Gibson, Josh

(b. Dec. 21, 1911, Buena Vista, Ga., U.S.--d. Jan. 20, 1947, Pittsburgh), American professional baseball player called the black Babe Ruth, one of the greatest players kept from the major leagues by the unwritten rule (enforced until the year of his death) against black ballplayers.

Gibson played as a catcher for the Pittsburgh Crawfords (1927-29, 1932-36) and the Homestead (Pa.) Grays (1930-31, 1937-46). Although precise records do not exist, he is believed to have led the Negro National League in home runs for 10 consecutive seasons and to have had a career batting average of .347. His catching ability was praised by Walter Johnson and other major league stars against whom he played in exhibition games. Gibson was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972.

Gibson sliding across home plate during an East-West All-Star Negro league baseball game in Chicago, 1944

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