

WOMEN OF THE NEGRO LEAGUES

Famous pitcher Satchel Paige was on the mound one day in 1953. A nervous second baseman stepped to the plate. Paige wound up, hurled the ball, and the batter cracked a base hit into center field.

This was no ordinary hit. The second baseman was no ordinary ball player. She was Toni Stone. Stone described the base hit off Paige as “the happiest moment in my life.”

Three women played side by side with men in the Negro Leagues. Many white women played professional baseball, but they played in an all-women league. Toni Stone, Mamie “Peanut” Johnson, and Connie Morgan were African American women who played in the men’s league. (They weren’t allowed to play in the women’s league. It was open only to white women.)

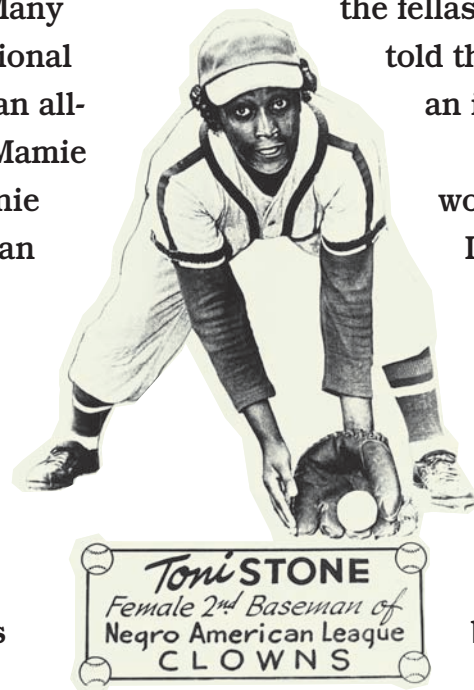
Stone became the first woman in the Negro Leagues

when she joined the Indianapolis Clowns as second baseman in 1953. She batted .243 for the Clowns. She was traded to the Kansas City Monarchs the next year and retired at the end of the season.

After the Clowns traded Stone, they signed Morgan to replace her at second base. They also signed Johnson in the same year as a pitcher. She was nicknamed “Peanut” because of her small size. Satchel Paige helped her improve her curve ball. “When I got good with that, I was striking the fellas out left and right,” she once told the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper in an interview.

It was hard for African American women to play in the male Negro Leagues, though. The men sometimes made fun of them.

Johnson is proud of her short career in the Negro league. “Those were the three best years of my life,” Johnson told the *Sun*. “Most of all, it was knowing I was good enough to be there.”



Adapted from an article by Mike Weinstein