

JACKIE ROBINSON BALLPARK

by Seth Stutman



Photo by Brian Merzbach

With spring around the corner, Major League Baseball is gearing up for another season. It all starts with spring training, a Florida tradition since the early 1900s that has included baseball greats Babe Ruth, Willie Mays and Alex Rodriguez. Florida's climate and spring training success has enticed many Minor League Baseball affiliates to the state, including the Daytona Cubs, who play at historic Jackie Robinson Ballpark.



Photo by Brian Merzbach

The stadium's story is an inspirational piece of baseball lore. Built in 1914 as the Daytona City Island Ballpark, the park first contained only the field and one set of wooden bleachers. Through the years, the stadium was improved and renovated until it met Minor League standards in 1993. Today, the stadium holds more than 4,000 fans and is home to the Chicago Cubs class-A affiliate, as well as the Bethune-Cookman University Wildcats.

Jackie Robinson Ballpark bears the name of the barrier-breaking slugger not only for his athletic accomplishments—the site was a landmark for baseball's de-segregation. In 1946, Brooklyn Dodgers president Branch Rickey signed Robinson as the first African-American in modern baseball. Robinson started his career with the Dodgers AAA affiliate, the Montreal Royals. During the 1946 spring training, the Royals players were scheduled to scrimmage the Dodgers in Florida. The cities of Jacksonville and Sanford refused to allow the game to be played in their stadiums. Daytona Beach welcomed the first integrated game to be played in what would become Jackie Robinson Ballpark.

Today, a statue of the second baseman stands outside of the park's front entrance. With constant promotions and ticket prices nowhere near what it costs to see a Major League game, Jackie Robinson Ballpark is a family affordable outing on the Atlantic coast. The Daytona Cubs begins its season in early April, while the Bethune-Cookman Wildcats kicks off its 2009 campaign in February. While you may not see today's stars, you might just cheer tomorrow's heroes.



Photo by Brian Merzbach

Jackie Robinson Ballpark is located at 105 E. Orange Ave, Daytona Beach, FL 32114. For Cubs ticketing or information, call (386) 257-3172, or e-mail info@daytonacubs.com



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FEBRUARY

- 3-4 *Hairspray*
- 5 Tribute to Benny Goodman
- 7 Munich Symphony Orchestra
- 16 Pink Floyd Experience
- 18 Dionne Warwick in Concert
- 20 Puccini's *La Boheme*
- 25 *Hormonal Imbalance!*
- 26 *The Rat Pack Is Back*

MARCH

- 13 Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra
- 17 From Galway to Broadway
- 24 *Sleeping Beauty* - Ballet
- 25 *Jesus Christ Superstar*
- 28 Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra
- 31 Jack Hartmann Hop To It!

APRIL

- 1 Jack Hartmann Hop To It!
- 3-4 Sweet Adelines Region 9 Competition
- 5 National Philharmonic of Russia
- 9-12 National Dance & Cheerleader Comp.
- 14 *Nate the Great*, TheatretworksUSA
- 16 *Color of Justice*, TheatretworksUSA

APRIL 16 - MAY 4
DAYTONA BEACH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

JUNE

- 7 European School of Ballet

JULY

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AUGUST

- 15 "Debbie Kruck Classic" Bodybuilding Comp.

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