



"THE CHOICE IS CLEAR"
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B. Davis Schwartz Memorial Library

AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN THE SPORTS ARENA

Foreword	Baseball	Introduction
Basketball	Boxing	Cycling
Football	Horse Racing	Track and Field
Tribute to Jackie Robinson: A Man for All Times		Paul Robeson
Fritz Pollard	Michael Jordan: The Making of an Athlete	
Virginia Plancke	For Further Information	Acknowledgements



FOREWORD

This exhibit represents a glimpse into the history of sports and the role the African American played in that arena. Some students had previously requested that such an exhibit should be displayed as a topic of interest and information for the larger audiences of sports enthusiasts. The early history was therefore chosen as the major focus of this exhibit. It was also chosen because it covered the "divided" and later "crossover" era for African Americans who were mostly excluded from the larger sports arena due to their race.

On view are seven major sporting events - [boxing](#), [horse racing](#), [cycling](#), [track and field](#), [basketball](#), [baseball](#), and [football](#) - which opened the doors to the expanding Sports Arenas of today. Books, photoprints, tapes, replicated sports memorabilia, periodicals, news clips, and lots of historical notes are represented. The life of [Michael Jordan: The Making of an Athlete](#) is presented in full view and a special tribute to the late [Jackie Robinson](#) is also on view.

The 50th anniversary of [Jackie Robinson's](#) entering into [Major League Baseball](#) will be celebrated in an upcoming conference at our Long Island University's [Brooklyn Campus](#) on April 3-5, 1997. Contact 1-718-488-1010 for more information.

As a jump start, see the [Post Exhibit](#) and expand that knowledge via the World Wide Web at www.afroam.org/history/Robinson/intro.html.

The [Post Library Exhibit](#) can be seen from February 1 - March 10, 1997 in the main lobby of the [B. Davis Schwartz Memorial Library](#).

[Professor Melvin Sylvester](#)
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INTRODUCTION

The world of sports is such a strong part of the recognizable American fabric that it would be hard to imagine the social, cultural, or political development of this nation without this pastime. Since African Americans were here in America going back to 1619, they too were involved in the sports arena as participants and early perpetuators of this pastime. All participants in American sports started out as exhibitors using games or physical skills in a competitive fashion as a means of entertainment. Both slaves and free blacks in America were part of this major focus on sports as an entertaining or recreational activity. Some of the **Slaves** were allowed "holidays" by their slave holders, whereby these slaves participated in ball-playing, [boxing](#), foot racing, cockfighting, and dancing. On the other hand, **Free Blacks** became noteworthy as participants in the traditional contests of cake-walking, boat racing, and [horse racing](#). But it was the growing American interest in [boxing](#) and [horse racing](#) which led African

American competitors to join other entertainers seeking recognition, fame, and money connected with these popular spectator sports. By 1834, Robin Carver had published his **Book of Sports** which spelled out the ground rules necessary to govern the different sports, including those participants wanting to compete in the American sports arena. It is said that "by the **Civil War** (1861-1865), slaves and free blacks were engaging in every sport imaginable." Those sports which took hold and became crowd pleasers were [Boxing](#), [Horse Racing](#), [Baseball](#), [Cycling](#), [Football](#), [Track and Field](#), and, later on, [Basketball](#).

Early records have shown that African Americans were involved in these sports whenever given the opportunity to participate. On the other hand, American sports are filled with records of African American athletes capable of participating in the broad sports arena but **not** given the chance due to their **race**. Therefore, as sports grew into an American popular pastime, it also grew along on separate fields with **race** as a dividing line. Most sporting events were separated by race up until the 1940's. For the few African Americans who were ready and able to cross that line, they had to pay a heavy price. They became the prime symbol of their **race** in that individual sport. They were, at times, teased, harassed, and belittled while demonstrating their skills in the sports arena.

This exhibit will touch on and identify the rise of the early pioneer **African Americans in the sports arena**. It will also highlight those outstanding modern-day African American sports figures who paved the way for the elimination of **race** as a qualification for those entering the broader American Sports Arena. The exhibit will end up this evolutionary role of **African Americans in the sports arena** by viewing some [famed athletes](#) of this day who have brought American sports to a new level of achievement. Today we can all appreciate these competitors as they raise our spirits in an arena which was once not open to them as African Americans.



BOXING

Boxing has a long history as an athletic event showing contestants defending themselves by using hand-to-hand combat. The **Egyptians** left behind objects of art and inscriptions on the walls of renowned pharaohs' tombs using scenes of boxing events. The **Greeks** incorporated a form of boxing into their **Pancratium** during the Olympic games around 776 BC. The **Romans** also used boxing in their sports arenas or coliseums as a spectator sport using several gladiators fighting it out until only one would become the victorious champion.

The **English** used boxing as a necessary embodiment for the completeness of a titled Englishman of aristocracy. It became part of the self defense process in their total education. By 1719, James Figgs, an English athlete and boxer, set up a formal school for boxing with the style of gloveless fighting using only the bare fists. He called his school the **School of Arms and Self Defense**. Later, a Figgs student named Jack Broughton formalized a set of rules in 1743 called the **Broughton's Rules** which included a thirty second knock down, ending the usual non-stop continuous fighting until one man conceded to a loss. Thus, the beginning of **Boxing** as a full-fledged sport took roots on English soil.

The English's manner of boxing and its formal rules were carried over to America around 1860.

But it was the addition of the **Queensberry Rules**, starting in 1872, which required all boxers to wear gloves with a one minute rest period allowed between each three minute round. American Boxing took off as a spectator sport with these regulations in place.

The first African American to engage in boxing was **William Richmond** of **Staten Island, New York**, a free black (b. Aug. 5, 1763 - d. Dec. 28, 1829). Richmond was noticed one day on the docks having a bout with a dock sailor by a British commander named **Hugh Percy**. Percy was able to convince Richmond's parents to let him travel to England where he could establish a better life. Richmond became an established cabinet maker, and he later took up boxing as a self-defense tactic. By 1800, Richmond had become a recognized semi-professional boxer. On October 8, 1805, William Richmond had gained enough wins to fight the English champion named **Tom Cribb**. The **Richmond versus Cribb** fight brought in thousands of English folk, including dukes and nobles. The hype of the **Cribb-Richmond** fight of October 8, 1805 was immediately publicized as **Cribb and Richmond (The Black)**. Race became an issue for the first time as boxing became the major focus in the sports arena. William Richmond lost his fight to Cribb, and "the crowd was pleased that a black man had been put in his place."

Cribb, the British boxing champion was again challenged by another African American boxer named **Tom Molineaux** of **Georgetown, Virginia** - now a part of Washington, DC (b. March 23, 1784 - d. August 14, 1818). Molineaux was born a slave and came from a family skilled in boxing. His master, **Algernon** Molineaux, used his slaves as competitive boxers by scheduling bouts with wagers set up to earn money for his own self coffer. **Tom Molineaux** earned his freedom by winning large wagers for his master, Algernon, and by 1809, he too had left America for London, England where he was trained by William Richmond for the London sports arena. Molineaux won a series of boxing bouts and finally met the champion, **Tom Cribb**. Molineaux was able to knock down Cribb in the 28th Round but did not win the fight due to an alleged infraction of the rules. Molineaux later became a heavy drinker, and his chance at becoming a world champion was never achieved. He died on August 14, 1818 in Galway, Ireland and was never reunited with his African American family in New York.

For the African American, boxing had its ups and downs. The money purses grew, and the status of being in the spotlight of the world made **race** and extremely "hot" issue for the African American boxer. The **Black** vs. the **White** fighter was there to test who would be the strongest or superior person to win the championship crown and the title of America's greatest sports hero.

The first African American to win a world title was **Joe Gans** [the shorter version for Gaines] (b. Nov. 25, 1874 - d. Aug. 13, 1910) of Baltimore, Maryland. He won the lightweight crown in 1902 from **Frank Erne** in Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada. Gans took on a weight gain and also fought in the welterweight division and won the championship from Jimmy Britt in 1904. Gans later fought Oscar "Battling Nelson" Nielson of Denmark after a weight loss, for the world lightweight division championship and won the titled fight again on September 3, 1906. By July 4, 1908, in a rematch with Nelson, Gans, "The Old Master," went down in defeat in the 17th Round. He died at his home in Baltimore, Maryland on August 13, 1910. Despite the racial implications, **Joe Gans** had opened the door of opportunity for future African American boxers seeking a chance at **titled American boxing bouts** in all categories except the coveted **Heavyweight Championship of the World**.

This, the Heavyweight Championship, was an exclusive title and was to be represented only by the White American boxer. It was known in the world of boxing as the last "bastion of white supremacy" to be broken by the African American boxers. White heavyweight champions drew the **color line** and refused to fight black contenders within this division. It was the controversial and uninhibited spirit of **John Arthur Johnson** of Galveston, Texas (b. Mar. 31, 1878 - d. June 10 1946) and better known as **Jack Johnson** who undertook this task. Johnson, by the age of

sixteen, had traveled from Galveston to Brooklyn, then to Boston, back to Galveston, and down to Dallas. It was in Dallas that Johnson met Walter Lewis, an ex-boxer who introduced him to his money making traveling troupe of boxers. Johnson's skills as a heavyweight earned him his first important victory on February 25, 1901 against **Joe Choynsky**, a noted **Polish-Jewish** heavyweight. Johnson **ko'd** Choynsky in the third round. From 1901 to 1903, Johnson had twenty-three winning fights with only **one** loss. In 1903, he defeated Ed Martin Denver for the **Negro Heavyweight Crown**, and **Jack Johnson** became "the best boxer alive." Johnson wanted a shot at the World Heavyweight Championship title held by **Jim Jeffries**. **Jeffries** response in 1903 was "I will not fight a negro! If the public demands that I should fight **Johnson**, I will surely have to decline."

Jim Jeffries retired from boxing in May of 1905 "citing a lack of competition - white competition, that is." **Marvin Hart** took Jeffries' place, but he lost the title to the Canadian champion, **Tommy Burns**. **Burns** refused to fight Johnson, but, after a long debate, the **first heavyweight title bout** between a **White** and a **Black** man was scheduled for December 26, 1908 in Sydney, Australia. **Jack Johnson** was 30 years old, and **Tommy Burns** was 27 years old. The record crowd numbered 26,000 people, including reporters and fans. **Burns** was badly beaten and **ko'd** in the **14th round** by Johnson, and **Jack Johnson** had won the World Heavyweight Title. **Jim Jeffries**, the retired Heavyweight champion, was therefore asked to come out of retirement, and his task was to become the "**Great White Hope**" by saving his race. Although Jeffries was **ko'd** in the **15th round** by **Johnson** in Reno, Nevada, July 4, 1910, the hype, money, and gambling on this **white vs. black** brought forth the issue of race and athletic superiority which became a major focus of the Heavyweight Titled Fight in years to come. Boxing, at this point, became a symbol of triumph or failure of a whole people. **Jack Johnson** had become that symbol, and he now held the undisputed World Heavyweight Championship title. **Johnson** earned a record \$110,600 and **Jeffries** \$90,400 for that solitary fight.

Jack Johnson's life outside the boxing ring was filled with the glitz of a high profile social life. Johnson's career carried him through four marriages, including three white wives. His flamboyant character kept him at the edge of what he felt was his choice of free living as a person of color in America of the 1920's. He died in a car accident on June 10, 1946 outside of Raleigh, North Carolina. **Jack Johnson's** greatest accomplishment was the doors he opened for all other African American boxers.



HORSE RACING

The influence of England on the early life in colonial America was quite evident in the social, cultural, and political practices of the colonists. Horse racing was one of the earliest English influences on the American gentry. The status of owning thoroughbred horses imported from England was a true indicator of American wealth. Later these wealthy Americans began breeding their own horses on large farms and plantations. As a cost effective and profitable approach, the care and training of these horses were assigned to the **slaves**. Horses were also needed for the gentlemen as a mode of transportation and for the carriages of the ladies of the aristocracy. As a diversion, horses were trained to race in betting events. Horse racing could earn the gentry money or goods such as tobacco, rice, cotton, sugar, or the addition of more property in the name of **slaves**. Horse racing became an enjoyable and profitable

American pastime. Soon the owners of race horses discovered that the riders were just as important as the horses. Since the African American slaves knew the temperament and ability of each horse they so trained, their selection as riders of race horses soon caught on. Out of the desire to have winners in horse racing, these sporting events included the **first identifiable African American sportsmen** known as **jockeys** and **trainers**. By 1800, the **south** had produced the majority of black jockeys seen at the major race tracks. From 1823 to the beginning of the American Civil War (1861-1864), the most popular American sporting event was **horse racing**, and the African American riders were key players in this spectator sport. The earliest known African American jockey was recorded by the name of "Monkey" **Simon**. **Simon** was a rider at the **Clover Bottom Race Track**, near Nashville, Tennessee around 1806. Later the name of **Abe Hawkins** appeared as a rider at the Metarie, Louisiana race track around 1851.

The American Civil War (1861-1865) put a temporary stop to horse racing. All horses were needed for the war efforts, and many were destroyed during this period. But, by 1875 racing was back, and on May 17, the **first Kentucky Derby** was won by **Oliver Lewis**, an African American jockey riding **Aristides**.

Isaac Murphy (b. Jan. 1, 1861? - d. Feb. 12, 1896), a prominent African American jockey, succeeded in winning the Kentucky Derby three times in the years of 1890 and 1891, a record which stood until the year of 1948 when Eddie Arcaro won the Kentucky Derby four times riding the famed **Citation**. Isaac Murphy was known as "the most phenomenal hand jockey the world had yet seen." He was opposed to being a "whip" rider in order to achieve the speed needed to win a race. Murphy rode in over 1,412 races and won over 628. Upon his death, the famed trainer **L.P. Tarlton** said these words about **Isaac Murphy**: "I have seen all the great jockeys in England and this country for years back, but, all in all, Isaac Murphy is the greatest of them all."

In the footsteps of Isaac Murphy came a list of notables up until the start of World War I. The list included:

- **Monk Overton**, who was credited with winning six races at Washington Park in Illinois, July 10, 1891.
- **Willie Simms**, who won five of his six races at Sheepshead Bay, New York, June 23, 1893 and the Kentucky Derby in 1896 and in 1898.
- **James "Soup" Perkins** at age 13, became known as "the boy jockey" in 1893. Perkins won at Saratoga and the Kentucky Derby in 1895.
- **Jimmy Lee** at the end of his career was a top drawer in horse racing. He won, from 1907 to 1909, ten major races, including the **Kentucky Oaks**, the **Travers** and **California Derby**.
- **Jimmy Winkfield** became a legend in the field of horse racing. He won the **Kentucky Derby** in 1901 and in 1902 and came in second in 1903. In 1904, he traveled to Europe and raced in Moscow, Russia. By 1923, he was racing in France and won the coveted **Prix du President de la Republique**. He died in 1974 at age 93 and was inscribed into the **Jockey Hall of Fame** at Pimlico.
- **Marlon St. Julien**, on May 6, 2000, became the first black jockey in seventy-nine years to ride in the **Kentucky Derby**. He finished in seventh place.

THE TRAINERS

Along side the ascendancy of the aspiring African American jockeys were the **trainers**. Many African American jockeys started out as trainers, but many trainers chose not to ride in races as

jockeys. Some retired jockeys eventually became trainers. Some well known trainers were **Edward "Brown Dick" Brown**, trainer of the horse, **Baden-Baden**, the Kentucky Derby winner in 1877. **Alex Perry** trained the horse, **Joe Cotton**, the winner of the 1885 Kentucky Derby.

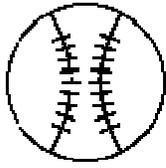
On Long Island, New York, **Fred Treadwell** (b. 1885 - d. 19??), was a master horse trainer for the **William Post** family during the 1930's. Treadwell's parents were servants for the Post family. Young Fred grew up around Mr. Post's polo ponies, and he too became one of a rare breed of polo players. Due to his color, he was not allowed to play in official polo matches. Treadwell was known to have played opposite Tommy Hitchcock, General George Patton, and the famed Will Rogers.

Another rare breed of African American horse racers were the **steeplechasers**. The object of the race is to train the horse to jump over a planned array of obstacles on a long winding path. His keen judgment and pace of timing lead African American steeplechaser, **Charlie Smoot**, to win the 1916, 1926, and 1933 **Beverwyck Steeplechase**. Other identifiable steeplechasers included **Sam Bush** of Baltimore, who won the 1923 **Prix Nagne**, and **Paul McGinnis**, who won twenty-eight races in 1936 alone.

Horse racing was sometimes called the "**Sport of Kings**." The daring and rare breed of dedicated African American sportsmen had to endure many obstacles in order to participate in this sport. They were the **clockers**, **hot walkers**, **exercise boys**, **grooms**, **stable hands**, and finally the **trainers** and **jockeys**.

With the demise of this group, African Americans never recovered their place and status in this sports arena. From 1900 through the late 1940's, these African American sportsmen were excluded from the major race tracks in the South due to strict **Jim Crow Laws**. In other areas of the country, starting around 1894, most jockeys were denied state licenses to ride on the major race tracks of America. Therefore, African American jockeys and trainers virtually passed off the scene from the **sports arena** in the sport they worked so hard to establish.

VIRGINIA MEALING PLANCKE, daughter of Kaye Mealing in the C.W. Post Campus' HEOP Program, graduated from C.W. Post in 1986. For over ten years, she was involved in riding and equestrian events. From 1989-1991, she was a trainer for the **C.W. Post / L.I.U. Equestrian Team**. As an African American, she is one of a few participating in this highly disciplined sport. Virginia has been involved in the traveling circuit of equestrian shows in Florida, Southampton, and Lake Placid. She has earned ribbons and placed in numerous **jumper division** shows. She was the only African American in the Belgium European Equestrian Show during the 1993-1994 season.



BASEBALL

Baseball is truly an American pastime. The origin of the sport can be traced back to colonial America and the English settlers around 1700. The mixing of cultures coming from Ireland, Scotland, Germany, and Africa to America also brought versions of what developed into the sport we know as baseball. The English version was called "rounders." During the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), the American soldiers were known to play "base." The true sport of baseball took root in America around the 1800's. It was called "towneball." In the late 1800's, it became known as "baste ball."

The original logistics for American baseball are believed to have been invented by **Abner Doubleday** (1819-1893). Doubleday was living in Cooperstown New York when he arrived at his essential ideas for the game of baseball back in 1839. Doubleday's game of baseball was very similar to the English game of "rounders," nevertheless, the interest which he brought to the area of Cooperstown, New York and baseball made him a recognizable name. The name of Doubleday became directly linked to the residents who helped to establish the **National Baseball Hall of Fame** and its **museum**. Abner Doubleday was an 1842 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy. He served in both the Mexican War (1846-1848) and the American Civil War (1861-1865). He died in 1893, but very little had surfaced about his true claim to being The Inventor of Baseball.

Baseball as an organized sport was established by a New York City sportsman named **Alexander Cartwright**. The **Knickerbocker Base Ball Club** of **New York** was the name chosen by Cartwright, and this club became the prime source for the first rules governing baseball. The first established, organized baseball game was held on June 19, 1846 between the **New York Nine** and the **Knickerbocker Club** in Hoboken, New Jersey. The Nines won the game 23 to 1. African Americans were excluded from the original Knickerbocker Club, but, by 1858, the **National Association of Baseball Players** (NABBP) was organized and did welcome African Americans as members. After the Civil War (1861-1865), baseball began to spread out to other places, mainly in large cities in the United States. The different clubs and leagues became more segregated by **race** and ethnicity during this period. By 1871, the NABBP had decided to exclude "colored" members from their clubs. Therefore, African Americans were forced to join, stay, and play in exclusive all black baseball leagues. These all black baseball teams were later identified as **The Negro Leagues**.

From 1871 to 1947, African American baseball players were locked in and forced to play only those teams made up of "negroes." As the all white baseball teams grew in numbers, right beside them were the developing number of all black teams. Baseball was so popular that, by 1869, the first **professional** organized team came onto the scene by the name of the **Cincinnati Red Stockings**. Recruiting the top players was the key to developing a highly professional ball club. By 1876, eight professional teams formulated the first **Major League** within the **National League**. By 1901, eight teams made up the **American League**. Baseball in America had become the prime spectator sport in America. It became so important to the American general public that baseball became known as the **national pastime**.

The early records of African American players playing as professionals on local league teams were not well documented. To have the necessary status of being "professional," these players had to join the all white teams in one of the major leagues. Two of the earliest players were **Bud Fowler** (his birth name was John Jackson), born in Cooperstown, New York in 1858 and **Moses Fleetwood Walker**, born in 1857 in Mount Pleasant, Ohio. **Bud Fowler**, by 1872, was playing on the New Castle, Pennsylvania (the **Keokuk**) as the only African American player. Fowler, like

many of the early players, could move about and play several other team positions. He played for fourteen different teams for a career spanning twenty-five years but never was able to cross over into the National League due to his race. **Moses Fleetwood Walker**, called Fleet Walker, grew up in Ohio and later attended Oberlin College along with his brother, **Weldy Walker**. Oberlin College was one of the earliest American universities to integrate its student body. Fleet Walker and Weldy Walker both helped to start a varsity baseball team for Oberlin College. Fleet Walker later attended the University of Michigan's law school but left in the year of 1884 and joined the **Toledo Mudhens** of the **Northwestern League** as its catcher. **Moses Fleetwood Walker** became the first African American to join the ranks of professional baseball. After forty-two games with **Toledo**, Moses Walker could not be retained. In order for **Toledo** to play in other areas of the country, they had to dismiss their "colored" players, thus ending the early progress of integrated teams in baseball.

In an effort to keep on playing organized, professional baseball, African Americans had to get the necessary backing. By the summer of 1885, **Frank Thompson** out in **Babylon, Long Island** started his own team called the **Cuban Giants**. The Cuban Giants **were not** from Cuba, but they did not want the general public to know they were African Americans but, rather, only here from another country to play baseball in the U.S.A. Some African American teams were playing against some all white teams, but, whenever the issue of race surfaced, the games were **canceled**. **Money** also became the issue. African American ball players made three times less than a White-American ball player competing in similar positions in the major leagues. African Americans, if they were good, could play in the minor leagues but **not** in the major leagues.

History pushed African American baseball players forward. They now had formulated their own professional league called the **League of Colored Baseball Clubs**. The founding teams were:

- **Boston Resolutes**
- **New York Gorham**
- **Philadelphia Pythians**
- **Washington Capital Cities**
- **Pittsburgh Keystones**
- **Norfolk (Virginia) Red Stockings**
- **Cincinnati Crowns,**
- **Lord Baltimores**
- **Louisville Fall Cities**

In 1888, these all black teams had to compete in a playoff tournament to determine the best in the **club**. The first "**Colored Championships of America**" winners were:

- First place: **Cuban Giants**
- Second place: **Pittsburgh Keystones**
- Third place: **New York Gorhams**
- Forth place: **Norfolk Red Stockings**

Even when these clubs began to wane, the rudiments of baseball for African Americans were firmly rooting in the sport as an enjoyable pastime. By 1890, predominantly black colleges and universities were "creating" baseball athletes in this popular sport. The formation of the **Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Association** also helped develop future African American baseball players by 1912. The First World War (1914-1918) also saw the segregated units of African American soldiers playing in **regimental tournaments** as baseball players. One noted team was the 25th Infantry, who developed a record as "the best of the Black teams" through World War I. The first **World Series** for baseball was in 1903 between the **Boston Red Socks** of the **American League** and the **Pittsburgh Pirates** of the **National League**. **Boston** won 5-3 games in the series. Millions of people were glued to the series, and everyone's models became the

baseball was elevated to the national pastime for the majority of Americans.

In the midst of keeping the **Negro Leagues** up to standards as a separate professional league came the great efforts of **Andrew "Rube" Foster**. **Foster** kept the dream alive by becoming an owner of the **Chicago American Giants**. His untiring work earned him the reputation of being "**the Father of Black Baseball**." **Rube Foster** had been a player and manager of the **Chicago Leland Giants**. Foster, by February 14, 1920, had brought together the top African American teams and their owners and formulated the **Negro National League** (NNL). The excitement behind Foster's efforts was his ability at getting lease and rental space time at available stadiums during the 1920's. Foster was able to see the "**Negro World Series**" and his **Chicago American Giants** beat the **Eastern Colored League** in 1926. FOSTER died in 1930.

The American Economic Depression (1929-1934) had over 14 million Americans out of work. All baseball leagues were almost destroyed during this period, including most teams in the **Negro Baseball League**. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, under the **New deal** (March 4, 1933 until his death on April 12, 1945), brought America back to the road of economic recovery. Two years later, the **Negro National League** folded in 1948. Some African American greats came out of this league. Among them:

- **Leroy "Satchel" Paige**
- **Josh Gibson**
- **Walter "Buck" Leonard**
- **James "Cool Papa" Bell**
- **Ray Dandridge**
- **Bobby Robinson**

to name only a few. By the early 1950's, the **Negro League** was closed out. The **Negro American League**, which started in 1937, survived until the early 1960's.

REMEMBER JACKIE ROBINSON

[Robinson](#) became the first African American to play in **major league baseball** when **Branch Rickey**, president of the **Brooklyn Dodgers**, signed [Robinson](#) up as the first African American in modern day history to cross over with a contract to play for the **Brooklyn Dodgers**. [Robinson](#) was first assigned to the Dodgers' **minor league** affiliate, The **Montreal Royals** on October 23, 1945. His entrance to the **major league** was on April 15, 1947 when [Robinson](#) made his debut as a player at **Ebbets Fields** for the **Brooklyn Dodgers**. [Robinson](#) was a former player on the **Kansas City Monarchs** all black team. With this door opened, the **history** of African Americans in **baseball** started a new era which made the long dream come true for countless players aiming for a chance to show their talents in the majors.

A TRIBUTE TO JACKIE ROBINSON

A MAN FOR ALL TIMES

When most African Americans think of Jackie Robinson, they think of the ultimate symbol of racial pride and progress in the sports arena. Jackie Robinson represented that symbol when he was chosen as the first African American to play in modern times for the **Major League Brooklyn Dodgers**. Robinson was chosen to fill these shoes by **Branch Rickey**, president and general manager of the Dodgers. October 23, 1945 was the date that Robinson signed a contract to play with the **Montreal Royals**, a minor league affiliate of the Dodgers. This was Robinson's official first step to the **majors**, which came on April 15, 1947 when he entered **Ebbets Field** to play baseball with the Dodgers. **This April 15, 1997 will be the 50th Anniversary of the celebrated date.**

Jack (Jackie) **Roosevelt Robinson** was born in Cairo, Georgia on January 31, 1919. He was the youngest of the five children of **Jerry** and **Mallie** Robinson. When Jackie's father Jerry, a sharecropper, left home seeking work, his mother, Mallie, decided to move west, seeking a better life with her children by her side. She was able to find a house in the suburbs of Pasadena, California. Life was not that easy for the Robinsons, being the only black family in this not so friendly area of California. Jackie and his older brother, Mack, took to sports early on in their school years. Mack became a world-class sprinter, and, by 1936, he was invited to compete in the 200 meter dash in the Olympics held in Berlin, Germany. He finished second to **Jesse Owens**, the African American hero of the 1936 Olympic Games.

Jackie Robinson, like most teens, joined a gang while going to school. He was headed for trouble, but, thanks to the positive influences of **Carl Anderson**, a local mechanic, and the minister, Reverend **Karl Downs**, Jackie made a change. Jackie even taught Sunday school lessons to youngsters at Sunday church each week. At **John Muir Technical High school**, Jackie Robinson learned to compete and win honors in sports. He earned high school letters in **football, basketball, baseball, and track and field**. Robinson attended **Pasadena Junior College** from September 1937 to August 1939. His athletic ability at Pasadena led to an athletic scholarship at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) starting in September of 1939.

At UCLA, Jackie Robinson was nothing less than **spectacular**. He was the university's **first four letter athlete**. He played football, basketball, baseball, and track and field. He was the team's highest scorer for two years in basketball. He also won the national championship in the **long jump**. He became an **All-American** halfback on the university's football team.

Jackie Robinson met **Rachel Isum** in 1940 while she was a freshman studying Nursing at UCLA. By the spring semester of 1941, Jackie had left the campus of UCLA to take a job as the athletic director for the **National Youth Administration**. Within the following year, he was called to serve his country in the United States Army. Robinson applied for admission to the **U.S. Officer's Candidate School** along with other African American draftees. Each one was denied admission due to his race. The **great Joe Louis**, U.S. Heavyweight Champion, was a sergeant at **Fort Riley** (Kansas) at the same time Robinson was there. Under **Joe Louis'** influence, **Jackie Robinson** and the other African Americans were admitted to the officers' school. **Robinson** enrolled and was awarded his commission of second lieutenant in January of 1943.

Even in the army as a lieutenant, Robinson was faced with racism and discrimination. He could play on the military team, but he could **not** travel with them to play teams in **Jim Crow** areas of

the **South**. Robinson was transferred to the army base at **Fort Hood**, Texas. Segregation was present and commonplace. "**For Colored Only**" signs were everywhere. Robinson was enraged and spoke up for his rights. He left the army in 1944 and went back to Kansas where he joined the **Kansas City Monarchs** as a shortstop for the all black professional baseball team in the **Negro Leagues**. Even though Robinson earned \$400 a month, there were hard conditions in the **Negro Leagues**. Traveling by bus for long distances to play other teams often led to hotels which would not take in "colored" players.

Robinson was playing shortstop for the Kansas City Monarchs for only one season in the year of 1945 when he was approached and persuaded by **Branch Rickey**, the Brooklyn Dodgers general manager, to join the **Dodger Organization**. Robinson knew how bad the rewards, recognition, and money were in the Negro League, therefore he decided to take a chance, and he signed his **first** contract to play with the **Montreal Royals** of the **Dodger's minor league** club on August 28, 1945. He played his **first game** with the **Montreal Royals on April 18, 1946**. His salary was \$600 monthly with a bonus of \$3,500. With this new salary, Jackie Robinson went back to Los Angeles and married **Rachel Isum**.

Jackie and Rachel were together when he undertook what was called the "baseball great experiment." This experiment was a test to see if a black player could play well enough to integrate the all white baseball leagues. That test would include his playing skills, psychological makeup, and social adjustment. This was 1940's America, and, on most fronts, **segregation** of the **races** was the way things were. **Branch Rickey** of the Dodger organization wanted this to happen in a positive way. The **Negro League** had many great players, and they were **not** chosen to make the crossover to the all white **Major League**. Jackie Robinson was watched and chosen to do this transition. How would the manager and other players make him part of the team? Well, after his April 18, 1946 debut, Jackie Robinson was on his way! He played against the **Jersey City Giants** in a stadium packed with 30,000 fans, and they wanted to see Robinson play. Robinson hit a three-run home run, stole bases, scored four runs, drove in three, and sent the crowd wild! He had helped the team win every game, and they became the champions of the International League. This win brought them to the playoffs with the **Louisville Colonels** in the **South** in Louisville, Kentucky. Robinson was booed with hatred remarks and racial taunts. He was upset and played his worst. On the return to **Montreal**, the Canadian fans were outraged, and they returned that behavior back to the Louisville players. Robinson was a gentleman and said he "didn't approve of this kind of retaliation but ... felt a jubilant sense of gratitude for the way the **Canadians** expressed their feelings."

The story about **Jackie Robinson** in baseball surrounds the very important efforts of **Branch Rickey** to break the color barrier in the league. **Branch Rickey** was the untiring force and strategist behind this move in American history. Rickey knew how hard it was to get change in this area of racially divided sports. Rickey knew he would meet with opposition. He therefore planned Robinson's team entry by having both the **Montreal Royals** and the **Brooklyn Dodgers** train together in **Havana, Cuba**. He also invited three other African American players to their spring training. They were **Roy Campanella**, **Don Newcombe**, and **Roy Partlow**. When **Rickey** told the **team** his plans, they signed a petition of **non-acceptance** of **Robinson** to their **team**. Rickey went ahead, and the **big announcement came on April 10, 1947**. **Jackie Robinson** was promoted to the **National League Brooklyn Dodgers**. His position was **first baseman**.

Jackie Robinson, no. 42, on **April 15, 1947**, played his first game as a **Dodger** in the **majors** against the **Boston Braves** at **Ebbets Field**. The Dodgers won that game 5 to 3, but Robinson did not have a spectacular showing on that day's event. Two months into the season in June, Robinson had created a 21-game hitting streak. Despite the racial insults, Robinson persevered, and his fellow teammates began to support, appreciate, and accept Robinson as a fellow **Dodger**. Robinson's plays helped the **Dodgers** to win the National League Pennant, and he

finished the league with the **most stolen bases** and tied for the team lead in **home runs**. He was honored as the **National League Rookie of the Year**, and the **Dodgers** won the right to play the **New York Yankees** in the **World Series** of 1947. Robinson later said, "If I could choose one of the most important moments in my life, it would be the opening day of the 1947 World Series when I played as a Dodger against the New York Yankees." Although the Dodgers lost the **series** in four games to three, Robinson was able to play against **DiMaggio**, **Berra**, and **Rizzuto**. He had finally crossed over to the majors!

Within the next ten years, Jackie Robinson's name became the example of a special role model for other African Americans making the crossover to the **majors**. By 1949, the Dodgers had added **Roy Campanella** and **Don Newcombe** to their roster of players. Robinson won the **National League Most Valuable Player Award** in 1949, and he demonstrated his ability in speaking out about race and being an American before the **House Un-American Activities Committee** in Washington, DC. Robinson's life was on constant "view." He was a celebrity, but he still had to encounter racial prejudice and bigoted remarks as he played against other teams who had no African American players in 1949. Robinson's mentor and long time friend, **Branch Rickey**, resigned as the president of the **Dodgers** in 1950, and **Walter O'Malley** took the reigns of the **Dodger Club**. **O'Malley** and **Robinson's** relationship was not the best. By May 1956, the famed **Ebbets Field** was sold, and the **Dodgers** moved to **Los Angeles** at the end of 1957. Jackie Robinson was traded to the **New York Giants**, but he refused to play, and, therefore, he announced his **retirement from baseball on January 5, 1957**.

Jackie Robinson went on to become an executive and Vice President for Community Relations with the **Chock-Full-o'-Nuts** restaurant and food distributor in New York City. Jackie was inducted into the **Baseball Hall Of Fame on January 23, 1962**. Jackie and Rachel Robinson had three children: Jackie Jr. (born in November 1946), Sharon (born in January 1950), and David (born in May 1952). Jackie Jr., a Vietnam Veteran, took to hard drugs, which took a hard toll on Jackie Sr. He was rehabilitated, but, unfortunately, he was killed in an automobile accident on June 17, 1971. Within sixteen months, **Jackie Robinson SR.** had died on October 24, 1972 of the crippling effects of diabetes and heart disease. Robinson once said that "**A life is not important except in the impact it has on others.**" His Legacy has provided a way for all of us to understand what the **sports arena** of that **era** was truly about.

A Commemoration, Celebration, and Educational Conference at **Long Island University's Brooklyn Campus** on April 3-5, 1997 will encompass the life and times of **Jackie Robinson's** entry into Major League Baseball. For information call: (718) 488 - 1010.



CYCLING

Cycling is often labeled by the name, **bicycle race**. In America, the bicycle was the most popular form of transportation between 1870 and 1893. Charles and Frank Duryea built the first successful gasoline powered car in 1893. Remember the **Stanley Steamer Car** was first put on a trial run in 1897 in the town of Newton, Massachusetts. **Henry Ford** introduced his first gasoline car in 1896, and it was not until 1901 that Eli **Olds** introduced 425 mass produced cars onto the U.S. market. Not until 1908 did we get the popular **Model T** by

Henry Ford. The first modern **Olympic Games** were held in the **Summer** of 1896 in Athens, **Greece**.

What does this have to do with **cycling**? The time-line dates can help one to focus on the importance of placing the bicycle in the mode of use by the sportsmen in the athletic sports arena. **Speed** and the use of **stamina** and **endurance** over miles of roads was the aim of testing the cyclists vying for the prizes in this sport. The [International Olympic Committee](#) (IOC), the major governing body of the **Olympic Games**, consider choosing a sport for competition only if it is popular in at least fifty countries on three continents. Today, **cycling** is among the 22 sports included in this worldwide selection for the **Summer Olympic Games**.

Cycling as we know it as a sport is considered on the low profile list for African Americans. This was not always the case, for one African American opened the door very wide back in 1895. His name was **Marshall "Major" Taylor**. **Taylor** was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on November 21, 1878. His father, **Gilbert Taylor**, served in the Union Army during the Civil War. Young Marshall Taylor worked for a local bicycle shop and learned to test the many tricks you could do using a bicycle. Marshall wanted to test his skills as a bona fide cyclist, and, with the help of a white ex-cyclist named Louis "Birdie" Munger, Marshall did reach his goal. He took his desires and learned skills to the town of Worcester, Massachusetts. At the YMCA, he joined the **Albion Cycle Club** in 1895. He won most of the club's amateur cycling prizes, and, in 1896, at the age of eighteen, he went professional. Marshall had gained a lot of experience as an amateur cyclist and knew about the previous racial barriers he had to overcome on his movements to area **cycling racing** events in the southern U.S.A. His talent was recognized, but his race made him unwelcome. African American cyclists were not accepted in regional Cyclists Clubs. Later, the **League of American Wheelmen** (LAW) excluded Blacks from their membership with their "**white only**" clause. Marshall Taylor refused to be defeated and entered the known cyclists' races as an outsider. By 1898, Marshall had accumulated enough total points - 121, with 21 first place victories - to become America's first African American National Cyclist Champion. Marshall still wanted to fulfill his dream of being an American champion exclusively. He first competed in Montreal, Canada and came back to Chicago where he accomplished a record time in the **one-mile sprint**. He was then acknowledged as an American Cyclist Champion for the year of 1899. From 1900 to 1908, Marshall Taylor became a world competitor as a cyclist in New York, France, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Massachusetts, Kentucky, Philadelphia, Paris, Belgium, and Germany.

Marshall "Major" Taylor is credited with being in the first sport where a national title was won by an African American.



FOOTBALL

Like other American sports, the first game of football was similar to the English sport of **soccer**. The date of 1862 was given as the first date American football was practiced by the Oneida Football **Club**. Later, the **soccer** style version of football was used when **Rutgers** played the **College of New Jersey** (now **Princeton University**) in the year of 1869. In 1874, **McGill University** of **Canada** played **Harvard University**. **McGill** had asked that **Harvard** play their English version of football. Both schools agreed to play one football version of

Rugby and one football version of soccer. The running and tackling facet of Rugby proved to be more popular, and soon it became the chosen contact sport for most eastern colleges. **Walter Camp** of Yale University took the sport of football to another level. During the 1880's, **Camp** adopted more solid rules and practices for the game of football. Camp also wanted more tradition in the game of football, therefore the **All-American Team** was devised to recognize the top college football players in the country.

Many select colleges in the Northeast during the 1880's had African Americans in their student bodies. These students also played on the colleges' football teams. **William Henry Lewis**, the **first African American All-American**, was from Berkeley, Virginia. He played football in the **center** position at **Amherst College** in 1889. On the same **Amherst** squad was **William Tecumseh Sherman Jackson** from Alexandria, Virginia. Jackson played in the half back position. **Lewis** was selected as **Amherst's captain** for the 1890 year. During his tenure at **Amherst**, Lewis helped with a 14-15-6 record for his three years of football. **Lewis** went on to **Harvard Law School** and played football there also. **Walter Camp**, the "father of football," saw **Lewis** in action and named him to his **All-American Team** as **center** for the 1892 and the 1893 seasons. **Lewis**, after law school, went on to become an Assistant District Attorney in Boston, Massachusetts. Out of the **University of Michigan**, in 1890, came **George Jeweth** from Ann Arbor, who was a half back and field goal kicker. **Jeweth** was called "the Afro-American phenomenon of the University of Michigan."

In 1892, at the **University of Chicago**, came **Amos Alonzo Stagg**, coach of the football team. **Stagg**, from his experiences as a coach, wrote, along with **H.C. Williams**, a book entitled, **A Scientific and Practical Treatise on American Football for Schools and Colleges** (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1893). This solitary source became the guide for many developing football teams at all black colleges in the South during the late 1800's. The **Morrill Act** of 1890 came along and helped **land-grant colleges and universities** to grow in numbers. Along with these country-wide large universities came the growth of sports which included larger sports arenas for grand football games.

African Americans were playing football at a host of eastern colleges by the end of the 1890's. Some players and schools were:

- **Howard J. Lee**, Harvard, 1896-1897
- **George Chadwell**, Williams College, 1897
- **William Washington**, Oberlin, 1895-1897
- **Albert Flippin**, Nebraska, 1894
- **Alton Washington**, Northwestern, 1898-1901
- **Matthew Bullock**, Dartmouth, 1902
- **Arthur Carr**, Ohio State, 1904
- **Joseph Trigg**, Syracuse, 1914-1916
- **Hugh Shippley**, Brown, 1913
- **Gideon Smith**, Michigan State, 1913-1916
- **Edward Morrison**, Tufts, 1914-1916
- **Fred "Duke" Slater**, Univ. of Iowa, 1918-1921
- And, among this group of football players, came [Paul Leroy Robeson](#) and [Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard](#).

PAUL ROBESON

Paul L. Robeson played for Rutgers University during the 1915-1918 football seasons. **Robeson** entered Rutgers University on an academic scholarship due to his exceptional competency placement scores for college entrance. Robeson played football in high school and used this skill

on the Rutgers football squad. Robeson was a **scholar-athlete** at Rutgers before that title became well known countrywide. Robeson helped Rutgers to a 7-1 record in his freshman year. In his sophomore year, Robeson played every game except when Rutgers went south to play **Washington and Lee University** in Virginia. Robeson later saw this as a shameful incident, for he had to be left on the bench due to certain universities **not** accepting their teams playing against other teams with black players. Walter Camp named Robeson to his first team **All-American** roster for 1918. Camp said, "Robeson was the finest end that ever played the game - college or professional." Paul Robeson graduated from **Rutgers University** in 1918. He was the class valedictorian with Phi Beta Kappa distinction. Robeson went on to play professional football while attending **Columbia Law School** in New York. Robeson's brilliance helped him to succeed in **opera** and **acting**. He was one of the first African American athletes to stand up and speak out against institutional racism faced by blacks in America. Paul Robeson's life was full of confrontational issues which caused him to become involved in national and international movements pertaining to world peace and racial justice. Robeson was a linguist and world traveler. His friendship with the Soviets labeled him as a Communist. In 1950, the American government canceled Robeson's passport. After eight years of legal fights, Robeson was able to travel again. Robeson's remarkable life ended in 1976. His legacy as an African American sports figure and celebrity cannot be equaled, even today in the 1990's.

FRITZ POLLARD

Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard's exceptional career in football had a flawed start. **Pollard** entered Northwestern University in 1913, but, because he was only interested in playing football, he was confronted and asked to leave. He later entered Brown University but was found lacking certain entrance requirements and, therefore, had to withdraw. After checking out Dartmouth, Harvard, and Bates College, Pollard decided he needed to complete his prerequisites before entering college. Having done this, he reentered **Brown University** in the Fall of 1915 at age 21. Pollard's career was nothing less than spectacular from 1915-1917. At Brown, Pollard was the star running back. He lead Brown to seasonal victories against Williams College, Yale, Harvard, Vermont, Colgate, and at Rutgers University where he played against Paul Robeson's team. In October of 1916, Pollard beat Robeson's team 21 to 3. It was said that **Fritz Pollard** was "the most talked about black man in America" in the football season of 1916. For his extraordinary talent, **Pollard** was named to Walter Camp's **All-American list** in 1916. Camp said, "**Pollard of Brown** was the most elusive back of the year. He is a good sprinter and, once loose, is a veritable will-o-the-wisp that no one can lay hands on." The season schedules for most universities were cut back during the war years of **World War I** (1914-1918). Pollard left **Brown** and became the Physical Education Director at Camp Mead from 1918-1920. Fritz Pollard ended out his career as one of the first African Americans in the newly formed **American Professional Association** which decided to become the [National Football League](#) (NFL) in 1921.

We all owe an enormous amount of respect and homage to these early African American football giants. Today the NFL has a full representation of African Americans playing football due to the competitive representation of these early pioneers.



TRACK AND FIELD

The preponderance of African Americans in **track and field** today can be attributed to many factors. The history, culture, physical and popular appeal of **track and field** are some of the factors why so many African Americans are attracted as competitors by training hard to stay at the top of this sport. Long before African Americans could join the sports arena, their African ancestors had established the need for running long distances to other villages within a certain time and at a swift pace. Jumping and running were a way of life which was later a natural focus for African Americans seeking to demonstrate stamina and speed in their way of life on American soil. In early America, remember, the slaves utilized some part of their "holidays" playing sports, and among those activities were jumping and foot racing.

Not many people related the early walking races or "pedestrianism" to a sport connected to our present day Olympic walking races. In America, these walking races were well attended crowd pleasers, and in New York City alone, the Scottish-American races documented, between 1830-1880, two outstanding African American walkers: **Francis Smith** of the 1830 races and **Frank Hart** of the 1870 races. After 1880, the "pedestrianism" races practically disappeared, and standardized games requiring speed, distance, and endurance dictated what a race should be like. Therefore, **track and field** required sponsors, organizations, and places for staged track meets. By 1866, the **New York Athletic Club** (NYAC) was organized, and, by 1871, it was able to sponsor certain **track and field** meets. African Americans were not welcomed as members to the NYAC nor to its events. The **Amateur Athletic Union** (AAU) was formed in 1888, and it also chose **not** to accept African Americans as members.

The **doors** were finally **opened** in 1895 when African Americans could qualify for the **Penn Relay** in Philadelphia, but they had to seek out their own sponsors and practice fields. The early sponsors of most African American athletes came from segregated all-black secondary schools, the "colored" YMCA's, the black colleges and universities, and several select northeastern, predominantly white universities. The year of 1890 was significant for African Americans in track and field. **Tuskegee Institute** hired **James B. Washington** as its first **sports director** and thus elevating, by 1893, the **first major** Black college track and field meet.

Prestigious northern universities recruited African American students among their schools' **track and field** athletic teams (examples: **Harvard, Dartmouth, Amherst, New York University, University of Chicago, and Penn State**). Also listed as advocates and sponsors of African American talent in track and field were a few all black clubs such as the **Smart Set Club** and the unified black **Vulcan Athletic League** (VAL), **Sears and Roebuck**, and the **Police Athletic Leagues**. The support of these organizations helped to make **track and field** a strong place where the African American sports hero could develop.

- By 1890, the first African American track star, by the name of **William Tecumseh Sherman Jackson**, emerged from the campus of Amherst College in Massachusetts as a half mile sprinter.
- From 1895 through 1897, **Napoleon Bonaparte Marshall** of Harvard College had run the 440 yard dash at 51.2 seconds.
- At the University of Illinois was **G.C.H. Burleigh** who, at 16.2 seconds, cleared the 120 yard high hurdles.
- The year of 1907 brought forth the **first African American track and field champion**, named **John Baxter "Doc" Taylor**. Taylor broke the Intercollegiate Amateur Athletic Association of America record for the 440 yard dash with a time of 49.2 seconds. **John B. "Doc" Taylor** was also credited with being the **first African American Olympic gold**

- medal winner** in the 200-200-400-800 meter medley relay in 1908, held in **London**, England.
- In the **field** event from **Harvard College** in 1909 was **Theodore "Ted" Cable**, a member of the 220 yard dash relay team and the **hammer throw** and the **broad jump** teams. **Ted Cable** was the first African American to win the **hammer throw** as a competitor in the 1912 **Harvard-Yale** meet.
- From 1910 through 1918, the track and field sport knew the name of **Howard Porter Drew** from Lexington, Virginia and a product of Springfield Massachusetts High School. Without a college affiliation until 1914, **Drew** was the first to be called "**The World's Fastest Human.**" He ran the 100 meter in 10.8 seconds and the 70 yard dash at 7.5 seconds on June 8 and September 8, 1912 respectively. In 1913, he held the AAU titles in the 100 and 220 yard dashes and held the **world record** for the 220 in 1913 at 22.8 seconds.

Rounding out track and field is one of the most competitive events called the **decathlon**. Back in 1914, **Edward Solomon Butler** decided he could still, while in high school, compete in multiple track and field events. At the Rock Island High School meet in Illinois, Butler won five events at that one meet: the 100 yard, 200 yard, and 400 yard races, and the high jump and broad jump. At his home school, Hutchinson High, he also played football and basketball. While at the University of Iowa in 1915, Butler set records in multiple track and field events which went unbroken at his school until 1939. Later, the famed **Jesse Owens** set seven world records during his career which earned him four **gold** medals at the 1936 **Olympics** in Berlin, Germany. **track and field** was well grounded and, to this date, has held up as the strongest participatory athletic event for African Americans in the sports arena.



BASKETBALL

James A. Naismith, a Canadian YMCA instructor, created **basketball**, a true American pastime, in 1891 as a team sport that could be played indoors during the winter months. Naismith was a physical education instructor at the School for Christian Workers which later became Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts. Basketball caught on fast, due to its fun and simplicity as an organized team sport. Males as well as females could play basketball. Secondary schools, colleges and universities, and private clubs embraced the team sport of basketball. Except for certain secondary school basketball players, the majority of African American players were confined and forced to play mainly as all-black teams. Local all-black basketball teams were organized and flourished as early as 1907 under such clubs as the **Smart Set Club**, the **St. Christopher Athletic Club**, the **Olympian Athletic Club**, the **Jersey City YMCA**, and the **Crescent Athletic Club**. Most of the early African American star players came about due to hours of hard practice with these highly competitive all-black teams. The best players from colleges were soon part of the **Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Association** and the **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference** which started in 1912 as a way to promote amateur and professional issues of basketball.

Some of the newly formed all-black professional teams were the **Monticello Delaney Rifles** of Pittsburgh, the **Incorporators** of New York City, and the **Kansas City Diamonds** of Kansas City.

Missouri. Between 1909 and 1913, the name of one African American club owner named **Cumberland Posey** created the stellar, undefeated team of the **Monticellos** of Pittsburgh (1909-1912). In 1913, he formulated a new championship team, **The Loendi Big Five**. This African American team dominated the world of black basketball until the arrival of the familiar **New York Renaissance** (The Rens) of 1923-1949, under the ownership of **Robert J. Douglas**, and the **Harlem Globetrotters**, established in 1927, but had to travel about America playing only other all-black teams. The **Loendi Big Five Team of Pittsburgh** and the **Incorporators of New York City** played a style of basketball which was aggressive, quick, and very physical. These teams were watched, and they set the pace for future imitators of basketball as an American spectator sport. At the same time, these team players as professionals earned only \$25.00 per game while working their daily jobs. As the sports fans and arenas grew, basketball took off as a full time professional players job.

Up until the year of 1950, colleges and universities, mainly in the **South** (U.S.A.), were forbidden to have black-white team sports due to **Jim Crow Laws**. The ABA, American Basketball Association, was organized in 1925, but **no** African Americans could join. This was true also for the BAA, the Basketball Association of America, formed in 1946. Some predominantly white universities in the **North** (U.S.A.) did use African Americans on their **basketball teams** in the pre-1950's. Some examples were: **Bob Yancy** and **Ben Franklin** of **Boston University** in 1937, **Lawrence Bleach** of **Detroit University** in 1937, and **William "Dolly" King** of **Long Island University** (in Brooklyn), 1937. King was also the **first** African American player in the **National AAU Tournament** in 1937. He also played football at **L.I.U.** in 1937. William King later played professional ball for the Scranton Miners, the Rens, the Washington Bears, and, by 1946, he played for the Rochester Royals, a national Basketball League. **Hats off L.I.U. Brooklyn!**

The 1950's were the beginning of big changes for African Americans in the world of **basketball**. **Chuck Cooper** became the **first** African American to play in the **NBA**. From 1950 to 1960, **basketball** saw the arrivals of **Bill Russell**, **Wilt Chamberlain**, **Oscar Robertson**, and **Elgin Baylor**. These players started the ball rolling for **Erving**, **Malone**, **Bird**, **Magic**, **Sampson**, **Jordan**, ..., ..., and on....

MICHAEL JORDAN

THE MAKING OF AN ATHLETE

Michael Jordan, superstar of the **Chicago Bulls**, was born on February 17, 1963 in **Brooklyn, New York**. When he was still a baby, Michael's parent's, **James** and **Deloris**, moved with Michael and his older brother, **Larry**, to live in the small town of Wallace, North Carolina. Seven years later, the family moved to Wilmington, North Carolina. Michael's parents had three other children: a brother, **Ronald**, and two sisters, **Delores** and **Roslyn**, while living in Wilmington. Both of Michael's parents worked. James Jordan was a supervisor at a General Electric plant, and Mrs. Jordan worked at the United Carolina Bank as head customer services representative.

When Michael was a young chap, he would watch his dad, James, repairing or fixing household

items in his workshop. Mr. Jordan, whenever he was in deep concentration, would stick his tongue out while doing his work. Therefore, Michael soon used his tongue to concentrate while involved in his tasks. Michael was not pushed into sports as a youngster. But he loved to eat, therefore he learned to cook, clean, and even sew. Michael never learned to swim due to losing a friend while "fooling around" the water shoreline of the Atlantic Ocean. Both Michael and his friend were swept out into deeper water. His friend drowned, but Michael made it back to shore. Michael was seven at the time. When he was ten, Michael noticed that most of the popular boys at his school were into sports. He also noticed how the girls paid attention to athletes. Michael joined the **little league baseball team** where he won his first **state championship**, and he received the **Most Valuable Player Award**. Michael even got his picture in the sports section of the *Wilmington Morning Star* newspaper. His talent for baseball made people think that, maybe someday, **Michael** would go into the **major leagues**.

This direction suddenly changed at age thirteen. Michael discovered he had a strong propensity for playing the sport of **basketball**. Michael and his older brother, Larry, would play endless hours of basketball in their homemade backyard court. Michael played a hard hustle, but he would never win. The sport made him tougher, and he started to develop his style of basketball by **running** and **jumping hard** and **fast**. They gave him the nickname of "**Rabbit**." Michael's hard practice earned him a position on his Junior High School Basketball Team. James and Deloris were always there in the gym bleachers cheering and supporting Michael and his older brother, Larry, whenever they played basketball. At **Laney High School** in Wilmington, **Larry** Jordan, the twelfth grader, made the Varsity team, even at five feet seven inches tall, based upon his quick moves and excellent skills. Michael, the tenth grader, did not make the team even though he was now six feet tall. His coaches felt he was not "tall enough or big enough to play varsity ball." This disappointment made Michael literally cry. He decided that he never wanted to experience that feeling again. Knowing the feeling of disappointment and loosing made Michael Jordan tougher and extremely competitive!

By the junior year at **Laney High**, Michael had improved his **game**, and, over the summer, he grew four and one half inches in height. **Now**, at six-four and one half in height, he could finally out-basket his brother, Larry. Michael also made **Laney High's** varsity team. It was a while before Michael began outshining his fellow players. It all started when **Laney** played **New Hanover High School** in a regional tournament. **Laney** was behind in points, but Michael knew they could win. Michael put on a show by landing baskets from all over the court. He scored the last 15 points with the winning jump shot at the buzzer. Michael knew how to concentrate under pressure. Michael also brought his uncanny ability in making baskets by leaping, twirling, or jumping into the air. His coordination sort of synchronized with the floor to the top of the basket. As he practiced these routines, he got better and better. Michael Jordan became so obsessed with playing basketball, he started heading for the gym and skipping his classes. He was suspended twice, and his dad reprimanded him for his unruly behavior. Michael wanted to play college basketball, therefore focusing on getting out of high school was his dad's advice.

The coaches were watching Michael, and he was given a chance to compete in the **Five-Star Basketball Camp** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The camp was a mixture of the best **high school players** in America. Michael Jordan was so outstanding, he earned nine separate trophies for his two week camp stay playing basketball. He also won the **Most Valuable Player Award**. Michael's skills only got better at **Laney High** during his senior year. He was averaging 28 points per game. Michael graduated from **Laney** in the **spring** of 1981. After some scouting, he selected the University of North Carolina at **Chapel Hill** as his college choice. Michael had to be good, for on the college **Tar Heels** basketball team were **James Worthy**, **Geoff Compton**, **Mitch Kupchak**, and **Al Wood**.

At North Carolina, Jordan, the freshman, was selected to the starting lineup to play with the **Tar**

Heels. Jordan immediately proved his worth among his veteran teammates. He averaged 13.5 points per game. In his first college tournament, he brought the **Tar Heels** to victory over **Virginia**, 47-45. Next, the **Tar Heels** were in the finals against **The Hoyas** of **Georgetown** and their star team player, **Patrick Ewing**, for the **NCAA** championship. In the huge sports arena, the **Louisiana Superdome** in New Orleans, Michael Jordan was in the eyes of over 62,000 fans. In the final seconds, Michael Jordan shoots the final points and saved the game for the **Tar Heels**, 63-62, over the **Hoyas** of **Georgetown**. The **Tar Heels** had not won a national championship **since 1957**. This game had the fans calling him the "**Last Shot**" man, and "**Superman**" Jordan was on the road to fame. Jordan made the **All-American Team** for the 1982-1983 season, and the magazine, **Sporting News**, named him **College Player of the Year**. This honor was based upon Jordan's record of **rebounds**, **block shots**, **guarding ability**, **steal shots**, and, most vital, his uncanny ability to **make late plays** which could **win games**.

Michael Jordan left the University of North Carolina in his **junior year** of 1984 for his chance in the **pro's** of the **NBA**. He was the **third pick** for the **NBA Draft**. Jordan went to the **Chicago Bulls** in a contract package for 6.15 million for seven seasons. By the way, the **first pick** in the 1984 **draft** was **Hakeem Olajuwon**, who went to **Houston**.

Michael Jordan spent the **summer** of 1984 in Los Angeles as part of the **Olympic Games**. The American **Olympic Basketball Team** - except for the 1972 game with a loss to the USSR - had won sixty-three of its games in a row. **Jordan** averaged 17 points per game in 1984's victorious American Olympic team.

All eyes were again on Michael Jordan, the rookie of the **Chicago Bulls**. **Jordan's** game was, from the start, an eyeful. He mesmerized the fans with his high aerial acrobatics, his quick sudden turns, and slam-dunk points. A series of wins pushed Jordan to the spotlight and a selected spot in the **NBA All-Star Game**. **Jordan** now was face to face with the best: **Magic Johnson**, **Isiah Thomas**, **Larry Bird**, **Julius Erving**, and **Dominique Wilkins**.

The **Chicago Bulls** improved its record in the 1984-1985 season to 38 wins and 44 losses. The **Bulls** lost in the playoffs, but they were on their way with **Jordan's** help. The 1985-1986 season saw **Jordan** with an ankle injury, which kept him out of other games for several months. The fear of not being able to play, or to sit out the season, was not for Jordan. **Michael Jordan**, in his first game back, proved to his fans he could still soar over other players to the top of the rim. Although the **Bulls** lost to the **Celtics**, 135-131 in a double overtime, **Jordan** proved his game even after coming off an injury.

The 1986-1987 saw a new coach and **Jordan** playing basketball as it had never been played before. **Jordan's** exciting dunks and "hangtime" saw a man staying in the air longer than any other player ever! **Jordan** became known as the "**King of Dunks**." **Jordan** also added to the record books on points made without a miss. He did 23 consecutive points against the **Atlanta Hawks**. By the 1987-1988 season, **Jordan** had the support of two new players: **Scottie Pippen** and **Horace Grant**. The 1988-1989 season elevated the **Bulls** to the **Eastern Conference** when they beat the **New York Knicks**, 115-111. **Jordan** and the **Bulls** had to face the powerhouse - the **Detroit Pistons** - with teammates **Joe Dumars**, **Dennis Rodman**, **Isiah Thomas**, and **John Salley**. Despite some wins, the **Bulls** went home without the 1988-89 NBA title. **Phil Jackson** came aboard for the 1989-1990 season as the new coach of the **Bulls**. Again, the Bulls moved up to the Eastern Conference level only to lose to the **Detroit Pistons** again. The previous year of 1988-1989 also brought Michael Jordan a new contract: twenty-five million dollars over a period of eight years - the **richest contract** ever signed by a **basketball player**.

The **endorsements** also poured into the realm of Michael Jordan. His popularity and celebrity status as a basketball player earned him an estimated thirty-two million dollars in 1992. We all

know of **Nike**. His "**Air Jordan**" shoes, when they hit the market, were expected to generate about three million, but, instead, they generated over one hundred million in sales for **one year**. **Nike clothes** came next. **Wilson Sporting Goods** sold the **Michael Jordan Basketballs**. **Jordan** was the first basketball player to appear on the **Wheaties** cereal box. Then came others: **Coca-Cola**, **Gatorade**, **Chevrolet**, **Hanes**, and **McDonald's**. **Jordan** then decided to establish his own company, **Jordan Universal Marketing and Promotions** and the **Michael Jordan Foundation**. In **September** of 1989, Michael Jordan married **Juanita Vanoy**, and they moved to a new home in the suburbs of Chicago. Michael, like his father, is a strong family man for his two sons, **Jeffrey Michael** and **Marcus James**, and wife Juanita.

Michael Jordan was an all around success by the 1990-1991 season, but he had yet to bring his Chicago Bulls team to the ultimate championship in the NBA. Jordan had become so much a part of the winning behind the Bulls that the other teams began to see **him** as **THE Bulls**. Jordan did **not** like this myth, and he wanted everyone to know and see the total strength of his team. From wining over the New York Knicks to their victory over the Philadelphia 76ers to overcoming and beating the Detroit Pistons to take the Eastern Conference and finally facing the **Los Angeles Lakers** and **Magic Johnson** to **win the Bulls first championship** (108 to 101), **Jordan** and the 1991 Bulls were finally seen as a team. In the 1991-1992 season, we saw the **Bulls** winning its **second NBA championship** against the **Portland Trail Blazers** (97 to 93).

On to Barcelona, Spain with the 1992 **Dream Team** of the United States Olympic Basketball Team and the **best** in basketball, the **ten** players were:

- **Chris Mullin**
- **Charles Barkley**
- **Larry Bird**
- **Karl Malone**
- **John Stockton**
- **David Robinson**
- **Patrick Ewing**
- **Clyde Drexler**
- **Scottie Pippen**
- **Michael Jordan**

Christian Laettner and Magic Johnson also joined the ten players. No Contest. The Team beat all opponents for the **gold** in basketball.

The 1993-1994 season was on, but Michael and Juanita saw the birth of their third child, a daughter, **Jasmine**. Jordan was now up against the **Phoenix Suns** with the likes of **Charles Barkley**. The Bulls took their **third NBA championship** in the sixth game by 99 to 98 over the **Suns**. The summer of 1993 saw **Michael Jordan** with the loss of "**his best friend**," his dad, **James Jordan**, who had been murdered on a lonely road in **North Carolina**.

On October 6, 1993, Michael Jordan retired from basketball. "There was nothing left for him to accomplish on the court." Michael went back to the University of North Carolina and completed his bachelor's degree with a major in Geology. **Jordan** tried a stint in baseball with the **Chicago White Sox**, February 1994-95. After seventeen months, **His Airness, Michael Jordan** - on **March 18, 1995**, in his new number: 45 - returned to **Basketball** and the **Bulls**.

THE LEGEND GOES ON!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Sports				
Baseball	Basketball	Boxing	Cycling	Fencing
Football	Golf	Gymnastics	Handball	Horse Racing
Ice Hockey	Olympics	Skiing	Soccer	Tennis
Track and Field				
Special Topics				
Fame and Stardom	Sports and Money	Sports History		
Coaches, Basketball	Coaches, Football	Managers, Baseball		
Women's Basketball	College Athletes	High School Basketball		
Personalities				
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar	Arthur Ashe	Rahsaan Bahati		
Dominique Dawes	Lee Elder	Zina Garrison		
Grant Hill	Allen Iverson	Larry Johnson		
Michael Jordan	Cheryl Miller	Hakeem Olajuwon		
Shaquille O'Neal	Jesse Owens	Gary Payton		
Paul Robeson	Jackie Robinson	Dennis Rodman		
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[Golf](#)

[Horse Racing](#)

[Baseball -- History](#)

[Track and Field -- History](#)

[Cycling -- History](#)

[Football -- History -- Paul Robeson](#)

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Thanks,

Melvin Sylvester



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