

## FORMER BASEBALL STARS TO COACH AT MLK YOUTH ALL-STAR GAME



Written by STAFF REPORT

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FORT LAUDERDALE — Former Major League Baseball stars including Mike Easler, Gary Sheffield and Mookie Wilson have joined forces with the Metropolitan Junior Baseball League for the MJBL's fourth annual All Star Games honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

The games, which will be hosted by the city of Fort Lauderdale, will be played Jan. 14-16 at Floyd Hull Stadium, 2800 SW Eighth Ave., Fort Lauderdale, and Florida Memorial University in Miami Gardens. It will include three age groups: 12 and under, 16 and under and 19 and under.

Wilson's son Preston Wilson, Tony Scott and Tom McGraw will serve as managers for the six all star teams and conduct practices to help fine-tune the players' fundamentals prior to the games. The coaching staff will bring more than a half-century of MLB playing experience and several years of professional coaching experience.

"It disturbs me seeing our youth walking away from the game of baseball," Mookie Wilson said in a statement announcing the games. "I believe that working with programs like MJBL can help steer our kids back to baseball. It's going to take nurturing, mentoring and teaching them the positive attributes that come from playing the game. The game has taught me life time lessons. I'm thankful that I now have the opportunity to share what I learned with these youth."

MJBL is a 46 year old non-profit organization established during the days of segregation when there were limited opportunities for African-American youngsters to play baseball.

Today, the league provides baseball, educational and cultural enrichment opportunities to primarily African American youth across the country, with teams in 20 states, the Bahamas and Puerto Rico.

"I grew up in Birmingham and experienced civil rights marches organized by Dr. King. There couldn't be a better way to demonstrate our concern for our youth than to have our all star game on his holiday weekend. This will undoubtedly bring attention to MJBL's efforts to reunite our youth to the benefits the game of baseball has to offer," said Fred Plump, MJBL's national commissioner, from Birmingham, Ala.

The Big Leaguers, along with former FMU President Albert E. Smith, will take part in the Bobby Bonds Memorial Symposium at 2 p.m. Jan. 14 on university campus, 15800 N.W. 42nd Ave., Miami Gardens.

The symposium theme is "Baseball — Could this be a part of 'The Dream'?"

It will address issues that face youth in African-American communities and discuss how baseball and education can be an integral part of the solution to these issues.

The high-school age players will be given a tour of the FMU campus and provided an opportunity to speak with guidance counselors to discuss the requirements to enroll at the university.

*For more information on the Games, visit: [mjbl.org](http://mjbl.org)*

*STAR COACH: Mookie Wilson coaches a boy in the finer points of baseball during a Metropolitan Junior Baseball League clinic in Harlem, N.Y. Wilson and a few other baseball greats will be in Fort Lauderdale Jan. 14-16 for the league's annual All Star Games.*