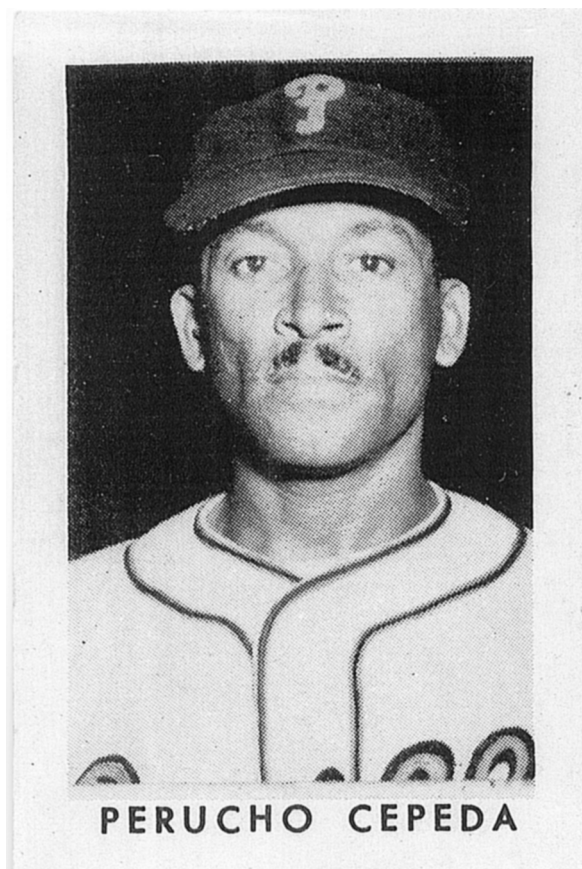


Forgotten Heroes:

Pedro Anibal “Perucho” Cepeda



by

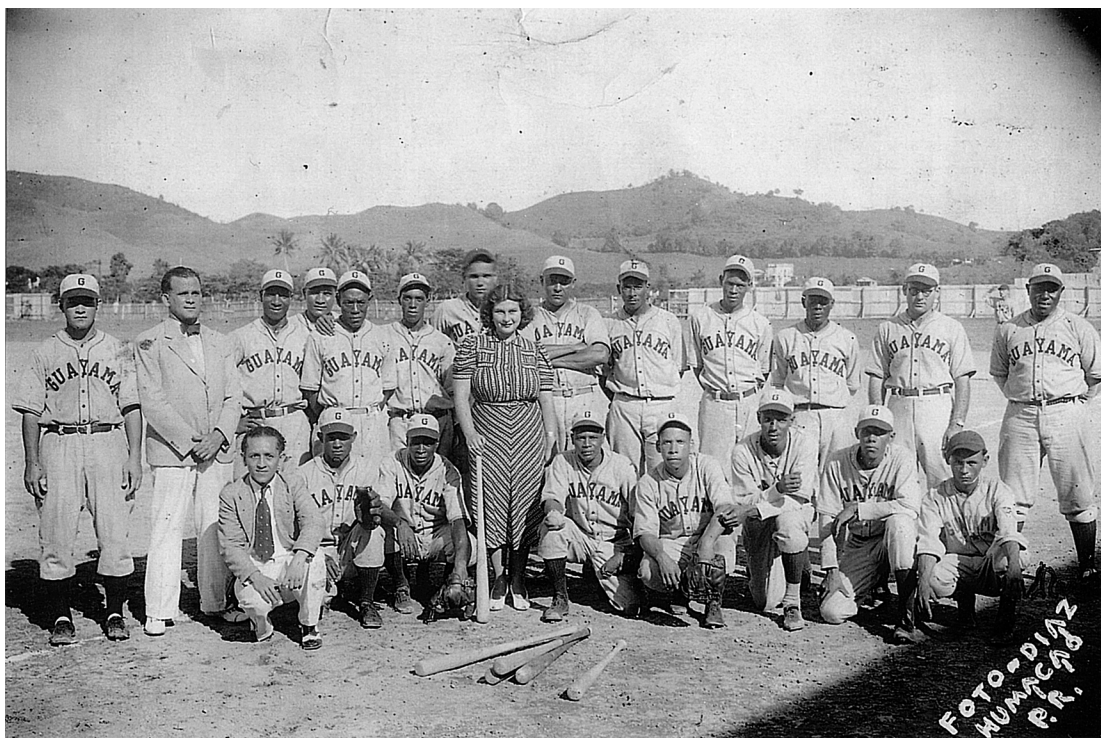
Center for Negro League Baseball Research

Dr. Layton Revel

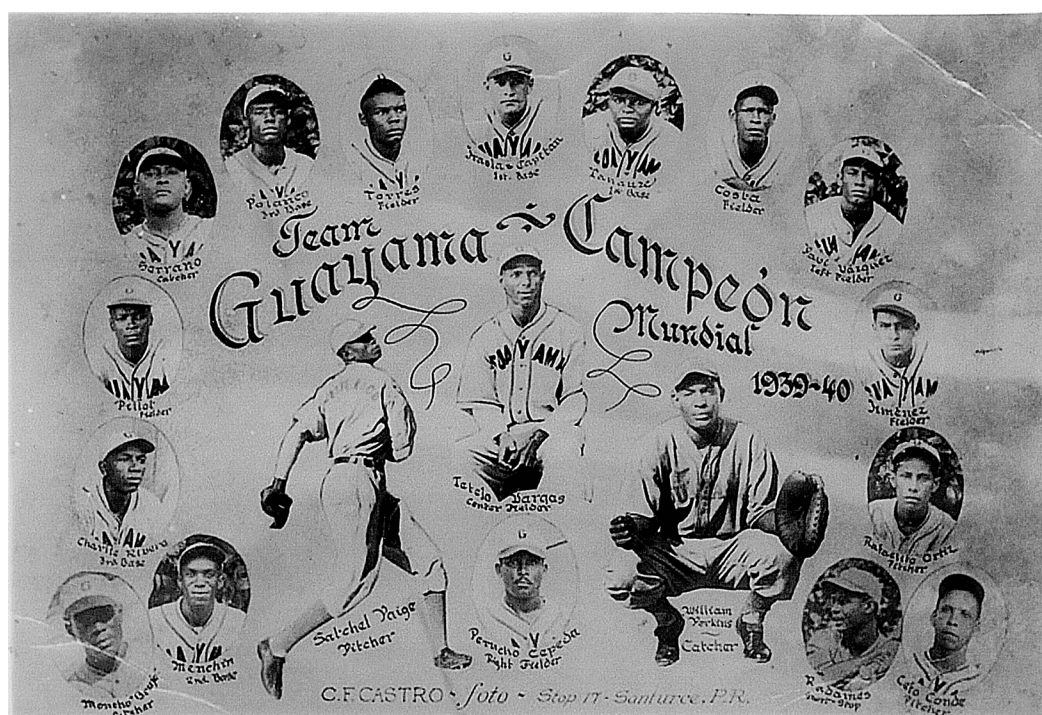
and

Luis Munoz

Copyright 2009



Guayama Brujos (1938-39)
Puerto Rican League Champions
 (Cepeda – back row fifth from right)



Guayama Brujos (1939-40)
Puerto Rican League Champions
 (Cepeda – bottom row middle of picture)

Pedro Anibal “Perucho” Cepeda was born on January 31, 1905 in Catano, Puerto Rico. He stood five feet eleven inches tall and weighed 190 pounds during his playing career. He was given the nickname “Perucho” or “The Bull” in his early years of baseball because of his muscular build and powerful body.

Cepeda played both the infield and outfield during his baseball career. Early in his career, he generally played shortstop, second base or third base because of his powerful throwing arm and excellent range. In the later part of his career, Perucho mainly played first base. During the 1930’s and early 1940’s, Perucho was probably the most dangerous hitter in Latin America. One of the things that made him such an outstanding hitter was that he was a great bad ball hitter. No matter where you pitched him, he hit the ball.

During the early years of the Puerto Rican League, Perucho was the league’s leading hitter. He won the league’s batting title the first two years: 1938-39 (.445) and 1939-40 (.383). Over the first four years of the Puerto Rican League, Cepeda had 713 times at bat and collected 293 hits for an amazing .411 batting average.

Early Baseball Career

Perucho grew up playing sandlot ball in Puerto Rico. He signed his first professional contract in 1928 when he played for the San Juan Athletics. In 1929 Perucho, Francisco “Pancho” Coimbre” and three other Puerto Rican players left Puerto Rico to play professional baseball in the Dominican Republic for Sandino (Santiago de los Caballeros). This was the first time Cepeda had played baseball outside of Puerto Rico. Perucho debuted in game ten of the season at third base for Sandino. He immediately responded to the opportunity and had the game winning hit. Cepeda went on to have an excellent season with Sandino and finished the year among the league’s batting leaders with a .429 batting average.

During the 1930’s Perucho played for various teams in Puerto Rico. In 1933, Cepeda joined Pancho Coimbre with the Ponce Leones and played shortstop. Cepeda was recruited to play shortstop for the Escogido Leones for the 1934 Dominican Republic season. Perucho returned to the Dominican Republic to play for Escogido for the 1936 Dominican season.



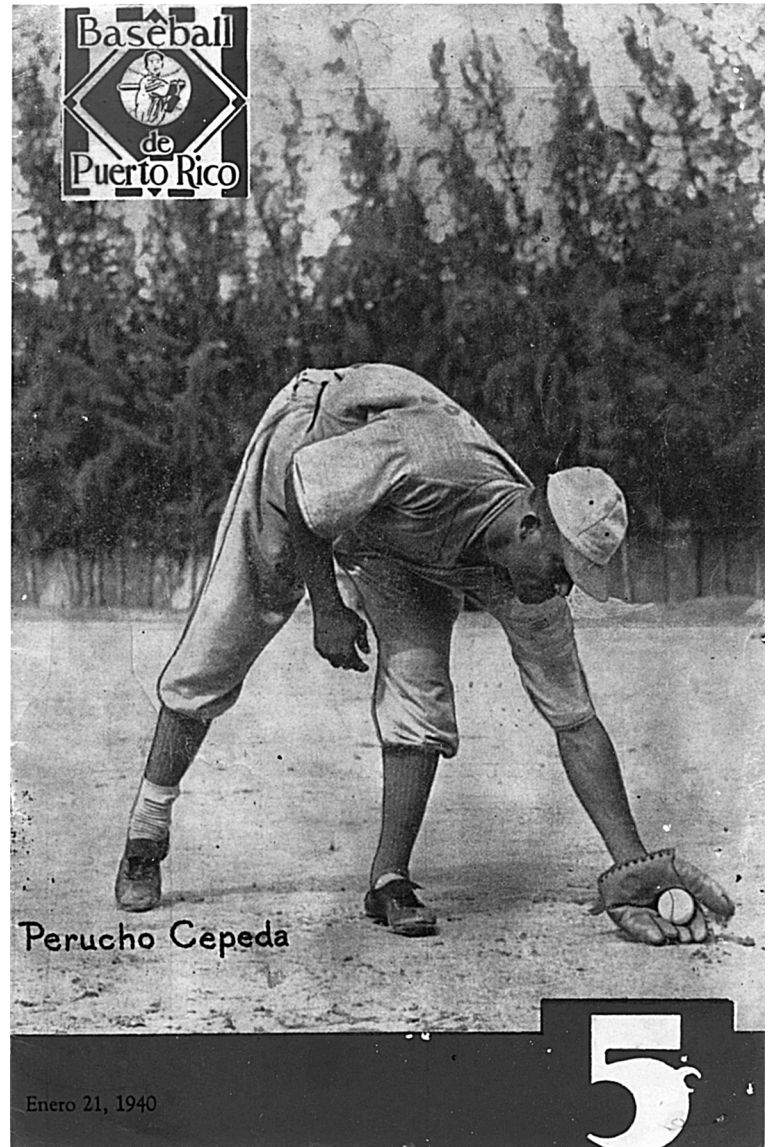
Ciudad Trujillo Los Dragones (1937)
(Cepeda – back row second from right)

One of the highlights of Perucho’s career was playing for the 1937 Ciudad Trujillo Los Dragones. This was one of the most powerful teams ever put together in Latin American baseball.

Perucho Cepeda – Latin Super Star



Perucho Cepeda
Centauros
Venezuela
(1939)

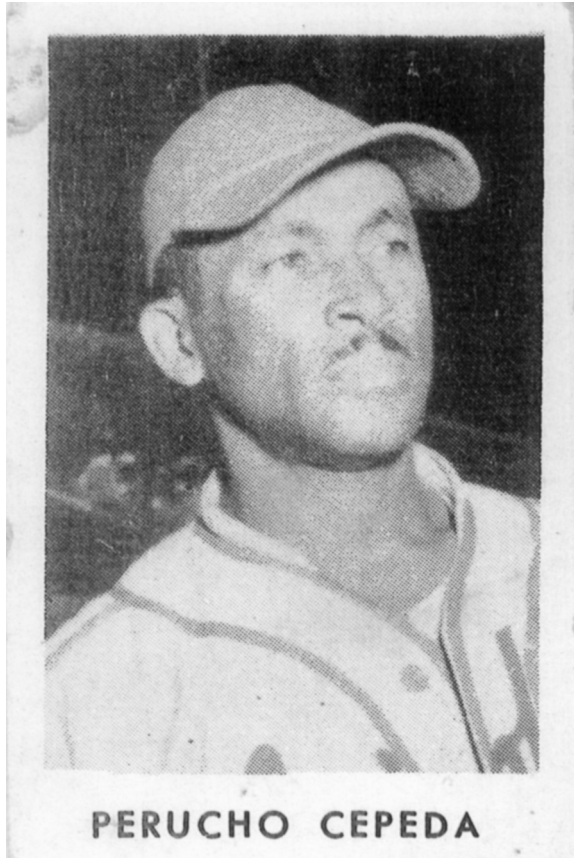


Perucho Cepeda
Puerto Rican Baseball Magazine Cover
(1940)

The team was a virtual Negro League All Star team that included: Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, James “Cool Papa” Bell, Sam Bankhead, Leroy Matlock, Cy Perkins, Robert Griffith and Harry Williams. The team also included Latin stars: Rodolfo Fernandez, Enrique Lantiqua and Lazaro Salazar. With this great line-up Ciudad Trujillo won the Dominican League championship.

Venezuelan Career

Like many Puerto Rican ball players, Perucho went to Venezuela to play baseball. Venezuela offered ball players an opportunity to play high quality professional baseball. Over his career, Cepeda played for the following teams in Venezuela: Cincinnati (1930), Macon (1930), Valencia (1932), Seleccion (1934), Gavilanes (1935), Centauros (1939 and 1940) and Santa Marta (1941).



Toleteros Baseball Card (1949-50)
Puerto Rico

Negro League Career

Perucho's career in the Negro Leagues was minimal to non-existent. Alex Pompez, the owner of the New York Cubans, tried to sign Perucho for years to come to the United States and play ball in the Negro Leagues. Pompez "thought" he had signed Cepeda for the 1941 Negro National League season. Perucho's name appears on the 1941 roster of the New York Cubans, but to this date no box score has been found to show that he ever played a game for the Cubans. Speculation is that Cepeda had a significant problem with racism and when it came time to come to the United States to play, he backed out because he didn't want to face all the racial problems that he knew he would encounter.

Puerto Rican Winter League Career

When the Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League (LBPPR) was formed in 1938, Perucho Cepeda was a star in Latin American baseball and was one of the first players signed. Cepeda was recruited to play for the Guayama Brujos (Witches). Cepeda did not disappoint the owner of the team, as he led the Brujos to Puerto Rican League championships in their first two seasons. Behind the league leading hitting of Perucho and a strong contingent of Negro League players (George Britt, Bertrum Hunter, Enrique Lantiqua, Alejandro Oms, Cy Perkins, Charlie Rivera and Juan "Tetelo" Vargas), the Brujos finished the 1938-39 season with a 27-12 record. Perucho won the league batting title with a .465 batting average and was named the league's Most Valuable Player (MVP). The next season (1939-40), the Brujos again relied heavily on Negro League players to anchor their roster. The Brujos imported Negro Leaguer players: Satchel Paige, Roy Partlow, Cy Perkins, Charlie Rivera, Enrique Lantiqua and Tetelo Vargas. Paige led the Puerto Rican League in pitching with 19 victories and 208 strike outs. Perucho started the season



Perucho Cepeda and Jose de la Vega
Puerto Rico (1939-40)

where he had left off the previous year. He hit .383 for the season on the way to winning his second straight batting title. The Brujos improved on their championship record from the year before and finished the 1939-40 season with a 39-17 record for another league championship.

Pedro played for the Brujos for the next two winter league seasons: 1940-41 and 1941-42. The Brujos had good seasons each year (24-18 in 1940-41 and 29-15 in 1941-42) and finished in second place both years. Perucho put up excellent numbers at the plate, hitting .421 in 1940-41 and .377 for the 1941-42 season. Remarkably, his .421 batting average for the 1940-41 season only put him in third place for the league's batting title behind Roy Partlow (.443) and Ted Young (.426).

When Guayama did not field a team for the 1942-43 season, Cepeda signed with the San Juan Senadores. Perucho was now 36 years old and his best baseball was behind him. Perucho's batting average slumped to a career low .283 in his first season with San Juan. Pedro played the next two seasons (1943-44 and 1944-45) for the Senadores before going to the Mayaguez Indios for a short period of time during the 1944-45 season. Cepeda played in Santurce for the 1945-46 season. He only played one season in Santurce before being dealt to Caguas in 1946. Cepeda played for two seasons (1946-47 and 1947-48) with the Caguas Criollos.

"GUAYAMA"		"ESTRELLAS"	
Radhamés López	SS.	Tetelo Vargas	CF.
Millán Clara	2B.	Bragañita García	2B.
Pancho Coimbre	LF.	Javier Pérez	3B.
Perucho Cepeda	1B.	Güigüí Lucas	C.
Tom Young	C y RF.	Grillo "B"	P.
Chester Brewer	RF y CF.	Loro Escalante	LF,CF.
Fellé Delgado	CF.	Horacio Martínez	SS.
Satchel Paige	P.	Grillo "A"	1B.
Menchín Pesante	3B.	Grillo "C"	RF,LF.
Ledde	C.	Pedrito Alvarez	RF.
Tomás Quiñones	P.		

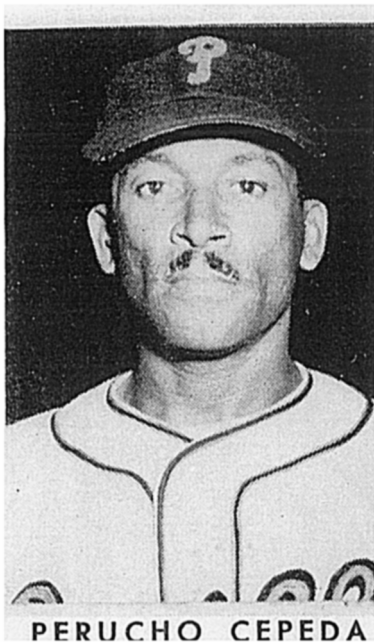
Guayama Brujos vs Estrellas Orientales (Dominican Republic)
Line up Card – 1941 series

Before the start of the 1947-48 season Perucho was selected to play on the Puerto Rican All Star team that played the New York Yankees on their tour of Latin America. According to his son Orlando, he even went four for four in one of the games versus the World Champion Yankees.

Cepeda was part of the Criollos championship team managed by Negro League star, Quincy Troupe, during the 1947-48 season. Perucho appears in the team photo for the 1948-49 Caguas-Guyama team but according to published records he did not play professional baseball during the 1948-49 season. Cepeda's last season in professional baseball was during the 1949-50 Puerto Rican Winter League season when he did make a brief appearance for the Ponce Leones. Even though most of the years that Perucho played in the Puerto Rican League he was past his prime, he still put up outstanding career hitting statistics.

Cepeda's Puerto Rican League Career Batting Statistics

AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1589	240	516	70	31	14	295	-	.325	.434



Toleteros Baseball Card (1948-49)
Puerto Rico

Over the first four years of the league, Cepeda had 713 times at bats and collected 293 hits for an amazing .411 batting average. Cepeda's batting average fell off dramatically in 1942. Age was definitely a factor, but during this time Pedro had also taken a full time job with the San Juan Water Department and only played baseball on a part time basis to supplement his income. In short baseball was no longer the primary focus of his life.

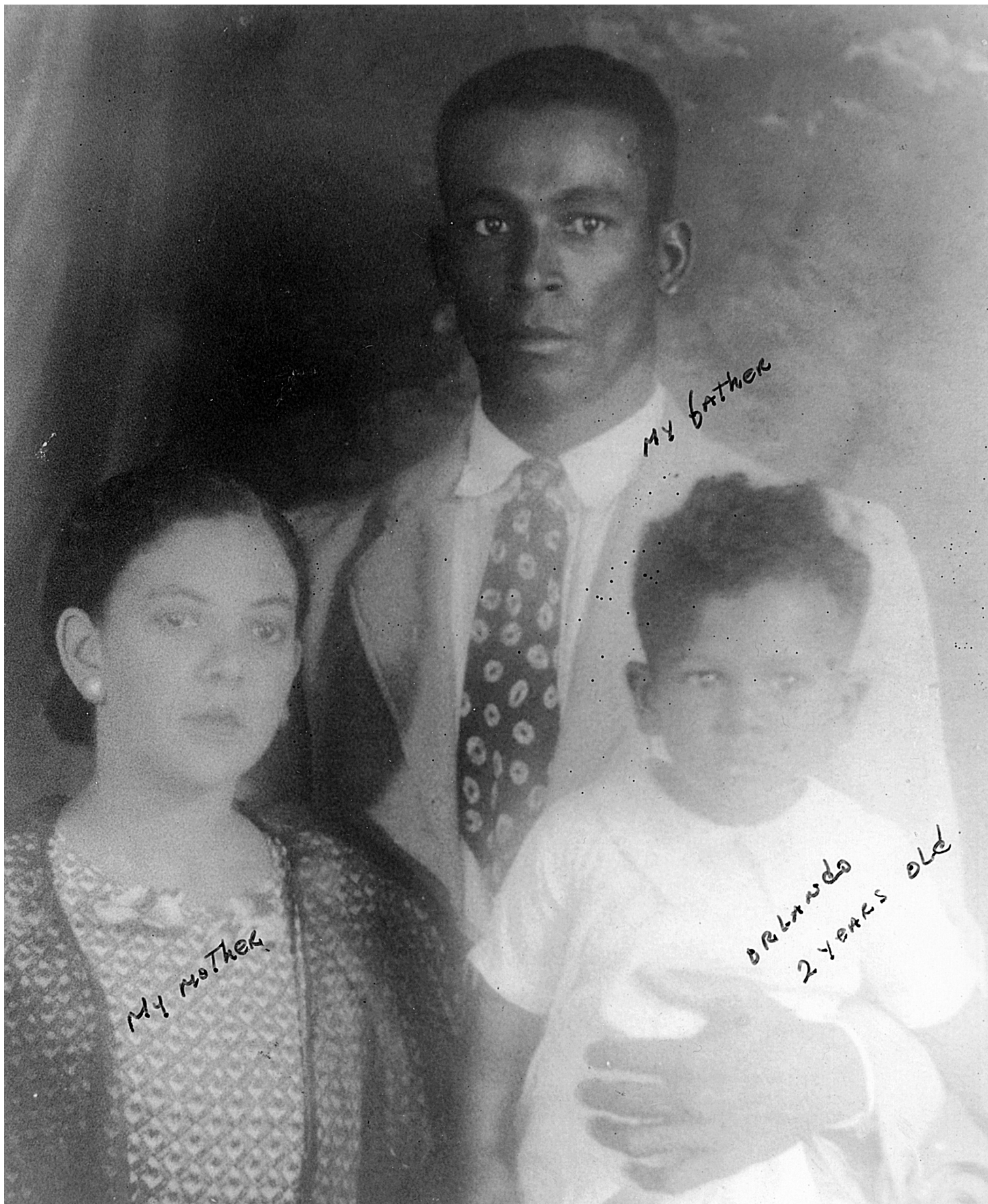
When Perucho retired, his .325 batting average placed him third on the all time Puerto Rican League career batting average behind Willard "Homerun" Brown (.350) and Francisco "Pancho" Coimbre (.337). An interesting footnote is that Roberto Clemente is fourth (.324) and Perucho's son, Orlando "Peruchin" Cepeda is fifth (.323).

Life Outside Baseball

In the early 1940's during World War II, Perucho went to work for the San Juan Water Department. He continued to play baseball in the winter league in addition to his job with the water company.

Pedro Anibal "Perucho" Cepeda passed away on April 16, 1955 at the age of 50 in San Juan, Puerto Rico from complications related to malaria.

Unfortunately for Perucho he did not live long enough to see his son Orlando play his first game with Santurce in 1955. Orlando used his \$ 500 signing bonus for signing his professional contract to bury his father.



Cepeda Family Photo (1939)
(Perucho, wife and Orlando)

Perucho's Legacy Lives on through His Son

In Latin America, Perucho Cepeda was a super star. Perucho never played baseball in the United States. We would, however, get to see the Cepeda legacy live on through his son Orlando.

Orlando Cepeda had an outstanding sixteen-year career in the Major Leagues for the San Francisco Giants, St. Louis Cardinals, Atlanta Braves, Oakland Athletics, Boston Red Sox and Kansas City Royals. Some of the highlights of Orlando Cepeda's Major League career are:

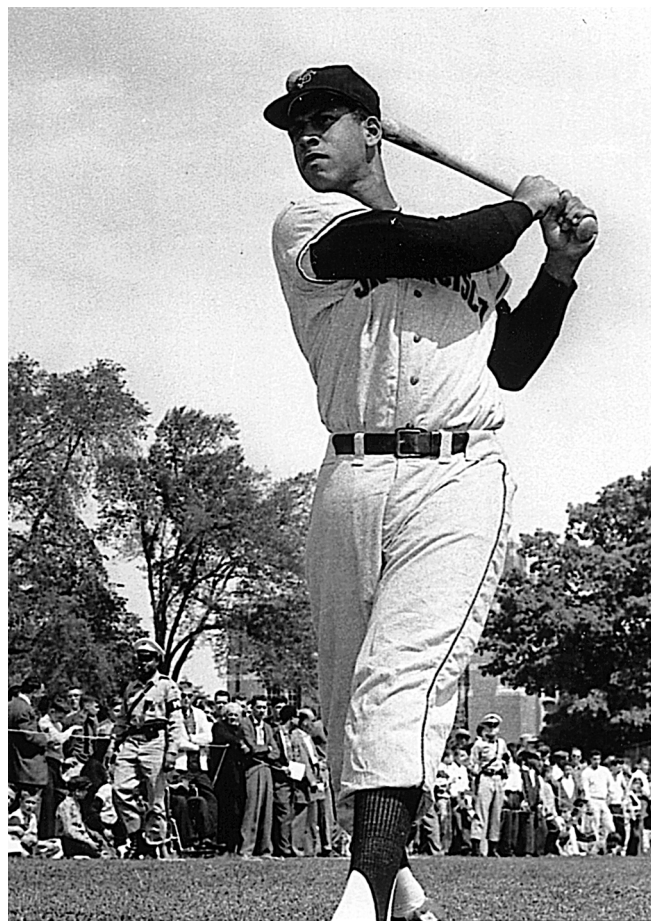
- 1958 National League Rookie of the Year
- Led the National League in homeruns (46) and runs batted in (146) in 1961
- 1967 National League Most Valuable Player (MVP) award
- Seven time Major League All Star
- Major League career: .297 batting average, 379 homeruns and 1,365 runs batted in

Orlando also put up great numbers during his thirteen-year career in Puerto Rico with the Santurce Cangrejeros. Some of the highlights of Orlando's Puerto Rican Winter League career are:

- Won two Puerto Rican League Most Valuable Player (MVP) awards (1958-59 and 1961-62).
- Won two homerun titles: 1957-58 – 13 homeruns and 1961-62 – 19 homeruns. (His 19 homeruns in 1961-62 are the most ever by a Puerto Rican born player.)
- Won two runs batted in titles: 1957- 58 – 53 RBI and 1961-62 – 53 RBI.
- Hit .415 for the 1960-61 season.
- Career batting average of .325 places him fifth on all time batting leaders for the Puerto Rican League.
- Played on four championship teams with Santurce: 1958-59, 1961-62, 1964-65 and 1966-67.

On May 18, 2004 Orlando's accomplishments in baseball were be recognized by his induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. As Orlando was touring the museum, he was shown a picture of the 1937 Ciudad Trujillo team with his father. Very moved by the experience, Cepeda is quoted as having said: "It's amazing. I didn't know my father was here, in that picture, like he was waiting for me. What a surprise!"

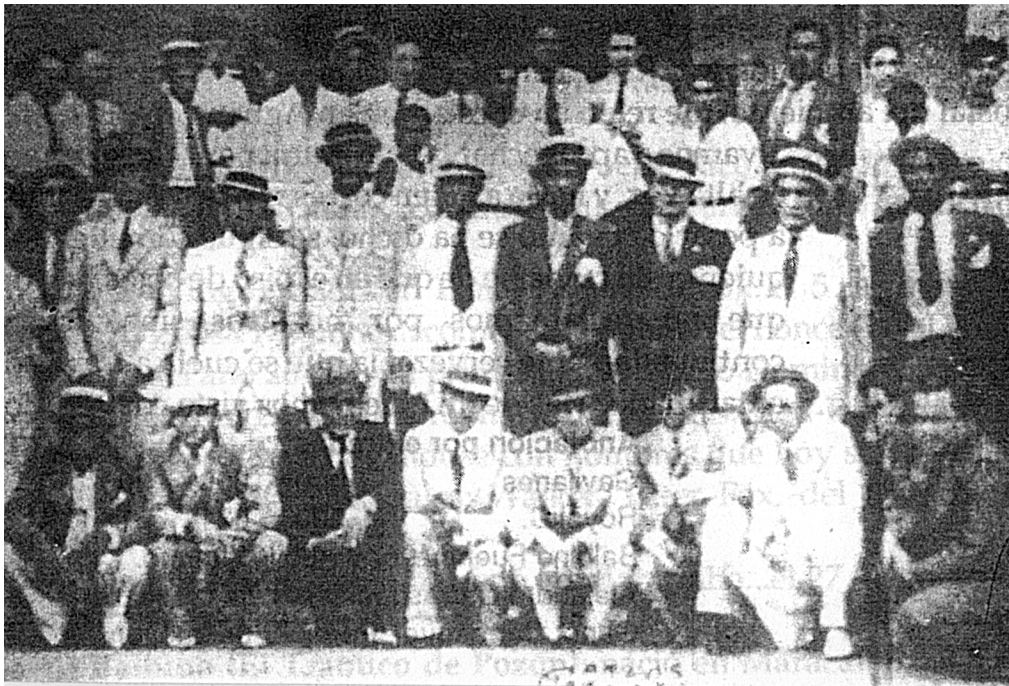
Together, Pedro and Orlando Cepeda formed the greatest father and son duo in Latin baseball history.



Orlando Cepeda
National Baseball Hall of Fame



Sandino (Santiago de los Caballeros - Dominican Republic) (1929)
 (Cepeda – front row first on right)

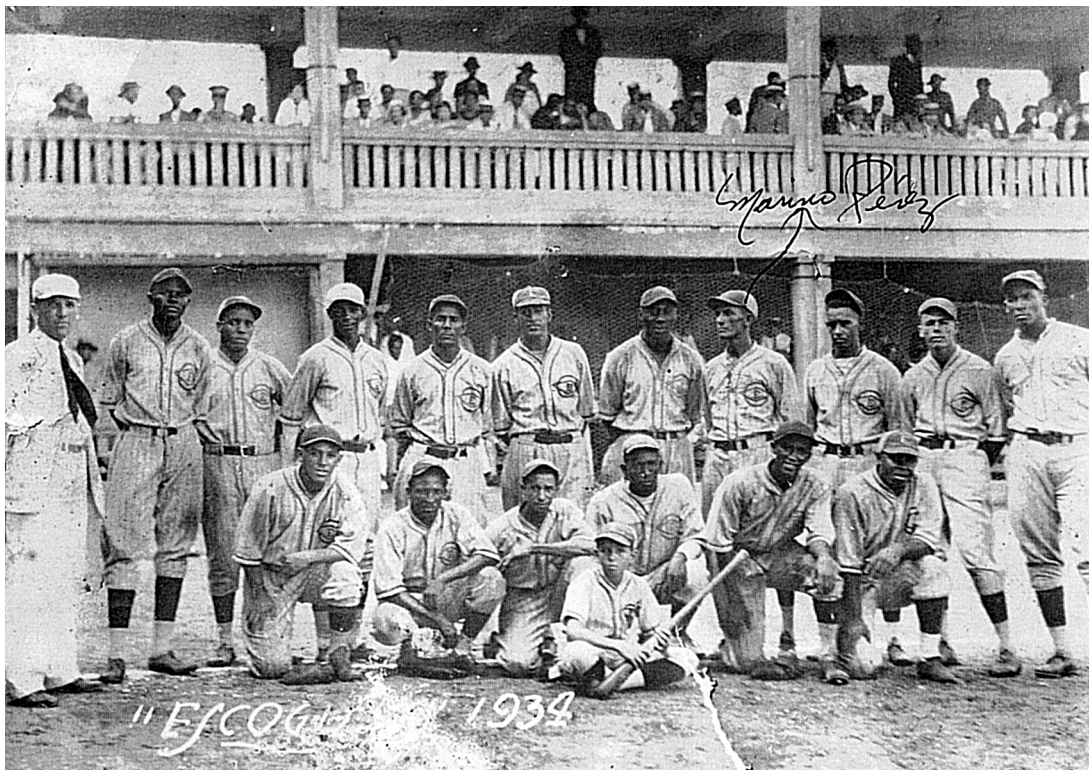


Gavilanes (Venezuela) (1935)
 (Cepeda – middle row first on right)

Playing Career

Regular Season:

Year	Team	League
1928-1929	San Juan Athletics	Liga Insular (Puerto Rico)
1928	Juana Diaz	Puerto Rico
1929	Jacaguas	Juana Diaz Baseball Association (Puerto Rico)
1929	Sandino (Santiago de los Caballeros)	Dominican Republic
1930	Cincinnati	Venezuela
1930	Macon	Venezuela
1931	Juncos	Liga Insular (Puerto Rico)
1932	Valencia	Venezuela
1933	Ponce Leones	Liga Insular (Puerto Rico)
1934	Escogido Leones	Dominican Republic
1934	Escogido Leones	La Copa Trujillo (Dominican Republic)
1934	Selecion	Dominican Republic-Serie vs Concordia
1935	Gavilanes	Campeon del Zulia (Venezuela)
1936	Escogido Leones	Dominican Republic
1937	Cuidad Trujillo Los Dragones	Dominican Republic
1937	Humacao Stars	Puerto Rico
1939-1940	Centauros	Venezuela
1941	Santa Marta	Venezuela



Escogido Leones (1934)
Dominican Republic



Caguas-Guayama Criollos (1947-48)
(Cepeda – kneeling first on left)



Caguas-Guayama Criollos (1948-49)
(Cepeda – kneeling first on left)

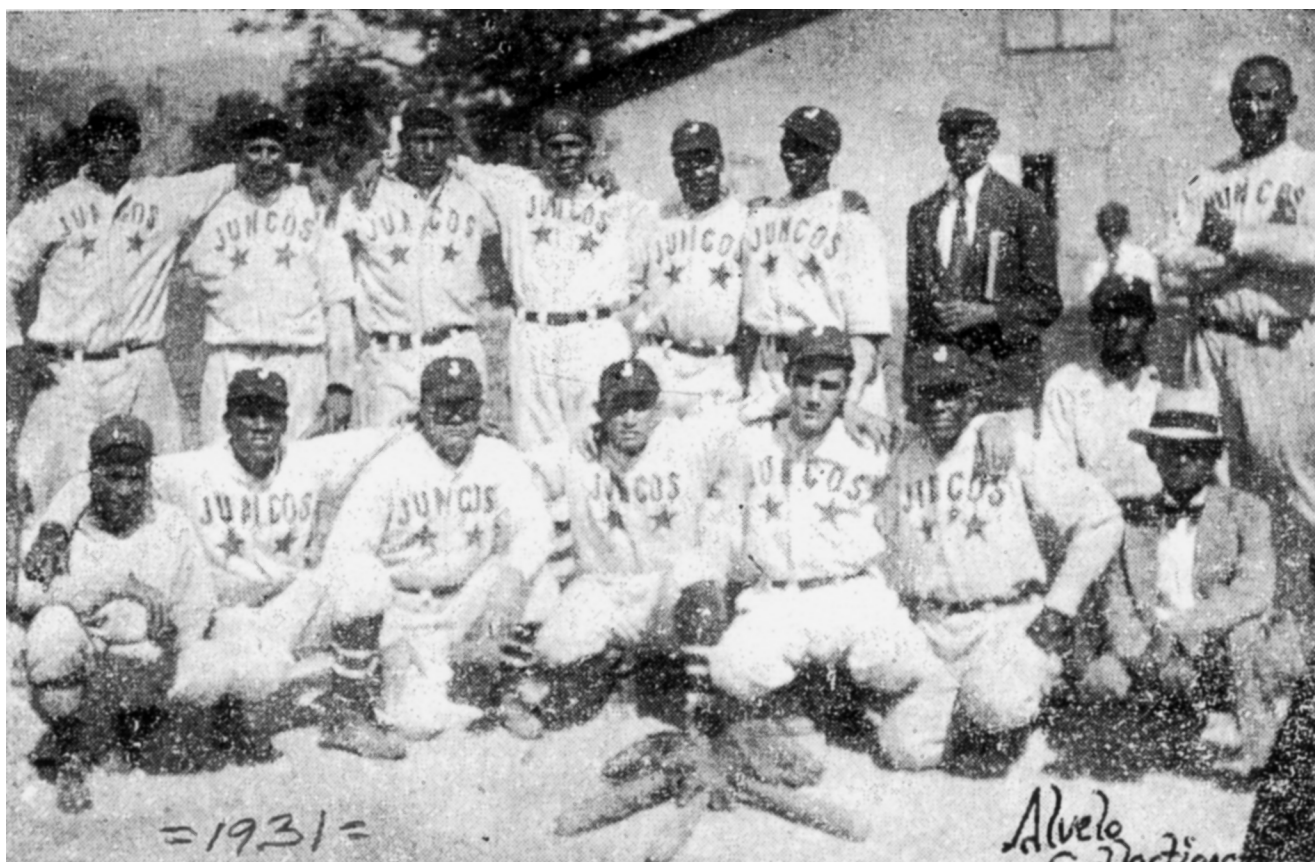
Playing Career

Winter Leagues:

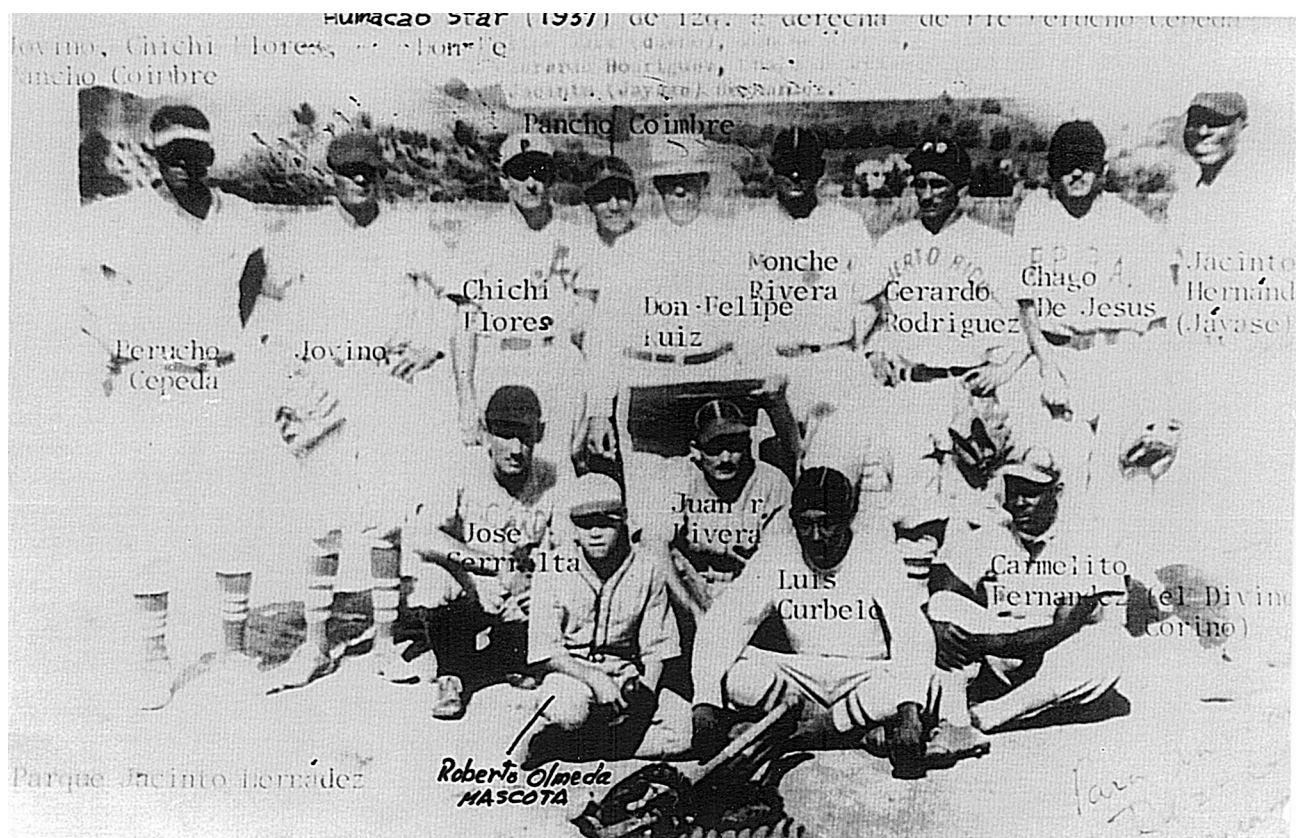
1938-39	Guayama Brujos	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1939	Estrellas Antillanas	All Star Game vs Estrellas Americanas
1939-40	Guayama Brujos	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1940-41	Guayama Brujos	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1941	Guayama Brujos	Serie vs Estrellas Orientales
1941-42	Guayama Brujos	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1942-43	San Juan Senadores	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1943	Estrellas del Norte	All Star Game vs Estrellas del Sur
1943-44	San Juan Senadores	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1944	Estrellas del Norte	All Star Game vs Estrellas del Sur
1944-45	San Juan Senadores	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1944-45	Mayaguez Indios	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1945	Estrellas Criollas	All Star Game vs Estrellas Americanas
1945-46	Santurce Cangrejeros	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1946-47	Caguas-Guayama Criollos	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1947	Puerto Rican All Stars	Six Game Series vs New York Yankees
1947-48	Caguas-Guayama Criollos	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League
1949-50	Ponce Leones	Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League



Radames Lopez, Juan “Tetelo” Vargas, Samuel Céspedes and Pedro “Perucho” Cepeda
Caguas-Guayama Criollos (1946-47)



Juncos – Liga Insular Champions (1931)
(Cepeda – back row standing first on left)



Humacao Stars (1937)
(Cepeda – standing first player on left)

Career Statistics – Hitting (Regular Season – Venezuela)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1939	Centauros	13	53	11	17	-	-	1	-	-	.321	-
1940	Centauros	11	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
	Totals	24	53	11	17	-	-	2	-	-	.321	-

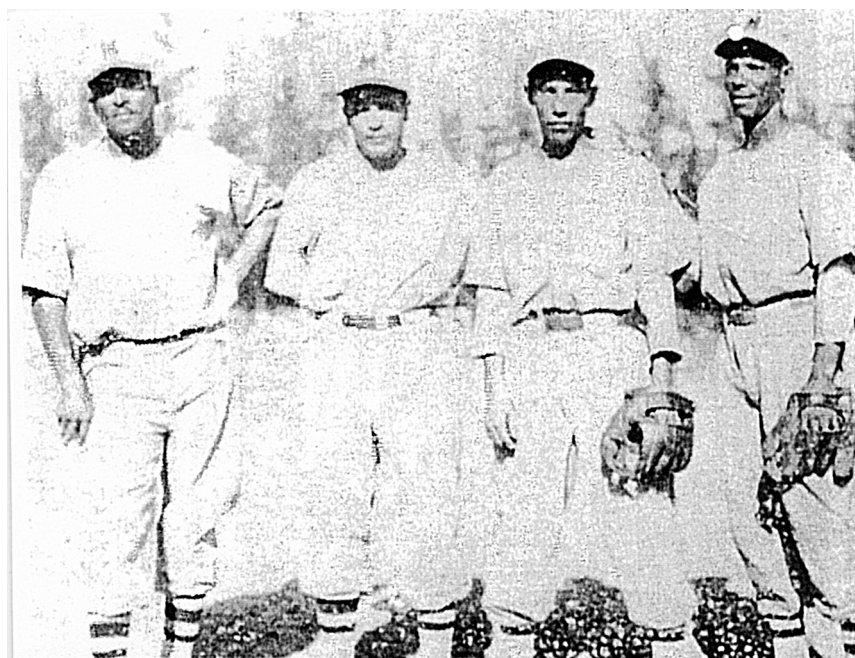
Career Statistics – Hitting (Winter League – Puerto Rico)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1938-39	Guayama	-	170	38	79	12	5	0	48	-	.465	.594
1939-40	Guayama	-	214	40	82	8	8	5	58	13	.383	.565
1940-41	Guayama	-	178	41	75	13	7	2	47	-	.421	.607
1941-42	Guayama	-	151	32	57	10	2	2	30	-	.377	.510
1942-43	San Juan	-	145	24	41	3	4	2	25	5	.283	.400
1943-44	San Juan	-	147	16	36	2	3	1	14	-	.245	.320
1944-45	San Juan	-	143	13	37	3	0	0	20	-	.259	.280
1945-46	Santurce	-	155	12	41	6	1	0	18	0	.265	.316
1946-47	Caguas	-	187	16	42	9	1	1	25	-	.255	.299
1947-48	Caguas	-	69	8	18	4	0	1	10	-	.261	.362
1949-50	Ponce	-	30	-	8	0	0	0	-	-	.267	.267
	Totals		1589	240	516	70	31	14	295	-	.325	.434

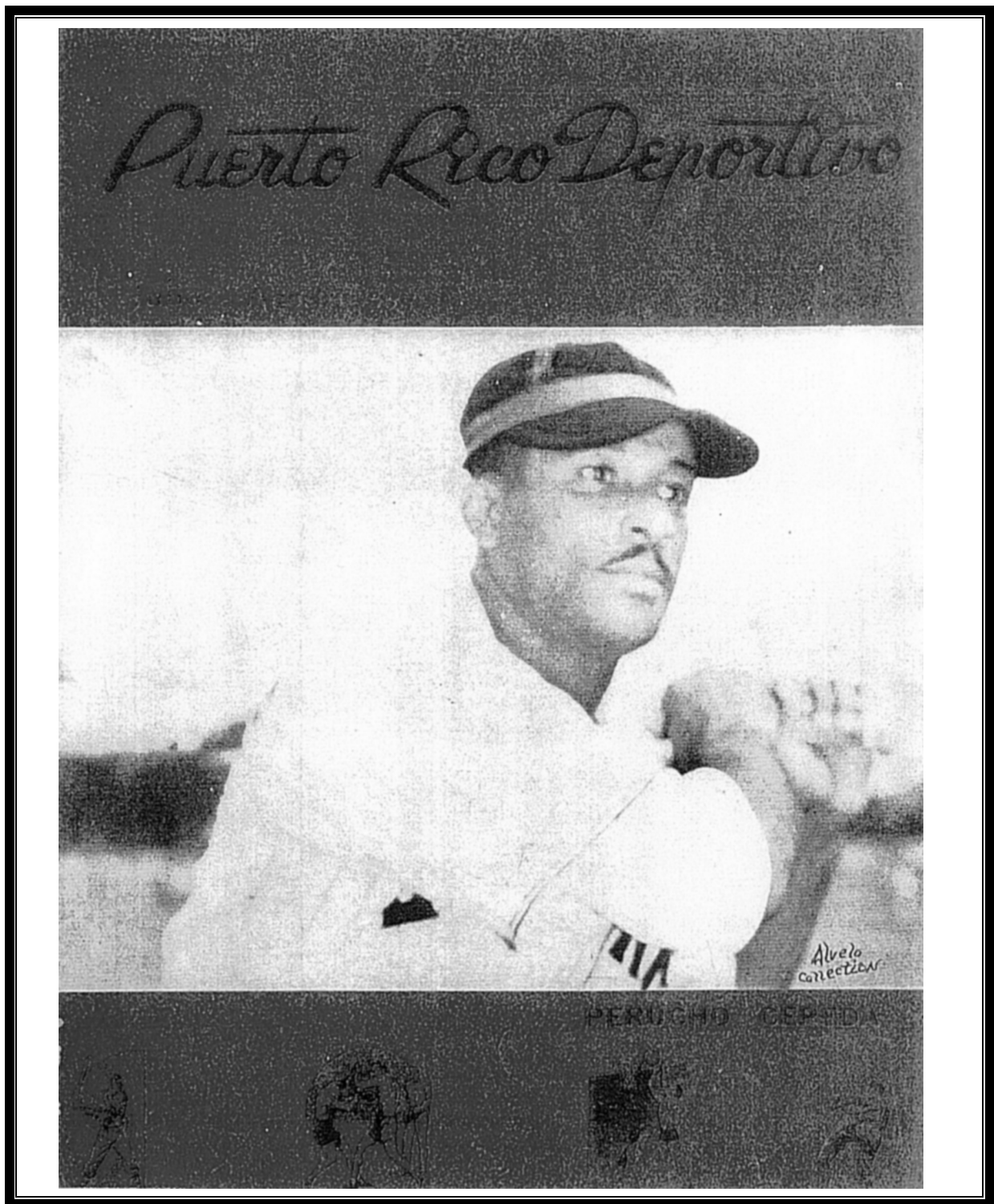
Career Hitting Statistics (Totals)

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Venezuela	24	53	11	17	-	-	2	-	-	.321	-
Puerto Rico	-	1589	240	516	70	31	14	295	-	.325	.434
Totals	-	1642	251	533	70	31	16	-	-	.325	.434

- Cepeda's hitting statistics are incomplete. All statistics from the Dominican Republic and virtually all of his statistics from Venezuela are missing.



**Pedro "Perucho" Cepeda, Manolo Garcia, Rafaelito Ortiz and Juan "Tetelo" Vargas
Mayaquez Indios (1944-45)**



Puerto Rican Sports Magazine Cover (1944)

Pedro "Perucho" Cepeda
Puerto Rican Super Star

Batting and League Leader Hitting Titles

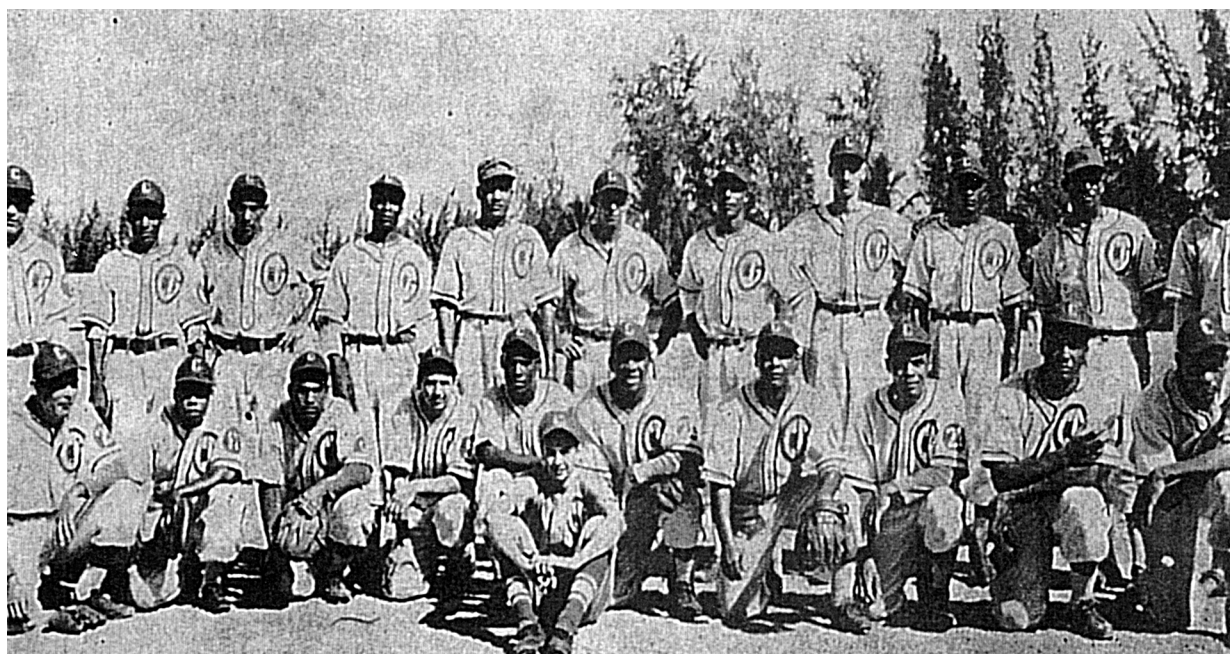
Category	Year	League	Number
Batting Average	1938-39	Puerto Rican Winter League	.465
	1939-40	Puerto Rican Winter League	.383
Slugging Average	1940-41	Puerto Rican Winter League	.607
Base Hits	1938-39	Puerto Rican Winter League	79
	1939-40	Puerto Rican Winter League	82
	1940-41	Puerto Rican Winter League	75
Triples	1939-40	Puerto Rican Winter League	8
Runs Batted In	1938-39	Puerto Rican Winter League	48
	1939-40	Puerto Rican Winter League	58
	1940-41	Puerto Rican Winter League	47



Ponce Leones (1949-50)
(Cepeda – top row second from left)



Guayama Brujos (1938-39)
Puerto Rican League Champions
 (Cepeda – back row second on right)



Caguas-Guayama Criollos (1946-47)
 (Cepeda – back row second from right)



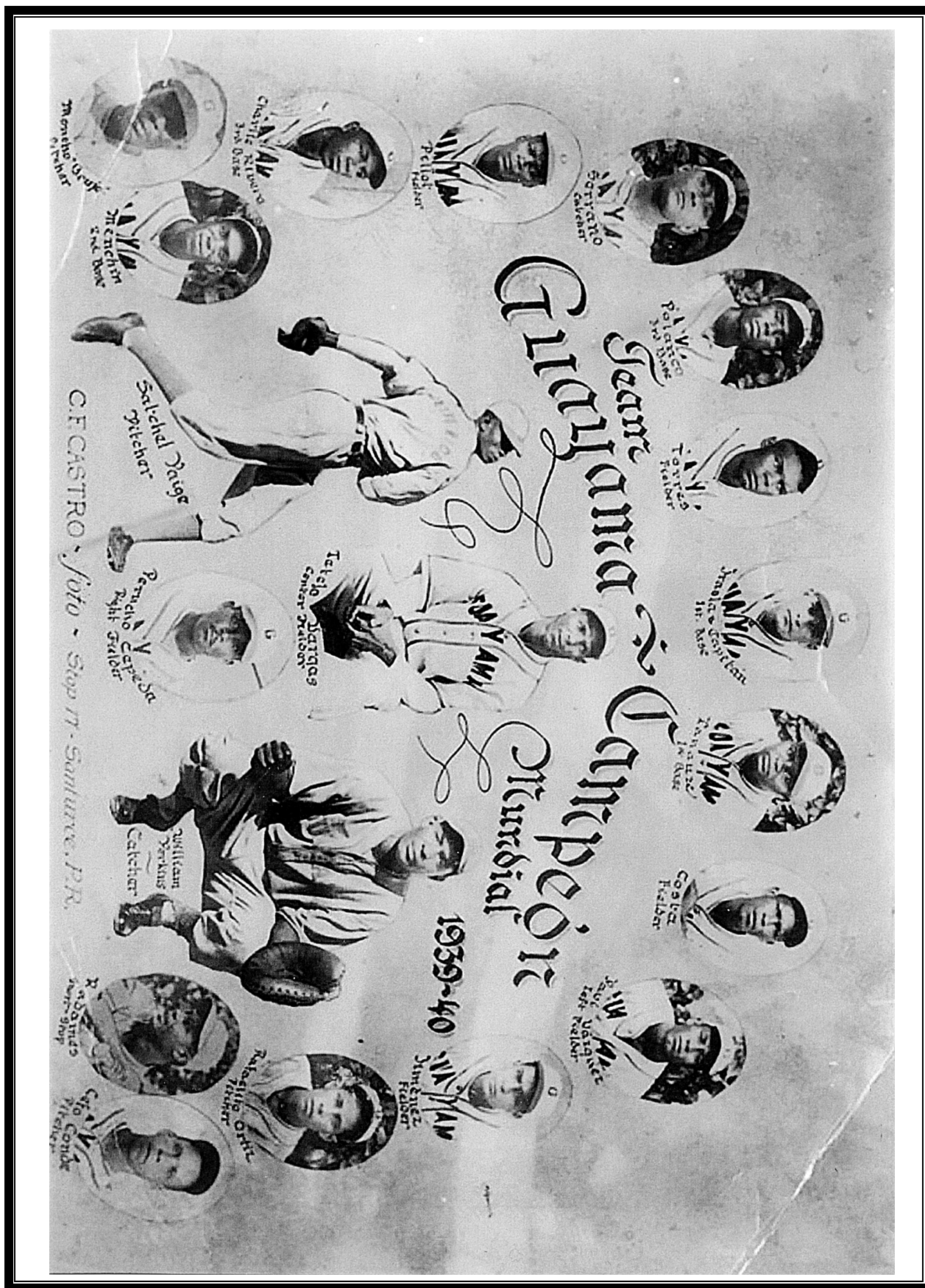
Caguas-Guayama Criollos (1948-49)
 (Cepeda – kneeling second on left)

Selected Career Highlights

- Hit .429 while leading Sandino to a Dominican League championship in 1929. This was Perucho's first season to play baseball outside of Puerto Rico.
- Led Juncos (1931) and the Humacao Stars to Liga Insular (Puerto Rico) championships.
- Won back-to-back batting titles the first two years of the Puerto Rican Winter League: 1938-39 (.465) and 1939-40 (.383).
- Voted the Puerto Winter League Most Valuable Player (MVP) for the 1938-39 season.
- Hit over .400 on two occasions: 1938-39 - .465 and 1940-41 - .421
- Most dominating player in the first four years of the Puerto Rican Winter League. Perucho hit an amazing .411 with 293 hits in 713 plate appearances. Cepeda won ten hitting titles over the first four seasons of the Puerto Rican Winter League.
- Third highest career batting average in Puerto Rican League history (.325).
- Won three straight runs batted in titles (RBI) in the Puerto Rican League: 1938-39 – 48 RBI, 1939-40 – 58 RBI and 1940-41 – 47 RBI.
- Named to the Puerto Rican League All Star for the 1938-39 (Estrellas Antillanas), 1942-43 (Estrellas del Norte), 1943-44 (Norte) and 1944-45 (Estrellas Criollas) seasons. (It is important to note that an all-star team was not chosen every year in the early years of the Puerto Rican League.)
- Member of the legendary Ciudad Trujillo that won the Dominican League championship in 1937.
- Member of three Puerto Rican League championship teams: 1938-39 (Guayama), 1939-40 (Guayama) and 1947-48 (Caguas).
- Named to the All Decade Puerto Rican League baseball team (1938-39 to 1948-49) as the starting shortstop.
- Elected to the Puerto Rican Baseball Hall of Fame in their inaugural year (1991).



Pedro "Perucho" Cepeda
Puerto Rican Legend



Guayama Brujos – Puerto Rican League Champions (1939-40)
Team featured - Perucho Cepeda, Satchel Paige, Cy Perkins and Tetelo Vargas