



The Team That Changed Baseball: Roberto Clemente and the 1971 Pittsburgh Pirates

Bruce Markusen

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The 1971 Pirates of Roberto Clemente, Willie Stargell, Bill Mazeroski, Dock Ellis, and Steve Blass are among my all-time favorite teams, and their spectacular World Series win over the Orioles of Earl Weaver, Frank Robinson, Brooks Robinson, Jim Palmer, and Dave McNally is one of the great baseball upsets of the postwar era. Still, though I followed their season closely, I never fully understood their impact."—Allen Barra, The New York Sun

In 1947, major league baseball experienced its first measure of integration when the Brooklyn Dodgers brought Jackie Robinson to the National League. While Robinson's breakthrough opened the gates of opportunity for African Americans and other minority players, the process of integration proved slow and uneven. It was not until the 1960s that a handful of major league teams began to boast more than a few Black and Latino players. But the 1971 World Championship team enjoyed a full and complete level of integration, with half of its twenty-five-man roster comprised of players of African American and Latino descent. That team was the Pittsburgh Pirates, managed by an old-time Irishman.

In *The Team That Changed Baseball: Roberto Clemente and the 1971 Pittsburgh Pirates*, veteran baseball writer Bruce Markusen tells the story of one of the most likable and significant teams in the history of professional sports. In addition to the fact that they fielded the first all-minority lineup in major league history, the 1971 Pirates are noteworthy for the team's inspiring individual performances, including those of future Hall of Famers Roberto Clemente, Willie Stargell, and Bill Mazeroski, and their remarkable World Series victory over the heavily favored Baltimore Orioles. But perhaps their greatest legacy is the team's influence on the future of baseball, inspiring later championship teams such as the New York Yankees and Oakland Athletics to open their doors fully to all talented players, regardless of race, particularly in the new era of free agency.

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