

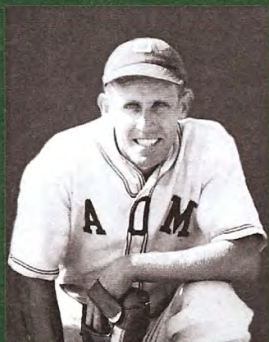


Sanford's Baseball History

Rededication of the Historic Sanford Memorial Stadium



1937 Lookouts with Wynn



Buddy Lake



The Boston Braves, Sanford



MUNICIPAL BASEBALL PARK
SANFORD, FLA.
1926 (R) & 1952 (L) Stadiums



Team - 1939

By GARY TAYLOR

Baseball and Sanford go together.

Many of the great players have passed through Sanford. Some, like Early Wynn, Jackie Robinson and Willie Mays, were here in the early days of their careers. Others, such as home run king Babe Ruth, drew standing-room only crowds in the twilight of their lives.

Still others, such as seven-time All-Star Tim Lincecum, Anaheim Angels rookie sensation David Eckstein and Hall of Fame announcer Red Barber, called Sanford home long before they became household names.

The past is well documented.

With today's rededication of Historic Sanford Memorial Stadium, baseball is insured of a future in Sanford.

As early as the 1890s, baseball was played in Sanford. When the Florida State League was formed in 1919, Sanford was a charter member.

Those early games were played at Holden Park on French Avenue near the current location of Scotty's. Some fans would sit in their horse-drawn buggies and watch the games, played adjacent to the city's rail yards.

In 1926, the action moved across town when a municipal ballpark was built at the corner of Mellonville Avenue and Celery Avenue.

One of the earliest players to use that field was Sanford's own Bernard "Buddy" Lake. After graduating from Sanford High School in 1930, Lake left Sanford to play in the minor leagues. In the early 1930s, Lake was on the spring training roster of the Boston Braves, playing along side Ruth and pitching against the likes of Lou Gehrig.

Arm problems ended Lake's chances of making the Big Leagues, but not his love of the game. He came back home, learned to throw the knuckleball, and launched the second half of his career.

In 1940, playing for St. Augustine, Lake returned to Sanford for the Florida State League All-Star Game. One of his teammates was a pitcher from Daytona Beach - Stan Musial. Stan the Man never made it as a pitcher in the Big Leagues, but oh could he hit. In fact, he slugged his way into the Hall of Fame.

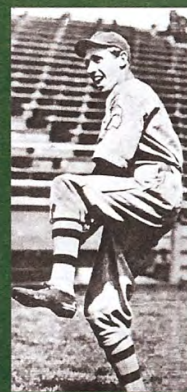
The Florida State League disbanded because of World War II and when it reorganized, Lake was back where he belonged playing for Sanford. Who could forget that night in 1946 when Sanford ventured to DeLand for a double-header.

Lake played the first game at third base before taking the mound for the nightcap. For 18 innings, neither Lake nor the opposing pitcher gave up a run. Then, in the top of the 19th, Lake belted a home run and Sanford went on to win 1-0.

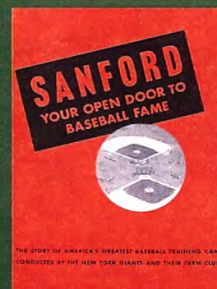
Later, Lake pitched the first perfect game in the league's history. But he was also a pretty fair hitter, winning the league's batting title and setting an RBI record that lasted for decades.

The first of many great minor leaguers to pass through Sanford was Early Wynn. Wynn showed up in 1937 determined to make the Sanford team, even though he didn't own a pair of baseball shoes. The team took one look at his talent and sent someone to the local hardware store for some shoes.

Wynn would go on to win 300 games and pitch his way into the Hall of Fame.



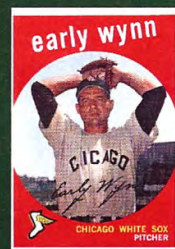
Buddy Lake



Giants Training Camp



Giants



Early Wynn



Team - 1950



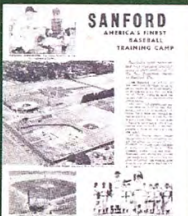
Babe Ruth, Sanford



Babe Ruth, Sanford



Harrelson & Marichal



Giants Training Brochure

Another pitcher that got his start in Sanford was Sid Hudson. He was so impressive in 1940 that he was promoted to the Washington Senators and became the first player ever to jump from Class D (now Class A) to the Major Leagues.

Much of Sanford's baseball history is tied to the minor leagues. But in the spring of 1942, the town belonged to the Boston Braves as they held spring training here.

Controversy reigned in 1946 when Jackie Robinson showed up to train with the Montreal Royals, a farm team of the Brooklyn Dodgers. In 1947, Robinson would become the first black player in the Major Leagues, but in 1946 times were tough. He reported to Sanford but was soon whisked away to Daytona Beach. Robinson did return to Sanford to play two innings, getting a hit and scoring a run, before police ordered him off the field. In 1997, the City of Sanford offered a public apology to Mrs. Robinson for the events of 1946, which was noted on National Public Radio (NPR).

Ruth's visit to Sanford was March 17, 1948, just months before he died. He spoke at home plate and visited with fans in the stands.

The New York Giants used Sanford for their minor league training camp for several years beginning in the late 1940s. Mays trained here with the Minneapolis Millers and signed a lifetime equipment contract with Adirondack Sporting Goods while sitting on the steps of the old Sanford stadium.

That old stadium was condemned in 1950. The Giants were using facilities at the Sanford Naval Air Station, but when it was reactivated in 1951 for the Korean War, the Giants turned to the City of Sanford for a facility to hold spring training for its farm system.

Construction of Sanford Memorial Stadium, dedicated to those who lost their lives in the military, began in May 1951 and was completed a year later.

During the next few years, future Hall of Famers such as Willie McCovey, Orlando Cepeda and Juan Marichal were among the hundreds of baseball players honing their skills here.

Sanford continued to play in the Florida State League until the early 1960s. Perhaps the last Sanford minor leaguer to make it to the Big Leagues was Ken "The Hawk" Harrelson, who went on to play for the Boston Red Sox and is currently an announcer for the Chicago White Sox.

For years after minor league baseball ended in Sanford, the stadium saw more use for football than baseball. Once it was converted back to a baseball diamond, Seminole High School and Sanford American Legion Post 53 used the stadium extensively. Scouts flocked to the stadium to watch one player who was a star for both teams Tim Raines.

With the reconstruction and today's dedication of Historic Sanford Memorial Stadium, the sounds of the baseball, the crack of the bat, and the pop of the ball into a mitt will once again fill the air. In the past, generations of players have called the stadium home. Now generations in the future will too.

PLAY BALL!

Gary Taylor, a Sanford native, is a reporter for the **Orlando Sentinel**. He has collected Sanford sports memorabilia for many years and much of it is on display as part of the permanent Sports Exhibit at the **Sanford Museum**, 520 E. First St., Sanford. The museum is open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. Admission is free.

Photographs courtesy of the **Sanford Museum** and the **City of Sanford**.



Team - Date Unknown



Team - 1947



1952 Stadium



1952 All Stars



Stadium & Dormitories



Tim Raines