



# The Baltimore Elite Giants: Sport and Society in the Age of Negro League Baseball

*Bob Luke*

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One of the best-known teams in the old Negro Leagues, the Elite Giants of Baltimore featured some of the outstanding African American players of the day. Sociologist and baseball writer Bob Luke narrates the untold story of the team and its interaction with the city and its people during the long years of segregation.

To convey a sense of the action on the field and the major events in the team's history, Luke highlights important games, relives the standout performances of individual players, and discusses key decisions made by management. He introduces the team's eventual major league stars: Roy Campanella, who went on to a ten-year Hall of Fame career with the Brooklyn Dodgers; Joe Black, the first African American pitcher to win a World Series game; and James "Junior" Gilliam, a player and coach with the Dodgers for twenty-five years. Luke also describes the often contentious relationship between the team and major league baseball before, during, and after the major leagues were integrated.

The Elite Giants did more than provide entertainment for Baltimore's black residents; the team and its star players broke the color barrier in the major leagues, giving hope to an African American community still oppressed by Jim Crow. In recounting the history of the Elite Giants, Luke reveals how the team, its personalities, and its fans raised public awareness of the larger issues faced by blacks in segregation-era Baltimore.

Based on interviews with former players and Baltimore residents, articles from the black press of the time, and archival documents, and illustrated with previously unpublished photographs, *The Baltimore Elite Giants* recounts a barrier-breaking team's successes, failures, and eventual demise.

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