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**Mamie "Peanut" Johnson • • •**

*Only woman to pitch in Negro League baseball*

Mamie "Peanut" Johnson is the only woman to ever pitch in professional baseball's Negro Leagues and one of only three women to ever play in Major League Baseball.



She was born in 1935 in Ridgeway, South Carolina, and attended Thorntree School, a two-room schoolhouse. She grew up with a passion for baseball and as a child often played with her uncle using tree limbs for a bats and rocks wrapped in tape for balls.

In 1945 she moved to New Jersey and played girls softball while a student at Long Branch High School. Frustrated and used to playing hardball with the boys, she quit the team and tried out for an all-boys team organized by the Long Branch Police Athletic League. As the only girl and the only black player – she helped the team to two divisional championships.

After high school, Johnson attempted to try out for the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, but was denied access to the field due to her race. She falsely assumed that because Jackie Robinson had broken barriers in the major leagues, the girls' league would also welcome black players.

She moved to Washington, D.C. in 1947 and soon was playing semi-professional ball for two local black-male teams in a recreational 'sandlot' baseball league.

By 1953, she was married, had a son, played baseball on weekends, and began college (in the off-season). During a 'sandlot' game in New Jersey she was discovered by a scout for the Indianapolis Clowns and was invited to try out for the team, the only one at the time with women players. She played for the Indianapolis Clowns from 1953 to 1955 and after three seasons held a winning record of 33-8 and a batting average range of .262 to .284, ranking her among the best players in Negro League history. Her nickname came from an opponent who said she looked like a "peanut" on the mound; she struck him out.

Following her graduation from New York University in 1955 she began

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son run his Negro League Baseball memorabilia shop in Capitol Heights, Maryland.

Among her many accolades, Johnson was recognized by President and Mrs. Clinton at the White House as a female baseball legend in 2001; *A Strong Right Arm*, a youth book about her life, was published in 2002; and a one-women theatrical show - "Change Up"- made its premiere at Brown University in 2005. In addition, she is a recipient of the prestigious Mary McLeod Bethune Continuing Legacy Award, the highest honor given by the National Council of Negro Women.

In 2008, Johnson and other living players from the Negro Leagues were drafted by major league franchises prior to the MLB First Year Draft; she was selected by the Washington Nationals. She was among the players from the Negro Leagues who were recognized by President Obama at the White House in August 2013.

Johnson was a speaker during the 2014 Women's Leadership Conference and honored at the Celebration of Inspiring Women.

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