



Document compiled from the files of
The Donaldson Network
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John Donaldson Career Highlights

“I am not ashamed of my color. There is no woman whom I love more than my mother, I am light enough so that baseball men told me before I became known that I could be passed off as a Cuban. One prominent baseball man in fact offered me a nice sum [\$10,000 in 1917] if I would go to Cuba, change my name and let him take me into this country as a Cuban. It would have meant renouncing my family. One of the agreements was that I was never again to visit my mother or to have anything to do with colored people, I refused, I am clean morally and physically. I go to my church and contribute my share. I keep my body and mind clean. And yet when I go out there to play baseball it is not unusual to hear some fan cry out: ‘Hit the dirty nigger.’ That hurts. For I have no recourse. I am getting paid, I suppose, to take that. But why should fans become personal? If I act the part of a gentleman, am I not entitled to a little respect?”

- John Donaldson

- Donaldson’s career spanned from 1908 to 1941 (33-years) he played for at least 25 different teams, including influential barnstorming clubs like the All Nations multi-racial team operated by Hall of Fame owner J.L. Wilkinson. The All Nations consisted of, “Chinese, Japanese, Cubans, Indians, Hawaiians ...and the Great John Donaldson the best colored pitcher in the United States.” Attitudes on race at the time believed a team with multiple ethnicities could not coexist much less excel at the national game. The All Nations did both
- John Donaldson was a founding member the Negro Leagues’ Kansas City Monarchs in 1920 where he pitched, played center field and batted cleanup
- Legendary baseball ambassador Buck O’Neil said in his autobiography– “John Donaldson...showed Satchel [Paige] the way, and the fact is, there are many people who saw them both who say John Donaldson was just as good as Satchel”
- John Donaldson was known to be the “highest salaried colored pitcher in baseball.” His income and reputation allowed Donaldson to control where he played
- In 1949, the Chicago White Sox hired John Donaldson as the first full-time African-American scout in Major League Baseball history. He scouted the all-time greats including Willie Mays, Ernie Banks and Hank Aaron. John Donaldson broke the color-barrier pursuing talent off the field
- Posthumously inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame in 2017

- Documented statistics from surviving newspaper accounts show a verifiable record of 413 wins giving John Donaldson the most victories of any segregated pitcher in the history of baseball
 - Struck out 500+ batters three consecutive years
 - John Donaldson is known to have recorded over 5,081 strikeouts
 - Over 150 known pitching performances by Donaldson have no published strikeout total and over 200 wins by teams Donaldson played with report no pitcher of record - deflating his statistics considerably
 - Between 1911 and 1913, newspapers reported an astonishing pitching record of 121 wins and eight losses
 - John Donaldson struck out 31 batters in an 18-inning game, holds strikeout records of 30, 29, 28, 27, 26 (3-times), 25 (2-times), 24, 23 (4-times), 22 (3-times), 21 (7-times), 20 (8-times) and pitched two perfect games
 - John Donaldson can be credited with 14 no-hitters
 - Struck out at least 10 batters in a game 234 times
 - Won 73% of the games he started as a pitcher
 - Over 90% of his known pitching appearances were complete games
 - Threw 30 consecutive no-hit innings in 1915
- Examination of discovered film footage suggests John Donaldson had a unique power pitching delivery that was decades ahead of his peers. Donaldson's physical ability was without question coveted by the major leagues. Magnates like John McGraw, Charles Comiskey and Frank Chance were said to have endorsed him. Hall of Fame entrepreneur J.L. Wilkinson called Donaldson, "The greatest pitcher that ever threw a baseball"
- John Donaldson is one of two remaining members of 13 black "All-Time Greats" documented in the 1952 Pittsburgh Courier Poll not currently enshrined in The National Baseball Hall of Fame. Fellow pitchers on the list are Satchel Paige, Joe Williams, Bullet Rogan and William Foster all have plaques in Cooperstown and all played side-by-side with John Donaldson
- John Donaldson was born February 20, 1891, in Glasgow, Missouri. Died April 14, 1970, in Chicago. Was buried in an unmarked grave until 2004 when he was selected by the Negro League Baseball Grave Marker Project to represent the inaugural class receiving a monument. Chicago White Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf was a principal contributor to the project

- In 2006 Donaldson was included on the final ballot of 39 Negro League players and executives considered for election to The National Baseball Hall of Fame. Donaldson's name was not among the 17 inductees despite the support of Fay Vincent, the former commissioner of MLB and chairman of the special election committee

"[2006] would be the final election...unless new research came out that would warrant another look."

Jeff Idelson President of the HOF in 2016

The committee considering John Donaldson had much less information than is known today. In 2006 researchers used 146 known wins with 2245 documented strikeouts to judge his worthiness for induction. Today, John Donaldson is known to have 413 wins with 5081 documented strikeouts

- During his career John Donaldson is known to have played baseball in 683 cities in 31 U.S. States and Canada
- Donaldson listed among "All Time" Negro League greats in 10 different decades
- The Donaldson Network has amassed more than 5,500 newspaper references pertaining to the career of John Donaldson contradicting a popular assertion that the press did not report on activities of African Americans
- John Donaldson life in baseball spanned 6 decades. Beginning with the hard-scrabble barnstorming era prior to the organization of the Negro League through the leagues struggle to maintain afloat during the Great Depression to his triumph of breaking the MLB scouting color barrier and beyond. His story is the quintessential tale of baseball behind the walls of segregation



[Click here to watch film footage of John Donaldson](#)

"John Donaldson is – and there is no one that is qualified to speak authoritatively that will dispute it – the greatest colored baseball player of today and of all time."

- 1927 Fairmont (MN) Daily Sentinel