

## Future scheduled to meet the past tomorrow on a ballfield in Oakland

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By Kevin Kirkland, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Who would you rather be? Bill Mazerowski or Josh Gibson? Or maybe Buck Leonard or Honus Wagner.

Thirty boys from Pittsburgh and Wilkesburg will find out whose jersey they'll be wearing -- and a little about All-Stars from another era -- at the Forbes Field Celebration tomorrow in Oakland.

At 3 p.m. tomorrow, Mayor O'Connor and former players from the Pittsburgh Pirates, Homestead Grays and other Negro League teams will help dedicate a state historical marker near what remains of the outfield wall from Forbes Field. A group led by state Sen. Jim Ferlo landed a \$25,000 state grant to restore the brick wall and flagpole that were preserved when the rest of the ballpark was razed in 1972.

After the dedication, two teams of boys ages 11 and 12 will play a game at Mazerowski Field, a small baseball and softball diamond next to the wall, across Bouquet Street from the new Schenley Plaza.

The players were chosen by their respective leagues: the Greenfield and Lawrenceville baseball associations and the Josh Gibson Foundation and Reviving Baseball in the Inner City, a program run by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania.

One team will wear uniforms based on those of the 1936 Pirates, which were similar to those the team wears today but for one key detail -- they're trimmed in blue and red. The Pirates didn't switch to black and gold until 1948.

The other team will wear uniforms similar to those worn in the 1930s and '40s by the Homestead Grays, who used Forbes Field as a home field when the Pirates weren't in town.

The Forbes Field working group, which includes Post-Gazette staffers, chose the two teams for their connections to this historic ballpark. Though the Pirates and Grays played there, they never played each other, according to Rob Ruck, a University of Pittsburgh history professor and expert on the Negro Leagues. Negro-leaguers sometimes played against major-leaguers in exhibition games, but black players were not allowed in the major leagues until Jackie Robinson and the Brooklyn Dodgers broke the color ban in 1947.

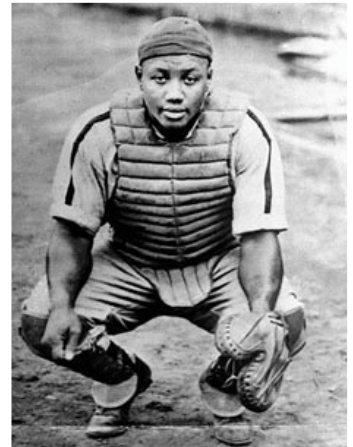
Eleven of the 15 Pirates jerseys will bear the names of hall of famers. Fred Clarke, Max Carey and Wagner -- all-stars from the beginning of the 20th century -- will be joined by later legends such as Ralph Kiner, Roberto Clemente and Willie Stargell.

The uniforms were custom-made by A.D. Starr, a South Side sports apparel and equipment maker, based on drawings in "Dressed to the Nines," an online exhibit on the National Baseball Hall of Fame's Web site, [www.baseballhalloffame.org](http://www.baseballhalloffame.org). The museum and the Pirates also provided information for bio sheets that will be given to the young players tomorrow with their uniforms.

So the pint-sized Pirates will know not only how many bases Wagner, "The Flying Dutchman," stole (722), but also how Pie Traynor got his nickname (He really liked pastries as a child.)

The Pirates and Grays uniforms were paid for by the Pirates and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. Dick's Sporting Goods supplied the balls and bats, which the Forbes Field working group plans to donate for youth pickup games at Mazerowski Field.

The Negro League uniforms were made by Charlie Peoples and his Oakland, Calif.-based company, CLP Specialty, under license from the Negro League Hall of Fame in Kansas City, Mo. CLP also makes apparel for the Josh Gibson Foundation, a local non-profit led by Sean Gibson, the slugger's great-grandson. Josh Gibson's name and No. 20 will be on the back of one of the jerseys along with those of fellow Grays "Smokey" Joe Williams, "Cool Papa" Bell and "Judy" Johnson.



Associated Press

**The youngster who gets Josh Gibson's number also will get to learn about the legendary Negro League slugger.**

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Information for the Grays bio sheets came mainly from the Negro League Baseball Players Association, a Maryland-based organization that honors and supports the men who played in the separate leagues from the late 1800s until their dissolution in the 1950s. Robert "Bert" Orlitzky is the organization's researcher and Webmaster of the site, [www.nlbpa.com](http://www.nlbpa.com). Among the statistics are anecdotes like this one about Cuban-born Grays' player Martin Dihigo:

"Once, while safely on third base, he screamed at the pitcher, 'You balked! You balked!' He continued to holler as he strolled toward home. Everyone stared as if he were crazy. But when he crossed the plate and walked slyly into the dugout, the fans laughed and cheered."

Afterward, the players and other participants will enjoy free hot dogs, lemonade and other ballpark food. Free carousel rides at Schenley Plaza and other children's activities will be offered from 3-7 p.m. Admission to the ceremony, game and other events is free.

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