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SABR 51

"Mothell was the greatest utility man in the game of baseball. He could step in at any position, except pitcher, and you'd never know it. Regular player was missing." – Cool Papa Bell¹

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Playing a variety of positions over the years, the versatile Dink Mothell was a member of three Kansas City Monarchs teams that finished as league champions – the 1924, 1925, and 1929 Monarchs. In 1924 he most often played center field; in 1925 it was left field; and in 1929 he usually manned first base. In 1926, with Mothell as second baseman, the Monarchs finished with the best overall record in the league and were the first-half champions, but the second-half champion Chicago American Giants prevailed five games to four over the Monarchs in a Negro National League championship series.²

Mothell did pitch, too, at one point, and acquitted himself well, thus having played at all nine positions.

As Phil Dixon has perceptively pointed out, because Negro League rosters were often limited to between 14 and 17 players, having someone with the versatility to fill in at a number of positions meant that “utility men like Wade Johnston, Hurley McNair, Sam Bankhead, Carroll (Dink) Mothell, and others weren’t viewed as second-stringers, but, rather, as highly valued contributors.”³

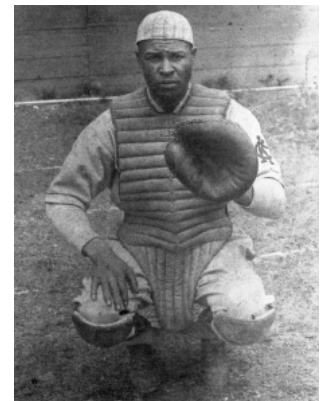
Mothell’s career in the Negro National League began in 1920 with the Chicago American Giants. He played briefly with them – as a catcher – before joining the Monarchs. The 1920 Chicago American Giants were the league champions, making him a member of yet another championship team.

Carroll Ray Mothell was the middle of three sons born to Samuel “Sandy” Mothell and Scottie Lee (Pillow) Mothell. He was born on August 13, 1897, in Topeka, Kansas. His brothers were Claude C. Mothell (1895-1965) and Ernest D. Mothell (1900-1973).

Sandy Mothell (born in 1874) never got to see his son Ernest; Sandy died of consumption at his home on May 15, 1900.⁴ Ernest was born in August.⁵

Sandy Mothell was a military veteran, who had served in the Spanish-American War as a volunteer with the 23rd Kansas Infantry. His parents, Ben and Eliza Mothell, had come to Topeka from Tennessee. Ben Mothell worked as a railroad laborer. Samuel (Sandy) had been born in Tennessee.⁶

Sandy Mothell had served as a private in Company A of the 23rd Kansas Voluntary Infantry regiment, alongside a couple of his brothers-in-law, Edward Pillow and Charles Pillow.⁷ The whole unit was from Topeka, an African



American regiment that served in Cuba from August 1898 to March 1899. Fourteen of the unit's members died in the service, 12 of them due to disease and 10 of those in Cuba. Pvt. Mothell was discharged from the service at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on January 21, 1900, and returned home to Topeka.

The Pillow family also came to Topeka from Tennessee. Charles and Celia Pillow were Scottie's parents and thus Dink Mothell's maternal grandparents. Charles was a Civil War veteran, and at the time of the 1885 census was listed as a laborer. SABR member Jan Johnson reports that he was a charter member of the Fort Pillow GAR Post in Topeka and one of the founding members of the Lane Chapel C.M.E. Church. After her husband's death, Scottie Mothell moved into the Pillow household with her three sons. She did not marry again.⁸

The Mothells worked at a number of jobs. Charles Pillow was a school janitor at the time of the 1900 census. His sons, Charles and Edward, were, respectively, a day laborer and a railroad section man. Scottie had no employment status indicated. In 1910 she was listed as a housekeeper for a private family; the younger Charles was a driver for a paint store and Edward was listed as a brick mason.

In 1920 Charles still worked as a teamster for the paint company. Ernest's occupation was grocery delivery. Carroll's first occupation listed was in 1920 as a "laborer, not employed."⁹

Carroll Ray Mothell was known by at least two nicknames – Deke, and, most commonly, Dink. Carroll's schooling saw him through eighth grade.¹⁰ He grew to stand 6-feet tall, with a listed weight of 175 pounds.

As early as age 17, Dink had played some in and around Topeka with a team called the Topeka Giants.¹¹ He recalled, "We had a fellow around here by the name of Jack Johnson – a prizefighter – 'Topeka Jack,' we called him. He had a little team around here called the Topeka Giants, and I played with him on occasion. That would be around 1914."¹² He threw right-handed but, as he told John Holway, "I was a switch-hitter. When I first started playing, they fed me so many curve balls from the right side that I knew I had to do something to stay in the league, so I switched over. As a kid I was a cross-handed [switch] hitter. I had more power from the right side but I struck out a lot less from the left side; it looked like I could see the ball better."¹³ In at least one clipping from 1917, "D. Mothel" was listed as a pitcher on the team.¹⁴ One interesting pregame advertisement from the June 14 *Mayetta* (Kansas) *Herald* promoted a game three days later between Johnson's Giants and the Mayetta Indians. It declared, "This is Topeka's crack team of colored boys. Jack Johnson is the greatest short-stop and Dick Mothell the greatest catcher in the country."¹⁵

Mothell first showed up in professional baseball with the 1920 Kansas City Monarchs for manager Jose Mendez, listed as a catcher on the team.¹⁶ He had been doing construction work around Topeka and making, he said, about \$130 a month. "In March 1920 I wrote to team owner J. L. Wilkinson of the Monarchs and told him about myself. A couple of weeks later I got a contract. ... I'm supposed to get 120 down in Kansas City."¹⁷ He added, "I didn't like catching, but they only had one catcher, a Cuban named [Vicente] Rodriguez."

His departure from Topeka was noted in the *Topeka Plaindealer*, a brief note saying, "He is a star catcher."¹⁸

Mothell told Holway more about his brief time with the team: "We went barnstorming around Oklahoma, Missouri, Nebraska. We traveled in automobiles, and we slept in different places; in a small town you'd have maybe two or three players in this residence, two or three in another residence, like that. It was hard to find rooms; sometimes we'd just sleep in the automobiles."¹⁹

Researcher Jan Johnson believes that Mothell may have caught the first road game ever played by the Monarchs – albeit a nonleague game – in Beloit, Wisconsin, on April 22, 1920.²⁰

In a road game on May 9, Mothell played second base against the St. Louis Giants, batting seventh in the order and without a base hit. He batted in the eighth spot, catching Rube Currie, against the Chicago American Giants on May 23 in Chicago. He is listed with one base hit and committing one error. Dave Wyatt of the *Chicago Defender* wrote, "The K.C. catchers put the visitors in an awful hole, especially Rodriguez, while Mathol [*sic*] was flashy in spots, but wobbled in the pinches."²¹ The hit may have been his first as a pro. On May 29 and 30, he played third base against Indianapolis. In the 14-inning game on the 29th, he was again hitless (0-for-5) but did get credit for a sacrifice.²² He was 1-for-4 on May 30.²³ A note in the *Defender* said, "The Monarchs are expecting a fellow soon, Rogan by name, and big leaguers

who have seen him work pronounce him the best ever. He is with the 24th regiment and will report the middle of June. Mathol, the Kansas City catcher, is playing the ball of his life at third base, but the team is sadly in need of a second baseman.”²⁴ On June 5 Mothell played third in a 7-3 home win against the visiting Cuban Stars. He was hitless but scored one of the runs.²⁵ In an article datelined June 11, he is shown at third base again, with two base hits – one a double – in an 8-7 come-from-behind win against Indianapolis.²⁶

It was tough to travel the way teams did. Even though Mothell wasn’t playing much, a couple of the older players said he should ask for more money. He did, but Wilkinson declined, so Mothell quit the Monarchs.

Rube Foster of the Chicago American Giants had seen him play well in a game – perhaps the May 23 game in Chicago – and when he heard that Mothell and the Monarchs had parted ways, Foster sent a sportswriter to talk with him. Mothell was disinclined to get back in baseball, but he said his mother told him, “This is your second chance.”²⁷ He got a raise from Foster, all of \$5 more per month.

Mothell wasn’t used much, saying, “I’d sit on the bench, pinch-hit every now and then.” Where he had liked Jose Mendez, the Monarchs’ manager, he said he really didn’t like Foster, allowing that he was a good organizer but too “tough on his ball players, a lot tougher than he should have been.”²⁸ Mothell is shown as appearing in four games for the 1920 Chicago American Giants. One of his teammates in Chicago was Bingo DeMoss, another Topekan. Mothell said he caught in only two games; one was on September 4, when he went 1-for-4 against the Detroit Stars. He was listed as “Matholl” in the *Chicago Whip* box score.²⁹ Seamheads shows his stats for the year as appearing in 21 games for the season, with 84 plate appearances and a .169 batting average. He had two extra-base hits, both doubles, and eight runs batted in.

What Mothell did for the next three years is difficult to pin down. He next turns up in the Seamheads database in 1924. Mothell told Holway that he quit Foster’s team in 1922, which suggests that he had played for them, at least to some extent, in 1921. He said he worked for the Santa Fe railroad but would also “play with little teams around here [Topeka], catching.”³⁰ Carroll Mothell may have been the Mothel who pitched a five-hit shutout for the Topeka Cubs on April 30.³¹

Dink’s younger brother Ernest played baseball, too, a pitcher, reports Jan Johnson: “Along with Dink, I’m showing him in roster lists of the 1917 Topeka Giants, the 1921 Topeka Cubs, and I think the 1921 Topeka Giants. Both brothers also played for the Chanute Black Diamonds at least once in 1921.”³²

In 1923 Dink wrote to Wilkinson again and was brought to spring training with the Monarchs in Dallas. Mothell said, “I thought I had made the club. But Wilkie had another team, his farm club, called the All Nations and he sent me out with the All Nations in 1923. We played Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Minnesota, Canada. I played first base, second base, outfield. I came back to Kansas City in 1924, and played a utility role, going in when somebody got hurt.”³³

The All Nations team was quite a team, winning over 120 games in a very busy year and at one point reportedly winning 44 consecutive games. Players whom Wilkinson had put on the team also included Newt Allen, Ted Alexander, John Donaldson, and Jose Mendez.³⁴

Wilkinson shut down the All Nations club after the 1923 season.³⁵ Mothel was on the reserve list for the Monarchs at year’s end.³⁶

Mothell joined the team for spring training. One interesting game was a preseason game behind prison walls at the United States Penitentiary at Fort Leavenworth. More than 3,000 prisoners watched the April 19 game, an 11-1 win for the Monarchs. Mothell and Frank Duncan shared catching duties.³⁷

In 1924 Mothell got a good deal of work, appearing in 70 known regular-season games (the Monarchs team showed a record of 57-22) and hitting for a .276 batting average and an on-base percentage of .376. He drove in 46 runs and scored 53. He had 11 doubles and five triples and stole six bases. He was already proving his versatility. Existing statistics show him catching in 12 games and playing first base in 14, second base in 2, third base in 5, left field in 3, center field in 34, and right field in 9. The trade that wasn’t – Phil Dixon writes, “In 1924, Kansas City offered seven

players in a trade for Cool Papa Bell of the St. Louis Stars. When St. Louis demanded that Mothell be one of the seven men included in the deal, Kansas City was forced to refuse the trade.”³⁸

Mendez and the Monarchs finished first in the Negro National League, five games ahead of the second-place Chicago American Giants. The Monarchs played the Eastern Colored League champions, Frank Warfield’s Hilldale Club of Darby, Pennsylvania, in the “World’s Colored Championship,” winning five games to four, with one tie game. Mothell played in the Series but was injured badly in Game Three – hit by a pitch badly enough that he “had to be carried off the field.”³⁹

The two teams took the Series to its final game, in Chicago, on October 20. Mendez held Hilldale to three hits and the Monarchs won, 5-0. Mothell played first base. Kansas City scored all five runs in the bottom of the eighth. Three runs were in when Mothell came to bat with one out, Mendez on third, and Allen on second. He singled to center field, driving in the fourth and fifth runs.⁴⁰

Many years later, when Mothell was asked what he considered to be his outstanding achievement in baseball, he replied, “There were a few, but I consider being one of few players to play in the first Negro World Series. Oct. 3-24.”⁴¹

His last game of 1924 may have been an exhibition game in Topeka, when the Monarchs played the White Eagles, a local semipro team named after an area petroleum company. Pitching for the White Eagles was right-hander Jesse Barnes, who had pitched for the Boston Braves that year. Mothell homered over the right-field fence, part of a 16-1 shellacking that was not all Barnes’s fault (his team committed eight errors).⁴²

In 1925 the Monarchs were the first-half champions and also the ultimate NNL champions after defeating the St. Louis Stars in the NNL Championship Series.⁴³ One standout day for Mothell was the June 21 doubleheader sweep of Birmingham (6-5 and 4-3), when he was 4-for-6 with a stolen base in each game. On September 14, also against the Barons, he doubled and tripled in a game and – perhaps not surprisingly – was also hit by a pitch.⁴⁴

Mothell played a lot of left field, but his versatility was perhaps well exemplified by four games against the Chicago American Giants at the end of August and into the beginning of September. Mothell played right field, first base, right field, center field, center field, and second base.⁴⁵

At the beginning of September, the Monarchs had been trailing the St. Louis Stars, but then reeled off four straight wins, leaving them just five games behind in the standings.

During the NNL championship series against the Stars, the Monarchs lost the services of both Mothell and Bullet Rogan, Mothell suffering his injury in the last playoff game against St. Louis in Chicago.⁴⁶ He was “confined to bed.”⁴⁷ With both men out, the Monarchs lost that final game and, in October, the World Series to the Hilldale club.⁴⁸

In 1926 the Monarchs finished with the best record in the NNL, 60-22.

Mothell began the season playing left field and leading off. By June he was more frequently handling second base and batting further down in the lineup.⁴⁹ When the team clinched the first-half pennant with a July 5 doubleheader sweep of the Cubans, Mothell played third base in both games. Seamheads shows him with a .290 batting average for the year, his best year to date.

The Monarchs were the first-half champions in the NNL. In late August, writer (and Negro League umpire) Bert Gholston selected Mothell as the utility player for his all-star team.⁵⁰

The second-half champion Chicago American Giants matched up against the Bullet Rogan-managed Monarchs in a playoff series. The first game of the series was at Kansas City’s Muehlebach Field. Chicago was down 3-0, then scored three runs in the top of the sixth. In the bottom of the sixth, with two outs and Cristóbal Torriente on third, Mothell singled over second base with the go-ahead and ultimately winning run.⁵¹ The series ran nine games, and Mothell appeared in eight of the nine games playing second base, batting .233, and driving in five runs. Chicago came out on top.

After the season was over, Mothell kept playing ball all winter long. Rogan recruited Mothell and a number of others to play California winter baseball for the Los Angeles Royal Giants.

The Pacific Coast News Bureau noted one game early in December when Mothell moved from first base to right field, and said he "saved the Giants several times with brilliant throws to the bases or plate. Mothell showed the greatest arm ever seen at the Sox Park."⁵²

The Giants played well into March 1927, giving Mothell year-round employment as a ballplayer.⁵³

The 1927 Monarchs dipped in the standings. Mothell kicked off Opening Day in Memphis with a single and triple in a 6-0 win. He had the winning hit – a bases-loaded single – in the bottom of the 10th inning of the August 7 game against Memphis.⁵⁴

The American Giants won the first-half championship over the Monarchs and Kansas City ended the season in third place, percentage points behind St. Louis.

Mothell never hit a lot of home runs. Seamheads shows 18 homers over the course of his 12 years and 612 games. One came on June 25, 1927, against visiting Cleveland – his home run and an RBI single helping produce a 6-5 win.⁵⁵ He no doubt enjoyed a real spurt during some nonleague games in September. Against the Wichita All-Pros, he was 3-for-6 with a triple and a homer on September 17, 3-for-5 with another homer on the first game on the 18th, and 2-for-4 with a double in the second game.⁵⁶ On July 21 he won a game against Emporia that was tied, 3-3, going into the ninth. There was one out and a man on base. Mothell hit a "single down the foul line into right field. It was lost in the weeds" and went for a home run.⁵⁷

Throughout the season, there were always a large number of games played against various semipro and other teams. Against the Concordia Travelers, Mothell had a three-home-run game on July 27 in Salina.⁵⁸ Playing Arkansas City on September 21, 1927, he hit two home runs in a 16-0 win.⁵⁹

One remarkable game, while barnstorming during the season, saw Mothell steal four bases against Emporia on September 14.⁶⁰

Bert Gholston again selected Mothell for his all-star team.⁶¹ He wrote of Mothell, "He is one of the best second basemen in the circuit. His fielding is the talk of the day throughout the league. He is an ideal running mate for any good shortstop. He can range far to the left or right with perfect ease and he is deadly on slow hit balls that require accurate fielding and a quick throw."⁶²

After the season, it was winter ball again, this time playing for a team billed as the Cleveland Colored Stars.

Mothell mostly played second base for the Monarchs in 1928. The team again contended but wound up in second place. For three years in a row, Mothell's stats show four home runs each year. One came in Chicago on June 29 as the Monarchs no-hit the American Giants, 4-0, behind the pitching of Alfred "Army" Cooper (7¹/₃ innings) and Chet Brewer.⁶³

His batting average shows as .298, the highest of his career for a full league season.

After the season, the Monarchs played against a number of teams in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado. Mothell continued on westward after that, and in the winter of 1928-29 he played with the Cleveland Giants. (The team name seemed to change from year to year but many of the players remained the same, from the 1926 Royal Giants to this year's edition.) They won the California Winter League title.⁶⁴

In 1929 the Monarchs ended up on top once again, finishing first. Mothell played first base in almost every game. One standout game early on was the May 25 season opener, against visiting Memphis, an 8-3 win in which he hit two doubles.⁶⁵ A 4-for-5 game against the Cuban Stars on August 19 was another memorable one, three singles and a double helping the team win its 14th game in a row.⁶⁶

Mothell was part of a triple play in a touring game in June against the Okmulgee Merchants, a close game the Merchants won in 11 innings. In the bottom the eighth, with two on base, a Merchant lined the ball to Newt Allen at

second base. He threw to shortstop Halley Harding who then threw to Mothell at first base.⁶⁷

In an August 6 game against Detroit, the team batted around and Mothell was one of four Kansas City batters who had two base hits in one inning.

The Monarchs won the first-half flag, beating the St. Louis Stars, 18-6, on September 2, to clinch the league championship. Mothell got in a fist fight with John Henry Russell of the Stars, who claimed Mothell had spiked him.⁶⁸ The 16 stolen bases Mothell is credited with in 1929 represented his personal best in league play, one more than the 15 he had stolen in 1928.

In an October 5 postseason game in San Antonio against the Cuban All-Stars of San Luis Potosi, a Cuban/Mexican team said to be Mexico champions, Mothell was key in a four-run third inning. He singled in two runs, advanced to third base, and then stole home.⁶⁹

The Monarchs were both first-half and second-half champions of the NNL.

Once again, Mothell joined Rogan, Newt Allen, Biz Mackey, and Newt Joseph in California Winter League ball. This year the team was dubbed the Philadelphia Royal Giants. Mothell primarily played first base. One notable win was on October 19 against a White team stacked with players including Bob Meusel, Irish Meusel, Fred Haney, and Tony Lazzeri. Mothell was one of five Royal Giants to homer in the 12-9 win.⁷⁰ Ten days later, Jimmie Foxx and Al Simmons joined the opposition, but still went down to defeat, 10-3.

In 1930 the St. Louis Stars reigned supreme while the Monarchs placed second. It's perhaps surprising that Kansas City did as well as it did.

The season started normally. In fact, playing a preseason game at night in Waco on May 5, 1930, the Monarchs prevailed 8-0. Honors went to Mothell, with two bases-loaded triples – one in the first inning and one in the ninth. Both would almost certainly have gone for grand slams except for ground rules due to canvas stretched around the outfield, but the star of the game was Johnny Markham, who pitched a no-hitter, said at the time to be the first night-game no-hitter.⁷¹

Rogan suffered medical misfortune about halfway through the season. Mothell took over as manager in midseason. The team had been 26-10 in league games under Rogan, but then was 16-28 under Mothell. The entire team suffered a combination of injuries and illness that resulted in half the team being unable to fully contribute. Rogan had to be hospitalized and was in "very serious condition in a Kansas City hospital"; a July 28 report predicted that he would be out for the remainder of the season.⁷² Army Cooper and L.D. Livingston were in an automobile accident. Newt Allen was injured during a game. LeRoy Taylor and Halley Harding both had to stop playing due to illness. It's not surprising that the team's performance swiftly went downhill.

At least one report, in the *Chicago Defender*, referred to Mothell as "Captain Mothel," saying in a story datelined Pittsburgh that he "has played bang-up ball in the three games here."⁷³ He hit a three-run homer in the June 19 game.

Mothell's defense was appreciated, too. A note in the *Kansas City Times* read, "The playing of Mothell this season at first base has been one of the features."⁷⁴ Monarchs owner J.L. Wilkinson had permanent lights installed at Muehlebach Field and more than 50 night games were played there in 1930.⁷⁵

In the winter of 1930-31, Mothell played some baseball in Cuba. He is shown with six at-bats for Santa Clara and 41 for Cienfuegos, with a combined record of .195, including two triples and one stolen base.⁷⁶

The Monarchs were an independent ballclub in 1931, no longer a part of the Negro National League. Rogan is listed as manager. Mothell is shown as batting .320 in 19 games, playing both second base and first base.

The comings and goings are a little unclear. In mid-July, Mothell ("late of the Kansas City Monarchs") played first base for Gilkerson's Union Giants ("one of the fastest semi-pro outfits on the road") which had traveled to Ogden, Utah, to play a local team there.⁷⁷ Just a few days earlier, he was with the Monarchs playing a game in Manhattan, Kansas, and losing to Elden Auker.⁷⁸

By mid-August, J.L. Wilkinson had re-signed Mothell and he was back with the Monarchs. On August 13 the Monarchs beat the Omaha Packers, 4-3.⁷⁹ Three days later, the Cuban House of David team drew a Depression-era crowd of 8,500 to Muehlebach Field. The Monarchs took both games, 5-4 (in 13 innings) and 4-3. Facing Luis Tiant the elder in the first game, Mothell was 2-for-5 with a base on balls.⁸⁰ Next, the team headed to Chicago to play the Chicago Mills team.

One of the last games of the season was in Kansas City against a visiting team of major leaguers who included Lloyd and Paul Waner. The Monarchs won, 4-3, with Mothell hitting an eighth-inning double to deep center and scoring the tying run on a ball hit by Newt Allen, who moments later scored on a hit by Tom Young.⁸¹

After the season, writing in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Cum Posey named Mothell as the right fielder on his "All-America Ball Club."⁸² *Kansas City Call* sportswriter A.D. Williams wrote: "When Mothell first entered the big show some eleven years ago we found him to be a player of remarkable ability. Through all these years we have watched his work, checked him at every turn and find him to have a record hard to beat. His career in the NNL is one that any player should feel proud to claim. Men like Dink are not found every day."⁸³

The 1932 season again saw the Monarchs as an independent club, managed by Mothell. The team's record was 13-5, first among the independent clubs. Mothell played third base in almost all the games. In April, he served as "captain" and played for the Cleveland-based Wakeman Red Caps.⁸⁴

It was in 1932 that Mothell got his first known work pitching during a game. He was with the East-West League's Cleveland Stars at the time and played second base in both games of the June 18 doubleheader in Pittsburgh. The Crawfords won the first game, 10-2. In the second game, Cleveland had a 3-1 lead after seven innings, but starter Nelson Dean appears to have run into trouble in the bottom of the eighth and been charged with four runs. At some point during the difficulty, Dean was replaced. Mothell moved from second base to the pitcher's mound, Joe Ware moved in from left field to take Mothell's place at second, and Orville Singer entered the game in left field, batting in Dean's spot in the lineup. When the inning was over, the Crawfords had taken the lead, 4-3, but the Stars scored four runs in the top of the ninth and won the game. Mothell had one base hit in the game; whether his hit came in the ninth and may have contributed on offense, we do not know. Seamheads shows him pitching in just one game – this one – and working to six batters, allowing one hit, and retiring the other five without a walk or a strikeout. It would appear that he was the winning pitcher in the game.

Mothell appeared in 15 games and hit for a .214 batting average. He is credited with four sacrifices and four stolen bases, driving in five runs and scoring 10. There was another spiking incident, noted in the *Defender*: "Mothel showed poor sportsmanship while going into second."⁸⁵

Riley writes, "When the East-West League folded during the season, the ultimate utility man returned to Kansas City, where he added another starting position to his list, as the regular third baseman."⁸⁶ It was a short season, the start uncertain and delayed until the beginning of July due to the Depression. As he had done with Cleveland, Mothell appeared in 15 games for the Monarchs; he had nine base hits in 55 plate appearances (.196), with five RBIs and eight runs scored. He stole five bases. Six walks and one hit-by-pitch gave him a .302 on-base percentage. Seamheads lists the team in first place among independent clubs. One newspaper article from August had Frank Duncan as the team's manager, and one in September had Mothell as "manager and third baseman of the club."⁸⁷ Needless to say, there were many more than 18 games played during the season, but the majority of these contests were barnstorming games against non-major-league caliber opponents.⁸⁸ The *Kansas City Times* declared that the team's August 14 sweep of a doubleheader over the Cuban Stars gave them 32 consecutive victories.⁸⁹ The October 3 paper said the Monarchs had won 73 of 76 games.⁹⁰

After the season, the Monarchs planned to take the train to Mexico and play a slate of games there, from October 22 to November 8, against the Mexico City Aztecs.⁹¹ Prohibition was in force in the United States, so readers of the *Baltimore Afro-American* may have been titillated by a photograph in the December 24 issue showing Mothell with Frank Duncan, Turkey Stearnes, Newt Allen, and others posing holding bottles of gin, whiskey, and champagne before their return to the States.⁹²

One newspaper later characterized Mothell as “quiet but efficient”⁹³ – but at the same time he clearly had at least on occasional playful side. A 1930 photograph shows him jokingly holding a shotgun pointed at teammate Halley Harding, while the Monarchs bus driver watches with a smile.⁹⁴

The 1933 Monarchs are shown on Seamheads as playing only six games, as an independent club, with a record of 4-2. Bullet Rogan was back as manager, after his year and a half apparently dealing with medical issues.⁹⁵ He had returned in October 1932. Mothell is shown as playing second base in the six games, going 5-for-23 at the plate. Clearly, they played many more, but newspaper coverage seems sparse – perhaps because the Depression had taken even deeper hold. The team largely played on the road. In his biography of Rogan, Phil Dixon says the Monarchs traveled in “three Ford touring cars for the southern states, up to the Dakotas, across to the Pacific Northwest and into Canada.”⁹⁶ He says the Monarchs played more games in Winnipeg – eight – than the four they played in Kansas City itself.

There was a game against the House of Davids, who beat the Monarchs, 7-5, in Emporia, Kansas. Mothell played second base and was 2-for-3 with a double and a stolen base.⁹⁷ The two teams sometimes barnstormed together.

After the 1933 season, Mothell became a baseball ambassador, traveling as one of 12 all-stars who played baseball “for two days in Japan and for a short time in China; then they remained in The Philippines until early February.”⁹⁸ The team had departed San Francisco on the *SS President Lincoln* in November and returned to Los Angeles from Honolulu on April 6, on the *SS President Cleveland*. Among the participants were Monarchs Newt Allen, Chet Brewer, Andy Cooper, Mothell, and Bullet Joe Rogan. The team played an eight-game series in Hawaii on their way back. Mothell hit .323 during those games, including “a triple off of former Royal Giants pitcher Ted Shaw secured an 8-5 victory over the Hawaiian Mutual Telephone ball club on March 21.”⁹⁹

An article in the *Courier* said the Monarchs “are not part of any league” and that after the 1934 season “they will go to South America for a series of games with teams in Brazil, Argentina, and the Canal Zone.”¹⁰⁰

In 1934 the Monarchs again played most of their games on the road. Their stats on Seamheads show them with a 3-6 record and no home ballpark. Mothell is shown in seven games at second base, going 7-for-28 (.250).

The June 30, 1934, *Baltimore Afro-American* presented all-star choices by Dan Burley, and Mothell was one of three second basemen chosen for his team, not for 1934 but for all time. The other two were George Scales of New York and Dick Lundy of Newark.¹⁰¹

In August the Monarchs became the first African American team to play in the venerable but previously segregated *Denver Post* tournament. Drawing sizable crowds, they prevailed in five games and progressed all the way to the championship game before losing, 2-0, to Grover Cleveland Alexander’s House of David team.

There was one oddity that happened during the fifth inning of the August 5 game against the Denver Athletic Club. The game had been scoreless. Nate Joseph reached second base on an infield hit and an errant throw by the Denver shortstop. Manager Sam Crawford had John Donaldson pinch-run for Joseph, and he advanced to third base on pitcher Cooper’s sacrifice. Crawford then had Mothell pinch-run for the pinch-runner Donaldson. Turkey Stearnes singled and Mothell scored the first run of what became a 4-3 Monarchs win. The *Denver Post* tried to explain it: “It seems Donaldson was substituted because he was a faster runner; Mothell because he was smarter. At least that’s the story!”¹⁰²

The Monarchs then traveled, playing Alexander’s team in Colorado Springs, Wichita, La Crosse, and Tulsa. They also took on a number of other teams, such as Dizzy Dean’s All-Stars, at games in Oklahoma City, North Dakota, Wichita, Kansas City, Des Moines, Chicago, and Milwaukee. It was, wrote Dixon, “one of the most profitable campaigns in their history,” and he quoted the *Kansas City Times* as saying they had “played 143 games winning 127.”¹⁰³

The team played its final game on October 15.

In the year he turned 38, Dink Mothell retired from baseball in 1935 “because of problems in his right shoulder.”¹⁰⁴ That said, he did show up from time to time, playing a bit that summer with the McNair Paseo Taverns of Kansas City, a

semipro team with several members drawn from the ranks of former Monarchs and Chicago American Giants players. The McNair team lost an August 18 game in Emporia but Mothell provided a thrill by stealing home.¹⁰⁵

He is said also to have worked some games as an umpire.¹⁰⁶

Mothell returned to Topeka and lived out his life with most of his acquaintances unaware of his years with the Monarchs. He never married and had no children. After his passing, family friend Wilber Douglas Jr. – whose father had played with Mothell on the Topeka Giants – said he worked numerous odd jobs, mostly doing custodial work. “That’s about all he could get in those days. I really don’t think many people he worked for knew anything about his baseball career.” He added, “Dink was a very likeable fellow. But when he talked with us kids about ball, he was very stern about how he did it. He made us listen, that’s for sure.”¹⁰⁷ Douglas donated Mothell’s uniform to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum.

Mothell died in a Topeka hospital on April 24, 1980, survived by his aunt, Mrs. Janie Hollis. He was 82, retired, and a member of the Lane Chapel CME Church.

He was not forgotten, but fuller recognition came just over 30 years later.

The Society for American Baseball Research Negro Leagues Committee raised funds to place a tombstone on his previously unmarked grave. The tombstone dedication occurred in June 2011 and was featured on *NBC Nightly News*. The inscription reads:

Topeka’s “Super Substitute”

Legendary second baseman in Negro Leagues Baseball as a member of the Kansas City Monarchs.

Mothell played at least one game at each position during his 15 seasons in the Negro Leagues.

“Mothell was a soft-spoken man,” SABR’s Larry Lester said at the dedication. “Not everyone is a self-promoter.” Family friend Jocelyn Lyons learned much about his baseball history during the ceremonies. “I didn’t know all this as a kid,” He said, “I just knew him as Uncle Dink. I knew him as grandpa’s best friend.”¹⁰⁸

A couple of months later, on August 6, 2011, the *Topeka Capital-Journal* named Dink Mothell as number 50 on its list of Top 100 Athletes in Shawnee County, Kansas, history.¹⁰⁹

Carroll Ray “Dink” Mothell was inducted into the Kansas Baseball Hall of Fame on February 4, 2012.

Acknowledgments

Many people helped in developing this biography. Special thanks to Jan Johnson, who provided considerable assistance. Thanks as well to Gary Ashwill, Phil Dixon, Kevin Johnson, Mike Lynch, and Mark Schremmer.

Notes

1 Phil Dixon with Patrick J. Hannigan, *The Negro Baseball Leagues* (Mattituck, New York: Amereon House, 1992), 100.

2 <https://www.seamheads.com/NegroLgs/year.php?yearID=1926&lgID=NNC>.

3 Dixon with Hannigan, 24.

4 *Topeka Plaindealer*, May 18, 1900.

5 The date of his birth is uncertain. When he registered for the draft in World War I, he reported it as December 16, but when he reregistered for the draft in World War II, he gave his birthdate as August 13.

6 State of Kansas census, 1885.

7 Charles was listed with the surname Pillows. Mothell was listed as Sandy Mathell.

8 Email to author from Jan Johnson on January 7, 2021.

9 Carroll Mothell does not turn up in the 1930 census, though we do see his brothers Claude (a janitor at the State House in 1930 and janitor at a commercial bank in 1940) and Ernest (laborer in a mattress factory in 1930 and machinist in a mattress factory in 1940). Carroll Mothell was living in Kansas City in 1940 and is listed as a janitor in a public office building.

10 Carroll Ray Mothell player questionnaire from the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

11 A photograph of him with the 1918 Topeka Giants appears in Dixon with Hannigan on page 88.

12 Dink Mothell interview with John Holway, presented in John Holway, *Black Ball Tales* (Springfield, Virginia: Scorpio Books, 2008), 58. Gary Ashwill has written a two-part biographical portrait of Topeka Jack Johnson. See "Topeka Jack Johnson, Parts 1 and 2," AgareType.com, February 21, 2016 and April 6, 2016 at: https://agatetype.typepad.com/agate_type/2016/02/index.html and https://agatetype.typepad.com/agate_type/2016/04/topeka-jack-johnson-part-ii.html. Accessed March 3, 2021. In 2016, Jan Johnson was the local Topeka coordinator for a grave marker installation for Johnson and prepared biographical remarks.

13 Holway, 58.

14 "Drill Before Game," *Topeka State Journal*, June 2, 1917: 7. This was likely a mistake. In the actual game, he was the catcher. See "Giants Defeat Battery 'A,'" *Topeka State Journal*, June 4, 1917: 3. A clipping from September shows Dick as catcher and "E. Mothel," quite likely Ernest, as pitcher. "Knights vs. Giants," *Topeka State Journal*, September 22, 1917: 7. Both Mothells were mentioned as competitive tennis players, with "Carol Mothel" playing in the boys' semifinals at Ripley Park. He was a few days shy of 21 years old at the time. See "Tennis Finals Tonight," *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 8, 1918: 2.

15 Advertisement from page 4 of *the Mayetta* (Kansas) *Herald*. Amusingly, the next line of the ad proclaimed "Funny Jokes a Specialty."

16 "Here Are the Fans; Take Your Choice," *Chicago Defender*, May 1, 1920: 9. He was listed as Mathell.

17 John Holway, *Black Ball Tales*, 58.

18 "Seen and Heard During the Week," *Topeka Plaindealer*, April 9, 1920: 3.

19 Holway, *Black Ball Tales*, 58, 59.

20 "Leaguers Lose First," *Beloit* (Wisconsin) *Daily Call*, April 23, 1920: 4. The battery was presented as "Correy" and "Mathell."

21 Dave Wyatt, "American Giants Win in 11th," *Chicago Defender*, May 29, 1920: 9. In newspaper accounts, throughout this career, his name was most often rendered as "Mothel." It was a rare article that spelled it correctly.

22 "Monarchs Lost Long Game," *Kansas City Times*, May 30, 1920: 12.

23 "Monarchs Won in Big Rally," *Kansas City Times*, May 31, 1920: 6.

24 "Kansas City Notes," *Chicago Defender*, June 5, 1920: 9.

25 "Cuban Stars in a Defeat," *Kansas City Star*, June 6, 1920: 14A.

26 "Monarchs Win Final from Indianapolis," *Chicago Defender*, June 11, 1920: 9.

27 Holway, 59.

28 Holway, 59-60.

29 "Star Lose First to Giants," *Chicago Whip*, September 11, 1920: 5.

30 Holway, 60.

31 "Cubs Shut Out Oskaloosa," *Topeka Daily Capital*, May 1, 1922: 7.

32 Jan Johnson email to author, March 1, 2021. Some clippings the *Chanute* (Kansas) *Daily Tribune* in both August and September 1920 show a Mothel catching. In a few 1921 clippings, there is a D. Mothel catching and an E. Mothel playing shortstop for Chanute. And there is one that shows E. Mothell at shortstop with D. Mothell, playing left field and then pitching the final 7½ innings of a game against the Humboldt Grays. "Humboldt 6, Diamonds 3," *Chanute Daily Tribune*, June 6, 1921: 4. The July 24 game against Overbrook featured the Topeka Giants battery of "D. Mother" and "E. Mother." See Topeka Giants 12; Overbrook 3," *Topeka State Journal*, July 25, 1921: 3.

Johnson adds, "There was an older Mothel(l) player, James. He was on Topeka Jack's 1906 and 1907 Topeka Giants teams, and again in 1917." How James might have been related is unknown. He is likely the James Mothel born in Topeka in 1879.

33 Holway, 60.

34 Phil S. Dixon, *Wilber "Bullet" Rogan and the Kansas City Monarchs* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2010), 86.

35 Phil Dixon with Patrick J. Hannigan, 100.

36 "National League's Player Reserve List," *Chicago Defender*, December 15, 1923: 8.

37 "K.C. Monarchs Down U.S. Prisoners, 11-1," *Chicago Defender*, April 26, 1924: 9.

38 Phil S. Dixon, 71.

39 "Negro Clubs in the Game," *Kansas City Times*, October 6, 1924: 9. The game ended as a 6-6 tie game after 13 innings. See also Frank A. Young, "Hilldale Leads in World Series," *Chicago Defender*, October 11, 1924: 1.

40 "The Title to Monarchs," *Kansas City Times*, October 21, 1924: 12.

41 Carroll Ray Mothell player questionnaire from the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

42 "Monarchs Trim Eagles," *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 27, 1924: 2. Barnes won 15 games for the Braves in 1924 but lost 20. In 13 years in the majors, he won 152 games. The article used the name "Claude Mothell" but it was brother Carroll (Dink) who was on the Monarchs.

43 <https://www.seamheads.com/NegroLgs/year.php?yearID=1925&lgID=NNC&tab=standings>.

44 The Monarchs won in 13 innings, 2-1. The one run was said to be the first run the Barons had scored against Monarchs pitching in three consecutive games. Mothell scored one of the two runs. For reasons unknown, Rogan started in right field and Mothell in center, but at some point they switched positions. "A Long Game to the Monarchs," *Kansas City Times*, September 15, 1925: 10.

45 "Kansas City and American Giants Split Two-All in Four-Game Series at Chicago," *Chicago Defender*, September 5, 1925: 8. Mothell switched positions during two of the games.

46 On page 59 of his book on Bullet Rogan, Dixon quotes the *Kansas City Call's Baseball Extra* of October 1925 saying that both were out due to injuries. And "it is absolutely certain that neither of them will get in the post-season classic this year."

47 Frank Young, "Hilldale Now Leads Kansas City in Championship Series," *Chicago Defender*, October 10, 1925: 8.

48 Dixon, 60, 61.

- 49 James Riley says that Mothell “[a]ssumed the duties at second base, enabling Newt Allen to fill the void left when Dobie Moore’s career was ended in a shooting incident early in the spring.” James A. Riley, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994), 572.
- 50 “Bert Gholston’s All-Star team,” *Kansas City Call*, August 27, 1926: 7.
- 51 “Monarchs Off in Lead,” *Kansas City Star*, September 19, 1926: 24. Mothell singled in the sixth the next day and scored the tying run. Moments later, the Monarchs made it 6-5 for another win.
- 52 “Giants Lose First Doubleheader Game,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 11, 1926: 14. The ballpark was White Sox Park.
- 53 See, for instance, “Colored Giants Will Send Strong Team Against Suds,” *Bakersfield (California) Morning Echo*, March 6, 1928: 6. Likewise, in 1928, the *Pittsburgh Courier* noted that Frank Duncan, Newt Allen, and Mothell had all returned from California and would spend “a few days with local fans” before joining Bullet Rogan to head to Hot Springs to prepare for the 1928 season. “Baseball Gossip in the National League,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 17, 1928: 16.
- 54 “Monarchs Win, Then Lose,” *Kansas City Times*, August 8, 1927: 9.
- 55 “Kansas City Keeps Up a Dizzy Pace,” *Chicago Defender*, July 2, 1927: 9.
- 56 “Kansas City Stops Wichita League Club,” *Chicago Defender*, September 24, 1927: 9.
- 57 “Lose Game in Ninth,” *Emporia Gazette*, July 22, 1927: 10.
- 58 “Monarchs Lift Eight Balls from Park in Turning Back Travelers,” *Salina Journal*, July 28, 1927: 18. See also “Sports Far and Near,” *Birmingham Reporter*, August 13, 1927: 7.
- 59 “Monarchs Humble Arkansas City,” *Kansas City Times*, September 22, 1927: 11.
- 60 “Lose to the Monarchs,” *Emporia Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1927: 5.
- 61 Bert Gholston, *Kansas City Call*, September 23, 1927: 6.
- 62 Quoted in Dixon with Hannigan, 119.
- 63 “American Giants Held Hitless,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1929: A7.
- 64 Dixon, 132.
- 65 “Monarchs, Win, 8 to 3,” *Kansas City Star*, May 26, 1929: 87.
- 66 “No. 14 to Monarch String,” *Kansas City Times*, August 20, 1927: 12.
- 67 “Merchants Defeat Monarchs 3 to 2 in 11-Inning Game,” *Okmulgee (Oklahoma) Sunday Times Democrat*, June 9, 1929: 7.
- 68 “Pennant to Monarchs,” *Kansas City Times*, September 3, 1927: 19.
- 69 “K.C. Monarchs Downs Cuban-Mexican Team,” *Chicago Defender*, October 12, 1929: 8.
- 70 James Newton, “Watching the Scoreboard,” *Chicago Defender*, November 2, 1929: 8.
- 71 “A No-Hit Game at Night,” *Kansas City Star*, May 6, 1930: 10.
- 72 “Rogan Out for Rest of Season,” *Chicago Defender*, August 2, 1930: 8. Phil Dixon wrote of speculation mentioning lockjaw, a virus, and an eye operation among explanations at the time, but historians still don’t know the actual ailment(s) that kept him out of baseball for more than a season. Dixon, 100.

- 73 "Monarchs Split 2 Night Games With Homestead Grays But Are beaten in Daytime," *Chicago Defender*, July 26, 1930: 8.
- 74 "The Cubans Here Today," *Kansas City Times*, June 7, 1930: 19.
- 75 "A Game on Here Tonight," *Kansas City Times*, August 1, 1930: 14.
- 76 Jorge S. Figueredo, *Cuban Baseball: A Statistical History, 1878-1961* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2003), 192, 195.
- 77 "Union Giants to Oppose All-Stars in Ogden Matinee," *Ogden (Utah) Standard-Examiner*, July 24, 1931: 8.
- 78 "Auker Holds Monarchs to Seven Hits; Travelers Win, 5-2," *Manhattan (Kansas) Mercury*, July 28, 1931: 3. Two years later, Auker was pitching for the Detroit Tigers.
- 79 "Monarchs Nip Western 9 in Tough Battle," *Chicago Defender*, August 22, 1931: 8.
- 80 "Monarchs Top Cubans Twice Before 8,000," *Chicago Defender*, August 22, 1931: 8.
- 81 "K.C.'s Win Before 8,000," *Chicago Defender*, October 10, 1931: 9.
- 82 "Posey's All-America Ball Club," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 10, 1931: A5.
- 83 Williams was quoted in Dixon with Hannigan, 136.
- 84 "Red Caps Have Good Squad to Oppose Bakers," *Sandusky (Ohio) Register*, April 28, 1932: 8.
- 85 "Notes of the Game," *Chicago Defender*, September 4, 1932: 9.
- 86 Riley, 572.
- 87 The August 8 *Kansas City Times* referred to "Manager Duncan." See "Monarchs Win, 8-1, 4-2," *Kansas City Times*, August 8, 1932: 10. A September 9 column contained the phrase characterizing Mothell as manager; Duncan was on the team. "Three Pitchers Give Up 22 Hits," *Battle Creek Enquirer*, September 9, 1932: 19.
- 88 Statistics against nonleague opponents are naturally not included in official Negro League statistics.
- 89 "Monarchs' String Grows," *Kansas City Times*, August 15, 1932: 10. They won number 33 the following day. It's not clear when the streak ended.
- 90 "Monarchs Make it 73," *Kansas City Times*, October 3, 1932: 12. Earlier, see "Only 2 Losses in 65 Games," *Kansas City Star*, September 22, 1932: 12. The October 9 *Star* said they were 75-3; see page 56.
- 91 "Monarchs Prepare to Invade Mexico," *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 24, 1932: 17.
- 92 "Train Now Leaving for Ol' Mexico," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 24, 1932: 18.
- 93 "Kansas City Monarchs to Show Wares with Sealeys in Night Game," *Hutchinson (Kansas) News*, September 25, 1930: 10.
- 94 Dixon with Hannigan, 160.
- 95 Rogan had spent 1932 playing for a nonleague team in Jamestown, North Dakota. See Dixon, 107-111.
- 96 Dixon, 139.
- 97 "Davids Defeat Monarchs, 7-5," *Emporia Gazette*, August 22, 1933: 6.
- 98 Janet Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs: Champions of Black Baseball* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1985), 86, 87.

99 Kazuo Sayama and Bill Staples Jr., *Gentle Black Giants: A History of Negro Leaguers in Japan* (NBRP Press, 2019), 358.

100 "Monarchs Facing Heavy Schedule," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 28, 1934: A4.

101 Dan Burley, "All-Time Team of Athletic Stars," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 30, 1934: 19.

102 Walter Judge, "Kansas City Colored Stars Defeat Denver A.C., 4 to3," *Denver Post*, August 6, 1934: 17.

103 Dixon, 150.

104 Dixon, 151.

105 "Emporia Wins by Late Rally, 5-4," *Emporia Daily Gazette*, August 19, 1935: 3.

106 Dixon, 183.

107 Mark Schremmer, *Topeka Capital Journal*, August 7, 2010.

108 Mark Schremmer, "Negro Leagues Star to Receive Grave Marker," *Topeka Capital Journal*, June 4, 2011.

109 Jan Johnson notes that the *Capital-Journal* updated its rankings in 2020. Mothell is now number 59 in the Top 125.

Rick Peterson, "Charting Shawnee County's Top 125," *Topeka Capital Journal*, August 23, 2020: B2, and August 30, 2020: B2.

Full Name

Carroll Ray Mothell

Born

August 13, 1897 at Topeka, KS (USA)

Died

April 24, 1980 at Topeka, KS (USA)

Stats

Baseball Reference

Seamheads

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