

Wilber (Bullet Joe) Rogan

Baseball Player

1889-1967

by David Conrads

Wilber "Bullet Joe" Rogan was one of the best and most versatile players in the history of the Negro Baseball Leagues. Known primarily for his fastball, Rogan had an assortment of effective pitches that made him the ace of the pitching staff of the Kansas City Monarchs in the 1920s. He was also an outstanding fielder and a powerful hitter. Satchel Paige, the legendary pitcher, once said of Rogan, "He was the onliest pitcher I ever saw, I ever heard of in my life, was pitching and hitting in the clean-up place. He was a chunky little guy, but he could throw hard."

Wilber Rogan was born in Oklahoma City in 1889 and moved with his family in 1908 to Kansas City, Kansas, where he attended Sumner High School. He played on several semipro teams in the Kansas City area, as well as in the Army. In 1917, on a tip from Casey Stengel, manager of the New York Yankees and a former Kansas Citian, J. L. Wilkinson hired Rogan to pitch for the All Nations, a mixed-race team. A few years later, at the age of 30, Rogan moved to Wilkinson's Kansas City Monarchs, of the newly-chartered Negro National League.

Bullet Rogan was a star player for the Monarchs for 11 seasons. During that period, he led the team in home runs and stolen bases three times, while twice, as a pitcher, lead the league in wins. In 1926, nearing the end of his playing career, Rogan became the team's manager, a position he held off and on through the 1936 season. He retired from the Monarchs in 1938 and worked as umpire for the Negro American League until 1946, when he went to work for the post office in Kansas City.

Bullet Rogan died in Kansas City in 1964. He was inducted posthumously into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, in 1998.

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