

SPORTS News

Mookie Wilson batting for Metropolitan Jr. Baseball League

By **HOWIE EVANS**
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For the past 43 years, the Metropolitan Jr. Baseball League (MJLB) has quietly but efficiently gone about their business of introducing youngsters to the game of baseball, which many feel is a forgotten sport among African-American youth around the country. But not William Forrester Jr., who has continued the work of his dad, William Forrester Sr., who founded the MJLB in 1966 in Richmond, Va.



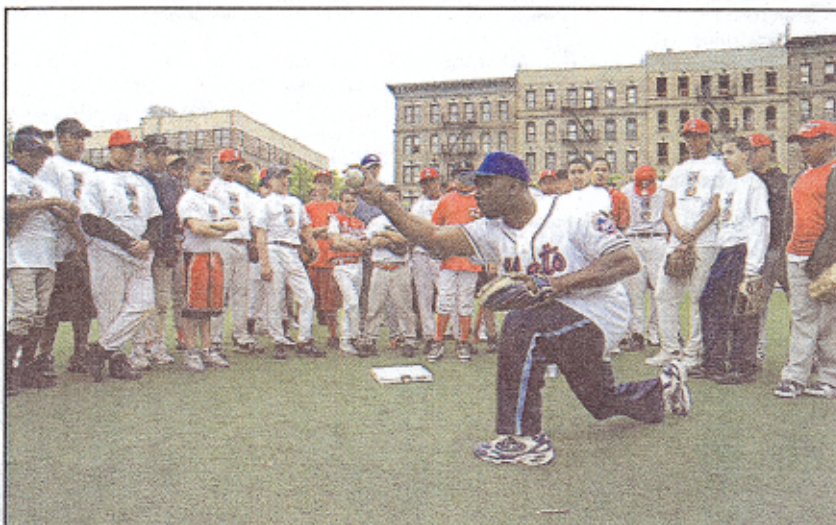
Mookie Wilson chatting up a young baseball hopeful at his clinic

"Our resources are extremely limited," said Forrester, as he and his staff of volunteers around the country in 17 states are relentlessly working to raise funds. A call to Mookie Wilson, who spent 12 years in Major League Baseball, eight with the NY Mets, resulted in the creation of the Mookie Wilson Baseball Clinics around the country.

Mookie, the first African-American to earn a baseball scholarship to the University of South Carolina in Columbia, was in New York last week where he put on a clinic at Annunciation Field, 134th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, in West Harlem. "African-Americans have been a part of baseball history since its beginning. We cannot deny that," said Wilson as he sat down to lunch at a west side restaurant in Manhattan.

Mookie wants to be a part of MJLB helping to get young kids on the diamonds of inner-cities around the country. He was the featured speaker at the Bobby Bonds Memorial Symposium, a think tank created to address the issue of Black youth and baseball. "Though our focus is on African-Americans, we have many non-African-American youngsters participating in our organization around the country," said Forrester Jr.

With planning underway for the annual Inner City Classic, featuring the Black World Classic, Mookie said this is a major tournament for youth. "Young players from around the country will play and we'll be doing clinics throughout the duration of the games," said Mookie. The Inner City Classic will be held in Greensboro, N.C., and hosted by North Carolina A&T, North Carolina Central and Shaw universities. Teams will come from all of MJLB's 17 states and over 40 cities in those states, including Las Vegas, New York City, Dallas, Pittsburgh and Atlanta, from August 5-9. For info, visit: mjlb.com.



Mookie Wilson demonstrating to a large youth group at the Mookie Wilson MJLB Clinic, which was held at Annunciation Field in West Harlem

(Durado Brooks MJLB photos)



Mookie (left) hanging out after the clinic with his guys