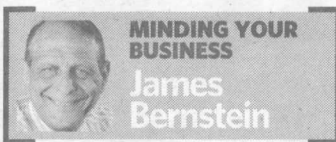


Negro League story in the cards



MINDING YOUR BUSINESS

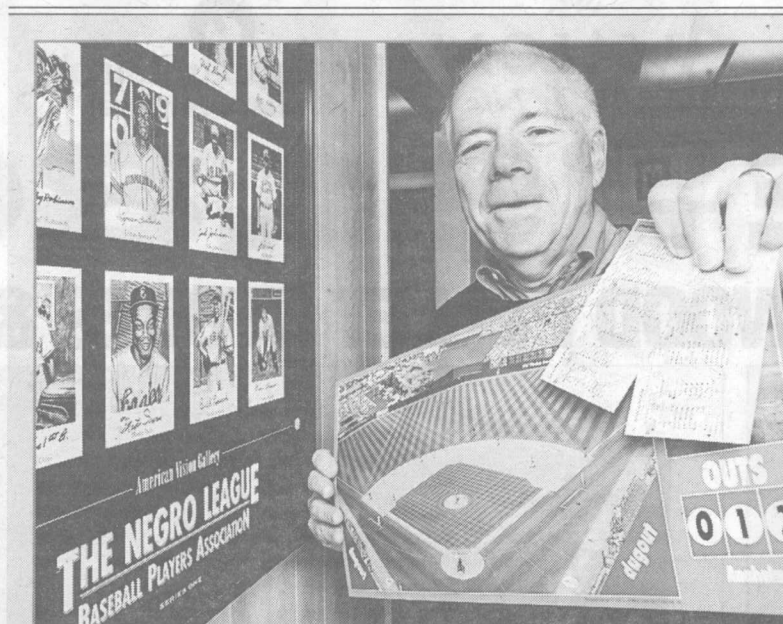
James Bernstein

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With American and National League playoffs taking place and a World Series coming up, what better time to stop in at the Strat-O-Matic Game Co. in Glen Head — the headquarters of “imaginary” baseball on Long Island.

The 49-year-old company founded by **Hal Richman** has been one of the country’s leading providers of sports card games, with baseball its biggest seller. And now Strat-O-Matic is about to release, on Nov. 1, a first in the nation: the Strat-O-Matic Negro League All-Stars, based on the black players of yore who were not allowed to play in what was once all-white Major League Baseball.

“These athletes should be highlighted and put into their proper historical place,” Richman, 71, said the other day in his comfortably rumpled office. “That’s what we’re trying to do.” Richman said the game will feature 103 players — the ageless **Satchel Paige** and **Josh Gibson** among them. You pick a player’s card, then roll the dice and, depending on the corresponding column of numbers on the card, the player is either on base or out. A CD-ROM version also will be available.



Hal Richman, of the Strat-O-Matic Game Co. in Glen Head, will release the Strat-O-Matic Negro League All-Stars game on Nov. 1.

At a glance

Who: Strat-O-Matic Game Co.

Where: Glen Head

What: A designer of sports card games

What’s New: Strat-O-Matic plans soon to release the Strat-O-Matic Negro League All-Stars, featuring black players like Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson who were not allowed to play in what was once all-white Major League Baseball

Owner: Hal Richman

What’s the Negro League game like: Interesting, and a lot of fun

“These athletes should be highlighted and put into their proper historical place.”

— Hal Richman, founder of Strat-O-Matic Game Co.

Richman, who calls himself a “creator, not an entrepreneur,” said he had the idea for the Negro League game for years, but did not have the statistics needed. Each player is represented by a card that has batting or pitching statistics.

The stats were dug up by **Scott Simkus** of Chicago, a Strat-O-Matic customer who will get a royalty for his work.

Simkus spent thousands of hours poring through old newspapers that covered the Negro Leagues.

“I’ve always been a stat guy, a baseball guy,” Simkus said. “It’s an obsession and a passion. I had an agreement with my wife and kids that we weren’t going to go on any vacations” in the past year. “I was sitting by the computer some-

times eight to 12 hours a day digging up boxscores.”

Jackie Robinson was first to break the color barrier, when he debuted with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, and the Negro League eventually faded into oblivion.

Richman demonstrated the card game with the enthusiasm of a youngster. “I’m pretty good at this,” he said, rolling the dice.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL E. ACH