwood T-shirt); and (4) Level 4 is an “All-Star” for a \$500 donation (and also gets a cage jacket) To join, please visit www.rickwood.com/membership or write us at:

**The Friends of Rickwood
Rickwood Field
1137 2nd Ave West
Birmingham, AL 35204**

Please come out to the ballpark and take a tour. Thanks!



2024 Topps Living Bill Greason card

FRIENDS OF RICKWOOD 2024 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Rickwood Field depends on the generosity of our community every year to keep the park alive. We had an incredible year of park operations and the world got to see America's Oldest Ballpark on national television during the MLB game! We had record park rental fees, memberships, and gift shop donations, and our board and friends continued to devote countless volunteer hours and critical in-kind services. The following sponsors, granters, and donors have contributed mightily to our 2024 success (this list is current through Dec. 24, 2024):

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"We had an incredible year of park operations, and the world got to see America's Oldest Ballpark on national television during the MLB game!"

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This listing does not include support such as the countless hours of help by our legion of volunteers, the support from the City of Birmingham, the critical in-kind donations we count on, annual Board dues, or merchandise sales. In addition, our members are listed on page 11.

2024 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

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When considered as a whole, community support for Rickwood Field is at an all-time high. We cannot thank everyone enough for their generous support. We have made every effort to include all those who have supported the Friends of Rickwood with your generous donations of money and services. **If we did not list your contribution please let us know and we will include your contribution in the next issue.**

“When considered as a whole, community support for Rickwood Field is at an all-time high. We cannot thank everyone enough for their generous support.”



“DUSTING ’EM OFF”

Continued from Page 7

The week began with a game between the Barons and Montgomery Biscuits. Then we hosted a celebrity softball game. All of this was a build-up to the most anticipated baseball game of the year.

On June 20, 2024, the big day finally arrived. With Commissioner Rob Manfred and all the other celebrities on hand, we saw the St Louis Cardinals defeat the San Francisco Giants, 6-5, in the first-ever regular season game played in the state of Alabama.

Birmingham was universally praised for our hospitality. Mayor Randall Woodfin was quoted as saying this event was one of the most important events in Birmingham’s history. The events related to the MLB game created a tremendous economic impact for our city, estimated at over \$10 million. But more importantly, so many people from all over the country saw first hand what a great City we have. The Friends of Rickwood are so thankful for the tremendous support of Mayor Woodfin, the City Council, the Jefferson County Commission, and Birmingham’s top corporate citizens.

The temporary structures, fencing, and the fan plaza which took weeks to install were removed in 10 days and by July 5 Rickwood was back to normal. Over the Summer we hosted tons of travel ball games as usual. In the Fall we hosted our annual fantasy camp and home run derby. Once the MLB week was over our tourism numbers exploded. We saw a 300% increase in visitors as fans came from all over the country to see the park.

Looking forward...

Commissioner Manfred told me on two occasions that MLB would be back at Rickwood; he just didn’t say when. I’m confident that he will keep his word. But wait, other big events are coming to Rickwood in 2025!

- In February, Miles College will play at Rickwood in the “Willie Mays Baseball Classic”;
- In March, we will host UAB and Troy in the third Annual Rickwood College Classic;
- In May, we will host the SWAC Baseball Tournament;
- In May, we will also return to Greystone with our second annual golf tournament;

- On June 4 we will see the Birmingham Barons return to Rickwood and face the Rocket City Trash Pandas;
- In July we will host the World Police and Fire Games;
- We will continue to host many travel ball games throughout the Summer; and
- Finally, in October we will see the 4th annual Rickwood Home Run Derby.

As I mentioned earlier, the MLB game was a tremendous success in so many ways. Most importantly, Rickwood is now on everyone’s map. The future is very, very bright at America’s Oldest Ballpark.

Our historic 2024 season would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our groundskeeping staff and our amazing board members. Thank you!

Please come visit us and take a tour of the ballpark. We will roll out the green carpet for you!

- Gerald Watkins

“The events related to the MLB game created a tremendous economic impact for our city, estimated at over \$10 million dollars.”

FROM RICKWOOD’S ROOFTOP: OUR NEWSLETTER TURNS FIVE

Rick Woodward III, is the grandson of our favorite ballpark’s namesake and has been on the Friends of Rickwood Board since the 1990s. Five years ago, he had a simple request at one of our meetings: “Would somebody please start a newsletter for our ballpark?”

Since Jeb Stewart and Joe DeLeonard spend a lot of their free time emailing about baseball history they figured they could turn those efforts into a newsletter and *Rickwood Tales* was born.

Other board members such as Gerald Watkins, Coke Matthews, Lamar Smith, Ben Powell, and Dan Weinrib have spent countless hours writing articles and editing this publication.

Our first issue was released in December of 2019 and appropriately featured a tribute to Art Clarkson, who had died on October 7, 2019. Clarkson saved Rickwood Field by bringing the Barons back to Birmingham in 1981. His clubs won

Southern League titles at the ballpark in 1983 and 1987.

This is the 21st edition of *Rickwood Tales* and our combined issues now total 187 pages, nearly a book. We have always tried to tell the history of the ballpark, its teams, and players, while blending news about events at the ballpark and the Friends’ never ending effort to save her. We hope you enjoy the newsletter. We look forward to continuing to bring you the tales of Rickwood.

“This is the 21st edition of Rickwood Tales and our combined issues now total 187 pages, nearly a book.”

FRIENDS OF RICKWOOD 2024 MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM CONTRIBUTORS

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*Renewal Members

Please see page 7 for information on becoming a member. Tax-deductible donations help the Friends of Rickwood maintain and restore America's Oldest Ballpark, which includes funding the ongoing renovations at the ballpark, as well as preserving the ballpark for future generations.

THANK YOU to all our Sponsors, Granters, Donors, and Members! You are truly FRIENDS OF RICKWOOD!

*“THANK YOU to all
our Sponsors, Granters,
Donors, and Members!
You are truly
FRIENDS OF
RICKWOOD!”*



The Friends of
Rickwood

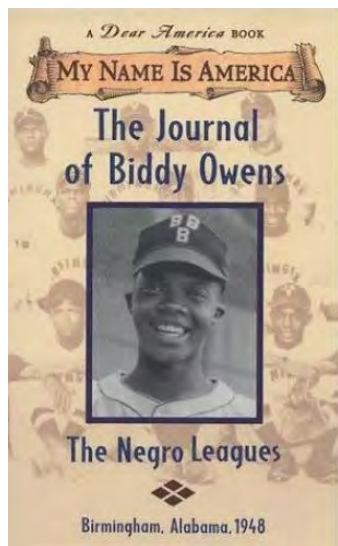
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1137 2nd Ave W
Birmingham, AL 35204
205-922-3725

Email address:

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THE RICKWOOD LIBRARY: *The Journal of Bidly Owens: The Negro Leagues*

The Journal of Bidly Owens: The Negro Leagues is a young adult novel by Walter Dean Myers, which retells the ups and downs of the Birmingham Black Barons' 1948 season through the eyes of 17-year-old Bidly Owens. The book, which features pitcher Jimmie Newberry on the cover, was released as part of Scholastic's "My Name Is America" collection. The series was a set of historical novels that were written as journals by fictional characters who told stories in the context of historical events.

Bidly Owens loves baseball and longs to play professionally for his hometown Birmingham Black Barons. To get his start in the game, he is willing to do whatever it takes. He becomes the team's equipment manager, scorekeeper, and occasionally fills in as a right fielder. While Bidly admires Birmingham's player-manager, Piper Davis, he knows to avoid him after a loss. No one hated to lose more than Davis, and his passionate drive to win is palpable throughout the book. Another player, Bill Greason, befriends Bidly and regularly offers him life lessons.

The book opens on May 1 as the Black Barons face off against the Cleveland Buckeyes on the opening day of the Negro American League (NAL) schedule. Bidly is struck by the intensity of the colors at Rickwood Field – the bright green grass, the wide blue skies, and the golden brown infield. The day is a happy one as the Black Barons win, 11-2. Of course, as any baseball fan knows, a title is not won in a single day.

The NAL may have had a shorter official league schedule than the major leagues, but players on the Black Barons would have scoffed at the suggestion that they played *less* games than big leaguers. In fact, they played *far more*. For every league game, clubs supplemented their revenue by playing two to three exhibition games against other Negro League teams, local all-star squads, and barnstorming outfits. Negro Leaguers did not have the luxury of ten-game homestands and reasonable road trips by train, which featured three-game series in the same ballparks like major league teams did. The Black Barons rarely played at home and spent most of their time riding in the cramped confines of a hot bus traveling far and wide. A doubleheader at Rickwood on a Sunday might be followed by two more in Anniston on Monday, more games in Meridian, Mississippi on Tuesday, followed by a trip to Cleveland, and two more weeks of traveling. Sometimes they had to go without meals and restful sleep was a rare commodity.

Bidly knows he will eventually have to decide between playing baseball and furthering his education as he writes: *"Life on the road can be boring. I like seeing all the cities but bouncing along in the bus or sleeping on some hard bed in a cheap hotel is not my idea of paradise. If I go to college I would have more things that I could do."* While life in the Negro Leagues was hard for the players, the larger problem was the difficulty of traveling throughout the Jim Crow South. Every aspect of any road trip had to be planned from bathroom breaks to meals, and lodging. No planning could prevent the daily indignities the team suffered on the road.

Myers expertly blends the story of the Black Barons' season with Bidly's home life and he develops the supporting characters well. Bidly's mother is against his dream of becoming a baseball player. While his father is supportive, he would like to see his son attend college to open more opportunities for him.

By early July, the Black Barons clinched the first half of the NAL title. The team also added another 17-year-old player, Willie Mays, to replace center fielder Bobby Robinson, who broke his leg in his game. Unlike Bidly, Mays has incredible natural ability in all facets of the game and remained a starter even after Robinson returned.

Myers also foreshadows the end of the Negro Leagues, which had already begun to decline. By 1948, fans were more interested in news of Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Larry Doby, and Satchel Paige, who were all playing in the major leagues. In African-American newspapers like the *Kansas City Call* and the *Birmingham World*, those players' exploits were front-page news. Teams in the NAL and NNL became an afterthought. Even so, Myers tells the story of the exciting NAL Championship Series between Birmingham and the Kansas City Monarchs as well as the final Negro League World Series.

The Journal of Bidly Owens is part *Ball Four* and part *Willie's Boys*. It is an excellent read and an altogether thought-provoking look at one of the great Black Barons teams, the end of an era in baseball, and a much broader look at life in the Deep South before the Civil Rights Movement. The book is a fine addition to the Rickwood Library.

- Jeb Stewart