

= Héctor López =

Héctor Headley López Swainson ( born July 9 , 1929 ( possibly April 8 , 1932 ) ) is a former left fielder and third baseman in Major League Baseball who played for the Kansas City Athletics and New York Yankees from 1955 to 1966 . He is notable as the first black manager at the AAA baseball level , as the third outfielder on the Maris / Mantle Yankees , and as the Kansas City Athletics franchise hitting streak record holder . López was on World Series Championship teams for the Yankees in 1961 and 1962 . In various seasons , he finished among the top 10 American League hitters in hits , runs batted in , runs scored , doubles , triples , slugging percentage , sacrifice flies , sacrifice hits , games played , times hit by pitch and at bats . He was also known for his hustle , his clutch hitting and poor fielding .

López was the second Panamanian @-@ born major league baseball player and continues to be one of the country 's most revered world champion athletes . Although Humberto Robinson ( 102 games played / 5 seasons ) debuted in the major leagues 22 days earlier than López , López ( 1 @,@ 450 games played / 12 seasons ) was the first of the 49 major leaguers born in Panama to have an extensive career . He was the first Panamanian @-@ born major leaguer to finish in the top 10 in any official statistical category ( sacrifice hits , 1956 ) ; first to lead his league in any official statistic ( sacrifice flies , 1958 ) ; first to play in the World Series ( with the 1960 Yankees ) ; and the first to win a World Championship ( with the 1961 Yankees ) .

He was an infielder for the Athletics , and later was often the third outfielder on the Maris / Mantle Yankees of the early and mid @-@ 1960s . López had his most successful season in 1959 , but continued to contribute effectively during the early 1960s during their pennant successes . The utility player divided his career almost equally between infield and outfield positions . After retiring from baseball , he went on to become a groundbreaking manager in minor league baseball as the first to break the baseball color line as a black manager at the AAA level for the Buffalo Bisons and then served in various international managerial and coaching positions .

= = Early life = =

Born in Colón , Panama , López grew up in Colón and the neighboring Panama Canal Zone . He held a part @-@ time job at an American military base bowling alley . He was a high school track star whose father had been a pitcher for the Panama national baseball team . As a high school athlete , he played semipro baseball for US \$ 100 per month in Colón . After he graduated from high school he signed to play with St. Hyacinthe of the Canadian Provincial League who also employed Clifford " Connie " Johnson .

= = Kansas City Athletics ( 1955 ? 59 ) = =

Prior to the 1952 season , López was acquired by the Philadelphia Athletics from the Drummondville Cubs of the Class @-@ C Provincial League for \$ 1 @,@ 500 ( \$ 13 @,@ 367 today ) . In 1954 , López won baseball 's Triple Crown in the Winter League . Throughout his professional career , he played in the Panama winter league where he won three batting titles and regularly led the league in home runs . López developed in the A 's farm system , and when the team relocated to Kansas City in 1955 he was recalled to the major league club . López made his major league debut in 1955 . That season he finished second to Carlos Paula among rookies in batting average and was overshadowed by American League strikeout @-@ leading pitcher Herb Score for the Rookie of the Year . He usually played second or third base during his time with the Athletics . During his rookie season , he finished third on the team in home runs , trailing only Gus Zernial ( 30 ) and Vic Power ( 19 ) . He tied Jim Finigan for third on the team in RBIs with 68 , trailing only Zernial and Power , who had 84 and 76 , respectively . López was the team 's regular third baseman , and was the youngest regular starter on the team . In 1956 , the team finished with a 52 ? 102 record , but López had a career @-@ high 153 hits . He also set then @-@ career highs in home runs ( 18 ) and runs batted in ( 69 ) . In his early years , black and white players did not room

together on the road , so he roomed with Vic Power even though Power 's closest friend on the team was Clete Boyer . In 1957 , he had a 22 @-@ game hitting streak , that is the All @-@ time Kansas City Athletics team record for the thirteen seasons the franchise played there .

He earned a position in the top @-@ 10 in the American League in both games played and at bats in 1956 and 1958 , as well as leading the AL in sacrifice flies and times grounded into double plays in 1958 . López also was in the top 10 in doubles and runs scored in 1958 and in sacrifice hits in 1956 . On June 26 , 1958 , López hit three home runs in a game against the Washington Senators . During his career with the Athletics , he hit .278 with 67 home runs and 269 RBIs , and scored 298 runs . However , his talents were wasted on a team that never finished above 6th place . On May 26 , 1959 , he was traded with Ralph Terry to the New York Yankees for Johnny Kucks , Tom Sturdivant , and Jerry Lumpe . For all his offensive skills , López led American League third basemen in errors in each of his four full seasons in Kansas City .

Baseball writer and Kansas City Athletics fan Bill James wrote that López was as bad a defensive player as you would ever want to see . The Authors of The Great American Baseball Card Flipping , Trading and Bubble Gum Book wrote of López 's defense " I would like to go on record right here and now as declaring Hector López the all @-@ time worst fielding major league ballplayer . "

= = New York Yankees ( 1959 ? 66 ) = =

In his first season with the Yankees after being traded , he played 35 games in the outfield , the first time in his career he played more than 20 outfield games . He still played 76 games at third base for the team . In his 33 games with Kansas City at the start of the 1959 Major League Baseball season , he had played exclusively at second base . In his next five seasons with the Yankees from 1960 to 1964 , he mostly played in the outfield as he was part of five consecutive pennant winners . During his time with the Yankees , he was often the third outfielder of the Maris / Mantle Yankees that won two of the five consecutive World Series they played in from 1960 to 1964 . He logged the most games in left field during the back @-@ to @-@ back World Series Championship seasons of 1961 & 1962 ( 129 vs. Berra @-@ 109 , Tresh @-@ 43 ) . During the five pennant years , with Roger Maris playing right field and Mickey Mantle playing center field , López logged 406 games in left field . This was the most by any Yankee during this period ( Tom Tresh @-@ 195 , Yogi Berra @-@ 129 ) . López is one of eleven Yankees to have been on these five consecutive pennant winners and along with Whitey Ford , Elston Howard , Bobby Richardson , & Clete Boyer is one of seven Yankees to have been part of the entire Maris / Mantle Yankee era . In 1965 and 1966 , he made the majority of his outfield appearances in right field . However , in 1965 Mantle did not play center field . Mantle did return to center field for the majority of his appearances in 1966 ( the final year of the Maris / Mantle Yankees and the final year of López ' career ) .

In 1959 , he finished in the top 10 in slugging percentage , hits , doubles and RBI . In 1960 he was among the top 10 in triples and sacrifice hits . During the 1961 World Series , López replaced Mantle ( who only had six Series at bats ) in Game 4 and recorded a 2 @-@ run single on the way to a 7 ? 0 victory . In Game 5 , which was the Series @-@ clinching game , he homered and tripled , driving in five runs , and caught Vada Pinson 's fly ball for the final out of the Series . His three for seven , 7 run batted in performance continues to be remembered by New Yorkers as a highlight of the series .

= = Managing = =

López was the manager of the Buffalo Bisons in 1969 . This made him the first black manager at the AAA level . This was six years before Frank Robinson became the first black manager in the major leagues . López was one of three black men ( along with Sam Bankhead and Gene Baker ) to manage in the minor leagues in the twenty @-@ five years after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in 1947 . In 1990 , he coached Malverne High School of Malverne , New York in Nassau County on Long Island in addition to working in the parks department in the Town of Hempstead . López has also managed in Venezuela and been a player @-@ manager in Panama . He was the

manager of the Panama national baseball team in the 2009 World Baseball Classic .

= = Panamanian history = =

He paved the way as a role model for the first three Panamanian Major League All @-@ Stars , Ben Oglivie and Manny Sanguillén also from Colón , and Rod Carew a Colonense born in neighboring Gatun . López recorded many firsts among Panamanian baseball players ; he was the first regular major leaguer , since 1955 was his rookie season , whereas Robinson did not qualify as a rookie until 1958 ( the season in which he recorded his 50th career inning pitched ) and Webbo Clarke , who also debuted in 1955 , never qualified as a rookie . López ' 1955 rookie season , when he batted .290 , was also the first by a Panamanian to qualify for baseball 's statistical leadership by recording the minimum number of plate appearances or innings pitched . Thus , although he was not the first to appear in the major leagues , he was in a sense the first Panamanian everyday player .

None of the other major leaguers born in Panama who played in the 1950s ( Robinson , Clarke , Pat Scantlebury , Tom Hughes ) played in the major league postseason , which then only included the World Series , before López did so with the 1960 Yankees . No other Panamanian was part of a World Series champion before López with the 1961 Yankees . He was the first Panamanian to record many statistical accomplishments , such as a stolen base , home run , double , triple , walk or strikeout . His 1956 season was the first by a Panamanian with more than 150 hits , more than 25 doubles , 90 runs scored , or more than 60 walks . His 1959 season was the first with more than 20 home runs or 90 runs batted in . López twice had .350 on @-@ base percentages , but in each season he recorded over 400 plate appearances without recording the qualifying number for unofficial league leadership . Thus , his career high on @-@ base percentage in a season in which he qualified for statistical leadership was .347 in 1956 . He was the first to finish among the top 10 in his league in each of the aforementioned statistical categories , and the first to lead his league in any official statistical batting category ( sacrifice flies in 1958 ) . López was the first Panamanian to accumulate a sufficient number of career appearances to qualify for career statistical leadership ( which depending upon the source is based on 3000 , 4000 or 5000 at bats ) , although his career .269 batting average , .330 on @-@ base percentage and .415 slugging percentage are not historically significant .

He also represented Panama in the 1960 Caribbean Series and tied with Félix Torres and Herman Davis for the tournament home run leadership . He continues to be considered a legendary world champion who represented the country . In 2006 , he was cited by professional basketball coach , Joseph Clarke , as ranking alongside such noted Panamanian sports personalities as Ismael Laguna , Roberto Durán , and Mariano Rivera as Panamanian World Champions . López has two sons . Ever since López ' performances with the Yankees , the team has had a huge following in Panama .

= = Post @-@ playing career = =

Lopez retired following the 1966 season at the age of 36 . That year , he also participated in his first Old @-@ Timers ' Day . He has returned to the annual event every year ( totaling 49 years as of 2015 ) .