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NEWARK BEARS PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL CLUB



The Legacy of Newark Baseball

The beginning of Newark's rich baseball legacy predates the Civil War. The game of baseball provided a universal language for the diverse immigrant residents of the city. During the Great Depression, baseball provided jobs as well as much-needed entertainment. Baseball was also a source of pride among the hardworking people of Newark, who, in the midst of great adversity, were able to enjoy one of the most successful minor league teams in baseball history. Newark was the home of several former minor league baseball teams, from the formation of the Newark Indians in 1902, and the addition of the legendary Newark Eagles of the Negro National League in 1936. A Federal League team, the Newark Pepper also played in 1915. The Newark Bears were introduced in the International League in 1917 and underwent many changes over the years as they made their mark in sports history and developed star talent who were promoted to the parent organization, the New York Yankees. Readers of *Baseball America* named the 1937 Newark Bears the minor-league team of the century. In 1950, the franchise was sold to the Chicago Cubs and was moved to Springfield, Massachusetts.

It took nearly 50 years, but the city's resilience, manifest through baseball, led to the 1998 reformation of the Bears by former Yankee catcher, Rick Cerone. And on July 16, 1999, the Bears returned to their Newark home field as they inaugurated their new ballpark, the Bears & Eagles Riverfront Stadium. The stadium name pays tribute to the city's former Negro League Team, the Newark Eagles, formed via the merger of the Newark Dodgers and the Brooklyn Eagles in 1936. The talented team won the Negro World Series in 1946 and sent five players to the National Baseball Hall of Fame: Larry Doby, Monte Irvin, Willie Wells, Ray Dandridge, and Leon Day. Larry Doby made another significant mark in history by becoming the first African-American to play in the American League. In 1948, the Eagles departed from Newark as the integration of baseball found increased success.

Now, in 2009, Newark baseball continues with the new ownership of the Bears as well as a revitalization of the Bears & Eagles Riverfront Stadium and the team's spirit of community with the great city of Newark.

