

Speak English Coach: Preston Gomez of the Spokane Indians

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Cuban Preston Gomez managed the Spokane Indians minor league baseball club from 1960 to 1962. In his initial season there he guided the team to its first Pacific Coast League Triple A championship with such players as Willie Davis, Ron Fairly and Frank Howard amongst others. Under Gomez's guidance many of his starters blossomed into quality professionals and later became major league stars. Throughout his tenure there he earned high praise from his players, many of whom credited him with their early successes as professionals.

At that time, Preston Gomez was the only Latin born manager in the American professional ranks. While his deep Spanish accent sometimes hindered him from expressing his thoughts clearly in English, he never hesitated to make efforts in community relations for the club. In fact, with the help of Indians' general manager Spencer Harris, Gomez became a local favorite to Spokane's baseball followers and media. He regularly attended community affairs, gave frequent interviews and translated for those Latino players under his auspices.

While Gomez enjoyed many fine moments as the Spokane manager, he did so during America's racially turbulent years and the period when the United States officially broke off relations with his native Cuba. Frequently, he faced the Jim Crow standards of the American South when his teams either traveled or trained there. At other times, he often worried about his loved ones in Cuba during the 1961 Bay of Pigs affair and 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Yet, he was able to maintain high standards of leadership throughout the various baseball seasons. Furthermore, he proved to be a competent counselor to those Latins players who faced similar circumstances.

During his managership at Spokane, Preston Gomez went well beyond the call of duty in bringing the community closer to its professional team. For those Latin players under him, his concern, efforts and understanding contributed greatly toward their acculturation into the United States. Furthermore, the Cuban manager proved to be an excellent liason in press relations despite his accent. In the eyes of Spokanites, Preston Gomez was, and remains, "El Señor."