

Jim Crow and Sports

By Jean M. West

"Citius, Altius, Fortius" (Swifter, Higher, Stronger) is the motto of the International Olympic movement, but it also captures the spirit embodied by African-American athletes who have smashed virtually every color barrier in sports. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the history of Jim Crow and sports is like the plot of a B-grade sports movie, where the spunky, talented kid gets a break, wins the game, and lives happily ever after. The age and degree of a sport's professional organization, economic factors (ranging from cost of participation to financial rewards for the victors and their sponsors), and individual personalities all interacted with segregation law and discriminatory attitudes to such a degree that generalizations about Jim Crow and sports are difficult.

Although Jackie Robinson's breakthrough in Major League baseball is the most recognizable benchmark for measuring the end of Jim Crow in professional sports, there were dozens of "Jackie Robinsons," male and female--many of them unknown outside of their sport or era--who had to perform swifter, higher, and stronger while also acting as pioneers for their race. Their resistance, persistence, and excellence on field, ball court, arena, course, track, and sports venues of every description created the foundation for integrated sports on which the opportunity and accomplishment of Barry Bonds, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and all other outstanding or aspiring African-American athletes stand.

Track and Field

From the Colonial Era through the Civil War, sports competition was a form of entertainment and recreation for all Americans including both free and enslaved African Americans, who competed from the earliest times. Footraces, contests of strength, wrestling, boxing, and sharp-shooting were especially popular during holidays or at fairs. Amateur events died out as organized bodies, such as the New York Athletic Club (1866) and the Amateur Athletic Union (1888), adopted field and track standards for speed and distance. Sports acquired rules, organizing bodies, sponsors, and dedicated venues at a time when sporting events became increasingly popular and better advertised through the expanding medium of newspapers. Throughout the 19th century, as spectators paid to see or wager on sporting events and as organizers attracted talent by offering salaries or prize money to competitors (especially in boxing and horse-racing), athletes turned professional.

With the increasing importance of money in sports, racial divisions increased as well. Neither the New York Athletic Club (NYAC) nor the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) admitted African-American field and track competitors. African Americans had to find a different means of participating in these events. Segregated Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA's) and schools sponsored the earliest African-American competitors in organized events like the Penn Relay in Philadelphia. When the Tuskegee Institute hired James B. Washington as athletic director in 1890, African-American colleges began to develop their student-athletes' talents, as well. A handful of northern universities recruited African-American athletes, beginning with William Tecumseh Sherman Jackson, Amherst's 1890 champion half-mile sprinter. Fame on a broader stage came to John Baxter "Doc" Taylor, 1907 Intercollegiate Amateur Athletic Association champion and 1908 gold medalist in the 4 x 400 meter relay. No American track athlete has ever outshone the incomparable Jesse Owens of Ohio State University who set seven world records and won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Owens was one of 18 African-American athletes who won 14 of the 56 U.S. medals at the 1936 games, thoroughly deflating Hitler's theory of the master Aryan race and demolishing Jim Crow's assumptions of racial inferiority.

To the present day, African Americans continue to be well represented in field and track events. Although the events themselves do not offer great financial rewards, top male and female

athletes attract lucrative advertising endorsement contracts and may enter post-competition careers in coaching and motivational speaking.

Boxing

As with track and field, boxing has been an outlet for African-American athletes from colonial times. The earliest boxing rules, Broughton's Rules, were created in England in 1743 (replaced by the Queensbury Rules in 1872 that ended bare-knuckle fights). Two African-American boxers, William Richmond of New York and Tom Molineaux of Virginia, fought in England for boxing championships in the early 1800s. However, it was not until 1902 that Joe Gans became the first African American to actually win a world boxing championship as a lightweight who overcame Frank Erne in Canada, and two years later as a welterweight defeating Jimmy Britt.

The very lucrative and prestigious title of world heavyweight boxing champion was racially charged by the beginning of the 20th century. In 1908, African-American heavyweight Jack Johnson won the title from Canadian champion Tommy Burns in Sydney, Australia. The results, however, were not recognized until 1910 when Johnson defeated retired heavyweight champion Jim Jeffries in Reno, Nevada. Jeffries, a man who had once proclaimed, "I will not fight a Negro!" and was perceived as the "Great White Hope," conceded, "I could never have whipped Johnson at my best, I couldn't have hit him. No, I couldn't have reached him in 1,000 years." Johnson won the largest purse in history to that date: \$117,000. Johnson's personal life made him an unpopular champion with many Caucasians both inside and outside the United States. It wasn't until Joe Louis defeated German boxer Max Schmeling, shattering Hitler's racist theories, that an African American was truly admired and embraced as America's world champion by a majority of Americans.

African Americans participate in the sport of boxing at all levels today, continuing to generate new champions, some controversial like Mike Tyson, others tremendously popular such as Sugar Ray Leonard. Yet, of all the champions, only one has fought his way through controversy to compel virtually universal admiration: Muhammad Ali. An Olympic gold medalist and a man who won and lost the world heavyweight championship three times, he defied racketeers, the U.S. government's policy in Vietnam, public opinion as he converted to Islam, and Parkinson's disease to light not only the Olympic flame cauldron at the centennial games in Atlanta in 1996, but also the way for all African-American athletes. Boxing, fostered by groups such as the Police Athletic League, continues to be a popular sport among young, predominantly urban African Americans, and, with such celebrity bouts as the one between Laila Ali and Jacqui Frazier, has begun attracting young women as well as young men.

Horse Racing, Equine Events, Bicycle Racing, Automobile Racing

In the tradition of the English gentry's recreational sports, where estate servants who groomed and exercised horses became trainers and jockeys, prosperous southern plantation owners assigned astute slaves to ride their best horses in prize races. Top competitors and those who sponsored them could earn fame and fortune as money purses grew and wagers became more extravagant, involving not only cash but also valuable commodities such as cotton and tobacco, slaves, and land. Early records indicate an African-American jockey, "Monkey" Simon, rode at Clover Bottom Race Track near Nashville, Tennessee, in 1806.

The dominant role of African Americans in horse racing peaked in the years between the end of the Civil War and 1900, when segregation extinguished their opportunity in the sport. African-American jockey, Ed Brown, won the fourth running of the Belmont Stakes in 1870. Thirteen of the 15 jockeys who rode in the first Kentucky Derby on May 17, 1875, were African-American, including Oliver Lewis, whose winning mount, Aristides, was trained by African-American Ansel Williamson. Over the next 28 years, 11 African-American riders won 15 Derbies. Willie Simms is

the only African-American jockey to win all three legs of the Triple Crown (in separate years); Simms won the Belmont (1893, 1894), the Kentucky Derby (1896, 1898) and the Preakness Stakes (on Sly Fox on June 11, 1898.)

Between 1921 and 2000, no African-American jockey would ride in a Triple Crown race. Marlon St. Julian's ride in the Kentucky Derby of 2000 broke this drought. Some successful African-American entrepreneurs are now becoming owners in this expensive sport, including Motown's Barry Gordy, whose Vista Stable produced 1994 Kentucky Derby contender Powis Castle (finished 8th in the field). The equestrian dressage/jumping circuit, dominated by wealthy international riders, attracts few African Americans, although Virginia Mealing Plancke was successful in the jumper division in the 1990s. Similarly, no African-American driver had ever competed in harness racing's most prestigious race, the Hambletonian, until DeWayne Minor in 2000. Even rodeo competition, with roots in an era when a fifth of all cowboys were African-American, excluded non-whites in the early days, 1911 Pendleton Roundup champion George Fletcher being an exception. Rodeo attracts few people of color today, although 1982 bull-riding champion Charlie Sampson excelled in the sport. The urbanization of African-American youth and the costs associated with horses have both vastly reduced the number of potential African-American competitors in equine sports and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

The technological successors to horse racing, bicycle and automobile racing, emerged at the height of segregation. Both African-American cyclists and drivers were barred from major races. In 1894, bicycling's League of American Wheelmen explicitly stated it was a "whites only" organization. However, Marshall "Major" Taylor succeeded in registering with the New York City racing board and, in 1899, won the world championship in Montreal; he was the first African American to hold an international title in any sport. The decline of the popularity of competitive bicycling in the United States has made it a sport of marginal interest to the African-American community; however, in 1998, Al Whaley won the Masters World Championship to become the first African-American bicycling champion of the modern era.

In automobile racing, attempts to create separate racing circuits for African-American drivers failed due to the expense of automobiles, the lack of sponsors and prize money, and the absence of an African-American racing spectator base. Wendell O. Scott became the first African-American to break into NASCAR's Grand National Circuit, competing in nearly 500 races between 1961 and 1973, while Willie T. Ribbs raced in the 1991 Indianapolis 500. However, the expense and lack of an African-American tradition in automobile racing have continued to make it a rare choice for black athletes.

Football and Soccer

Emerging from English ball games in the 19th century, U.S. football is usually dated to November 6, 1869, when Rutgers played Princeton (then the College of New Jersey) in the first intercollegiate game. Beginning in the 1880s through 1911, Walter Camp of Yale University was the major force in formalizing the rules of this distinct ball game and also inventing the All-American Team. As in the case of track and field, Northeastern and Midwestern colleges recruited some African-American athletes. The first African-American, All-American football player was Amherst College center William Henry Lewis. And, in 1916, Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard became the first African-American collegiate player to appear in the Rose Bowl. As professional football developed on the regional level, some teams also signed top African-American players. The first of these was Charles Follis, the "Black Cyclone from Wooster," who played for two years with the Shelby Athletic Association before injury forced him out of football and into Negro League baseball.

The American Professional Football Association organized for play in autumn 1920; it changed its name to the National Football League (NFL) in 1922. From the beginning, integration was limited, with Robert "Rube" Marshall playing for the Rock Island Independents and "Fritz" Pollard for the

Akron Professionals. Pollard made additional history in 1923 when he became the head coach of the Akron Pros. Paul Robeson, who achieved even greater fame as a singer/activist, went from being All-American end in 1918 to a playing two-year stint in the NFL. Then, in 1933, the NFL reversed itself and excluded African-American football players.

This color line was permanently broken in 1946, when the Los Angeles Rams signed Kenny Washington and Woody Strode, and the Cleveland Browns hired Marion Motley and Bill Willis. Although the Washington Redskins were the last team to integrate (hiring Bobby Mitchell in 1962), they were the first to be led to a Super Bowl victory by an African-American quarterback (Doug Williams, 1988). In 1989, three years after "Fritz" Pollard's death, the Los Angeles Raiders signed Art Shell to be the first African-American head coach of a professional football team in the modern era. African Americans also had to challenge racist notions about their leadership abilities, and did so as Burl Toler became a field judge (1965-1989), Johnny Grier a referee (beginning in 1988), and Gene Upshaw the president and executive director of the NFL Player's Association. Because of the scarcity and cost, ownership of an NFL franchise has eluded African-American entrepreneurs; but, given the opportunity, African-Americans have excelled in every other aspect of the sport of football, from high school to collegiate to professional play and coaching.

Soccer on the professional level in the United States has arrived so recently that it atypical in the history of Jim Crow and sport. Throughout most of the 19th century, various ball sports (rugby, soccer, and football) were differentiating themselves, especially on the college campuses where they were most commonly played. During the 1870s and 1880s, when football emerged as the most popular collegiate level sport, soccer became the game of the immigrant working class, attracting players of all races and national origins. The American Soccer League of the 1920s had begun to attract a fan base and the financial strength to attract top players when the Depression caused it to collapse. In the decades following World War II, U.S. soccer failed to pull itself out of amateur or semipro regional leagues and establish a viable national professional league, in contrast with basketball, which galvanized public attention.

Certainly, there were world caliber players of African origin on teams of this era. Pelé, the first international soccer superstar to attract a U.S. following beginning in 1975 while playing for the New York Cosmos, was a Brazilian of African descent. With the improvement in U.S. players' performance in this most competitive of sports, came the creation of Major League Soccer in 1995 and the Women's United Soccer Association in 2000. Some African-American soccer stars may be on the horizon to popularize the game; for instance, Briana Scurry, goalkeeper of the 1996 Olympic gold medal team and the 1999 Women's World Cup Championship team, and Cobi Jones, Eddie Pope, Tony Sanneh, and DaMarcus Beasley of the astonishingly successful 2002 World Cup quarterfinals team. However, while more Americans play soccer than ever before, the sport still does not attract as many African-American student athletes as do basketball, football, and baseball. One contributor to this problem is that, beyond the collegiate level, most U.S. players must become expatriates if they want soccer stardom and substantial financial reward.

Basketball

Canadian YMCA instructor James A. Naismith, wanting a winter team sport that would be simple and exciting, invented the game of basketball at the International YMCA Training School in 1891. The sport spread quickly across the wide network of the YMCA facilities and beyond, to secondary schools, colleges, and sporting clubs. In 1902, African-American basketball player Harry "Bucky" Lew integrated the professional level New England Basketball League, playing for Lowell and Newbury-Haverhill. Yet, most African-American players were barred from interracial competition and had to play on all-black teams--or, not at all. To meet their need, the Interscholastic Association of the Middle States (ISAA) organized an African-American basketball league in 1905. Brooklyn's Smart Set Athletic Club, begun in 1906 under ISAA auspices, was the first African-American men's basketball club; by 1907, there were 40 ISAA basketball clubs.

Smart Set also formed a women's basketball team before World War I. The YMCA continued to introduce large numbers of African-American athletes to basketball and eventually formed its own intercity league. In 1910, the top YMCA club, Washington, DC's 12th Street team, defeated the ISAA champion Smart Set team.

Black entrepreneur Cumberland Posey assembled the first great African-American barnstorming team, Pittsburgh's Monticello Rifles, which played on the eastern circuit. This undefeated club (1909-1912), with its dazzling fast play, was emulated by college players. Posey created a new championship team in 1913, the Loendi Big Five, which dominated African-American basketball until Robert Douglas assembled the New York Renaissance team in Harlem. Under Douglas' coaching and ownership (1923-1949), the New York Rens won 2,588 games. Douglas would become the first African American inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

In 1925, when the American Basketball Association organized, it specifically excluded African-American players. Consequently, a group of players from Wendell Philips High School in Chicago were forced in 1927 to organize as the Savoy Big Five barnstorming team. When agent Abe Saperstein renamed them the Harlem Globetrotters, one of the most successful, talented, and popular teams in the history of basketball entered the American sports scene. Quick, physical, and with unparalleled ball-handling skills, the Globetrotters suffered all the indignities of travel under Jim Crow restrictions: pay that was not commensurate with their skills and the need to use clowning and gimmickry to make their victories over white teams palatable to their audiences. Nonetheless, they prevailed, flourished, and continue to dazzle audiences decades later.

African-American women faced gender, as well as racial, discrimination in sports; but, pioneers in the 1930s paved the way for today's Women's National Basketball Association. The Philadelphia Tribune Girls were organized in 1931 and featured tennis champion Ora Mae Washington. The Chicago Romas emerged as the top women's team after World War II, remaining undefeated for six years. These and other barnstorming women's teams introduced the sport to African-American girls across the country. Finally, in 1985, Lynette Woodard was hired by the Harlem Globetrotters, signaling that African-American women were performing at the peak of the game.

Some northern colleges and universities broached the color barrier by including African-Americans on their basketball teams in the 1930s. Columbia's George Gregory, Jr., became the first African American to be named an All-American basketball player in 1931. In 1937, Long Island University's William "Dolly" King became the first African-American basketball player to participate in the National Amateur Athletic Union tournament. The barrier to professional interracial play fell shortly afterwards, in 1939, when Chicago hosted the World Professional Basketball Tournament. The New York Rens defeated the National Basketball League's white Oshkosh All-Stars by 34-23.

In 1942, the color barrier in professional basketball was smashed as Bill Jones and three other African-American players joined the Toledo Jim White Chevrolet NBL franchise and five former Harlem Globetrotters joined the Chicago Studebakers. The West Coast professional leagues followed suit in 1944, when Kenny Washington joined the Hollywood Bears (before breaking the color line in the NFL two years later) and Jackie Robinson joined the Los Angeles Bulldogs (before he historically integrated Major League baseball in 1947). In 1948, Don Barksdale became the first African-American player named to a U.S. Olympic basketball team and won a gold medal at the post-war London Olympics. Nonetheless, when Walter Brown of Boston formed the Basketball Association of America in 1946, the league's rules banned African-American players.

On April 25, 1950, however, Chuck Cooper, the first African-American player to participate in the National Basketball Association (NBA) draft, made basketball history when the Boston Celtics signed him to their team. Yet, due to scheduling, the first African American to actually play in an NBA game was Washington Capitals player Earl Lloyd, on October 31, 1950. Throughout the

1950s, more African-American players were signed to the NBA, including future Hall of Famers Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, Elgin Baylor, and Oscar Robertson. As in baseball and football, integration of players led to the integration of management. In 1966, William F. "Bill" Russell became the first African-American coach of an NBA team, the Boston Celtics. Russell led them to back-to-back league championships in 1968 and 1969. And, in 1968, Jackie White served as the first African-American NBA referee at a Chicago Bull-Cincinnati Royals game in Cleveland; then, in 1997, the first African-American women referees entered the sport; they were Dee Kantner and Violet Palmer. Wayne Embry became the first general manager of African origin, not only in the NBA, but also in all of professional sports in 1971, when he assumed control of the Milwaukee Bucks.

African-American women have played an increasingly important role in basketball. In 1977, Lucy Harris, a silver medalist from the 1976 Olympics, was drafted by the NBA New Orleans Jazz. Although she never played, it was a breakthrough for all women in professional sports. In June 1997, the NBA organized the 8-team Women's National Basketball Association, the WNBA, including top African-American Olympians Lisa Leslie (Los Angeles Sparks) and Sheryl Swoopes, the first woman to have an athletic shoe, "Air Swoopes," named after her.

African-American preeminence in basketball dates back to 1966 when Texas Western's all-black starting five defeated the University of Kentucky's all-white starting five to become the NCAA Finals champions. In April 1984, Georgetown University's coach, John Thompson, became the first African American to coach his team to the NCAA Division I Championship. Rising from the college ranks to the professional level of the NBA, African Americans now hold nearly 80% of the positions in the NBA. As cultural icons, the athletes' whose portraits appear on Wheaties Cereal boxes are very special; the Chicago Bull's legendary Michael Jordan was the first African-American basketball player so honored (1988). While basketball is an appealing sport readily available to children of all economic classes in all geographic regions and provides health and social benefits to all participants, the number of positions available in professional basketball is quite small. Players who aspire to life-long association with the sport must accept that very few of them will become highly paid NBA players and sports commentators; most will be coaches at the secondary school or college level, enjoying the reward of sharing the sport with young people rather than huge financial rewards.

Hockey -- Winter Sports -- Water Sports

The game of hockey emerged in Northern Europe in the 1800s and was brought to Canada by British soldiers around 1870. Hockey became so popular that, in 1892, the Governor General of Canada, Lord Stanley of Preston, purchased a silver bowl to be awarded annually to the best amateur hockey team; the Stanley Cup is now awarded to the winner of the National Hockey League (NHL) playoffs. The NHL was organized on November 26, 1917, and consisted of five teams, all of which were Canadian. At the time, the Canadian population of African origin was only about 16,000, but they did play hockey. Some players participated in integrated teams, while others played on all-black teams, such as the players of the Colored Hockey League in the Maritime Provinces, against all-white teams. Few non-Canadians were hired to play for the NHL, even though Boston acquired the first U.S. NHL franchise, the Bruins, in 1924. Canadians of African heritage did not play for the NHL until 1958, although the Toronto St. Pats scouted Fred "Bud" Kelly in 1916 and the New York Rangers invited Quebec's Herb Carnegie to training camp in 1947, offering him a minor-league contract with one of their farm teams, which he declined. Finally, Canadian-born Willie O'Ree was hired by the Boston Bruins and played his first game against the Canadiens in Montreal on January 18, 1958.

Nevertheless, hockey has not seen a great influx of players of African heritage into the NHL, although Mike Marston, Tony McKegney, goalie Grant Fuhr of the Stanley Cup championship Edmonton Oilers, Anson Carter of the 1997 Canadian World Championship team, and 2002 NHL scoring champion, Jarome Iginla, have extended the tradition of African-Canadian excellence on

the ice. The first professional hockey team coach of African ancestry was John Paris of the Atlanta Knights, International Hockey League. The NHL has a Diversity Task Force and its teams now include around 30 minority players. Due to the expense of youth hockey, ice hockey's relative lack of youth and amateur leagues in the U.S., the competition of Russian, Northern, and Eastern European athletes for positions on the 28 teams of the NHL, and African-Americans' perception that hockey offers them limited opportunities as a sport, it may be some years before there is a U.S. African-American player who becomes an NHL All-Star.

The costs for entering other winter sports, including ice-skating, speed-skating, skiing, and sled-type racing (luge, skeleton, bobsled) and winter sports' lack of traditional cultural resonance with many African Americans has kept many blacks from participating until recently. Mabel Fairbanks, a talented skater-performer from the 1940s, was unable to join professional ice skating clubs, yet she eventually became a top ice-skating coach. Her students included gold medalists Scott Hamilton and Christi Yamaguchi and 1980 Olympic pairs skaters Randy Gardner and Tai Babilonia (she of African-American ancestry). In 1986, figure skater Debi Thomas became the first African-American woman to win the U.S. and World championships; she subsequently won a bronze medal in the 1988 Olympics.

Those African-American athletes cross-training from football, roller-skating, sprinting and other summer sports have become increasingly successful in winter sports. The 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, provided breakthroughs, as Vonetta Flowers won gold on the 2-woman bobsled, followed by Randy Jones, Garret Hines, and Bill Schuffenhauer, who gold-medaled on the four-man bobsled. Further, Shani Davis became the first African-American Olympic speedskater, participating in the 1,000 meter short track event. However, because of the limited financial and career opportunities in most winter sports, they do not attract top African-American athletic talent.

Water sports, too, attract relatively few African-American competitors, whether fishing competitions, speedboat racing, rowing, or swimming. Ironically, the most prominent African American in international sports, Anita de Franz of the International Olympic Committee, began as a 1976 rowing bronze medalist. College programs are beginning to attract more African-American rowers and swimmers, and some have excelled in international competition, including the 2000 Henley Royal Regatta individual sculls champion, Aquila Abdulla, and 2000 Olympic 50-meter freestyle gold medalist, Anthony Ervin. The organization, People of Color Outdoors (POCO), created in 1997 for minority bass anglers, now boasts over 15,000 members. Although demographics and economics are depressing factors, the benefits of water sports in fitness and entertainment seem to be attracting increasing numbers of African-American participants.

Tennis -- Golf

Tennis and golf historically have been sports of the privileged, because they required leisure, wealth and special facilities, usually through country clubs that restricted access to members of racial, religious, and ethnic minorities until the middle of the 20th century. Although golf had been played earlier, the first golfing club organized in the United States was St. Andrew's of New York, which formed in 1888; within 12 years, however, there were more than 1000 clubs. In 1894, the United States Golf Association organized to regulate rules and handicapping and it held the first U.S. Open and Ladies Amateur Open the following year. During the construction of Shinnecock Hills golf course, Scotsman Willie Dunn began teaching local children the game, including Oscar Bunn, a member of the Shinnecock Indian tribe and 16 year-old African-American John M. Shippen, Jr. When the second U.S. Open was held at Shinnecock, several English and Scottish players told Dunn they would pull out if Shippen and Bunn played. Dunn ignored their threat, teed up the minority players, and proceeded with the tournament. All golfers entered in the tournament played and young Shippen came in fifth in the 36-hole event. He played in five more U.S. Opens, the last one in 1913.

All golfers benefited from the creativity of Boston's Dr. George F. Grant, an African-American golfing enthusiast who invented and patented the golf tee in 1899. However, when the Professional Golf Association (PGA) was formed by 35 charter members in New York City on April 10, 1916, it was an explicitly white-only organization. The Masters Tournament was first held in 1934 in Augusta, Georgia. Augusta, like nearly 5,000 other private and public golf facilities in the United States, excluded minority players, yet it permitted African-American caddies and groundsmen. As African Americans observed, learned the game, and began playing it themselves, they looked for venues and tournaments, forming the United Golfers Association in Washington, DC, in 1925. John Shippen, Jr., played in the first National Colored Golf Championship held at Shady Rest Golf Club in Westfield, New Jersey, that July but lost by three shots to young Harry Jackson. The National was the premier event for African-American golfers on the UGA summer tour until the 1980s. In 1946, Bill Powell broke different ground by becoming the first African American to design and build a golf course: Clearview Golf Course in East Canton, Ohio. (His daughter, Renee Powell, would become the second African-American woman, following in Althea Gibson's footsteps, to tour with the LPGA from 1967 to 1981.)

Tennessee-born Theodore "Ted" Rhodes became a dominant force on the UGA circuit in the postwar era. As golf instructor to boxer Joe Louis, they together began to probe the PGA's segregation rules. Then, in 1948, Rhodes, Bill Spiller, and Madison Gunther filed a civil suit against the PGA because of its "whites-only" policy. The PGA then changed to an "invitation-only" format, which allowed it to continue restricting access to most minority players, although it did invite Rhodes to play in the 1948 U.S. Open. Finally, in 1961, under pressure from the courts and public outcry, the PGA changed its rules again to permit African-American golfers the opportunity to participate. The following year, Charlie Sifford became the first African-American golfer on the PGA tour. In 1964, Pete Brown became the first African American to win a PGA title at the Waco Open. Lee Elder was the first African-American golfer to play for the United States on the Ryder Cup team (1979) and at the Masters Tournament at Augusta (1975); nonetheless, it was not until September 1990 that the Augusta National Golf Club admitted its first African-American member, Gannett Television and Nielsen Media Research executive Ron Townsend. In 1997, Eldrick T. "Tiger" Woods burst onto the international golf stage and became the first golfer of African-American ancestry to win the "grand slam" of major golf tournaments: the Masters, the U.S. Open, the British Open, and the PGA Championship. Woods' popularity and dominance has attracted minority golfers whose impact will begin to be felt in the decade to come.

Tennis has its origins in the medieval era, but the modern form of lawn tennis was patented in 1874 by Walter C. Wingfield in Great Britain. The first Wimbledon tournament was played in 1877. The first tennis court in the U.S. was built in 1876, and the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association was formed in 1881. International competition began in 1900 with the first Davis Cup tournament between the U.S. and Great Britain. African-American universities, including Tuskegee and Howard, offered tennis to students from the 1890s onward. Beginning in 1898 at Philadelphia's Chautauqua Tennis Club, African-American tennis players from the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast competed in invitational tournaments. When the USLTA issued a policy statement formally barring African-American tennis players from its competitions, the Association Tennis Club of Washington, DC, and the Monumental Tennis Club of Baltimore, Maryland, conceived the idea of the American Tennis Association. The ATA was formally organized on November 30, 1916, at the YMCA of Washington, DC. In August 1917, the ATA held the first National Championship Tournament at Druid Hill Park in Baltimore. Ora Mae Washington was undefeated in 12 years in the ATA (1924-1936), although she earned her living playing on the Philadelphia Tribune's women's basketball team. Dr. Reginald Weir of City College of New York dominated men's play winning five Nationals between 1931 and 1942.

The wall of segregation in tennis began to crumble when white player, Don Budge, who became the first American to win the "grand slam" of tennis (French Open, Wimbledon, U.S. Open, and Australian Open) in 1938, competed at the ATA-affiliated Cosmopolitan Tennis Club in New York City on July 29, 1940. Budge played and won a singles match against Jimmy McDaniel, the ATA

champion. He then paired in doubles with Dr. Weir against McDaniel and Richard Cohen. Weir again made history in 1948 when he competed in New York at the U.S. Indoor Lawn Tennis Championship.

The USLTA color line was finally broken with prodding from within the association by Alice Marble and Edward Niles and from outside by the ATA. In 1950, ATA women's champion Althea Gibson's applications to enter clay court and lawn tournaments were accepted. On August 28, 1950, Gibson became the first African American to play in the U.S. Open. During her first match a bolt of lightning struck and knocked a concrete eagle off the top of the stadium. Gibson thought, "It may have been an omen that times were changing."¹ Two years later, Reginald Weir and George Stewart would be the first African-American men to play at the U.S. Open at Forest Lawn, on August 29, 1952. Between 1956 and 1958, Althea Gibson was the world's dominant woman player. She won on clay at the French Open in 1956, as well as the All-England Lawn Tennis Women's Single's championship in 1957 and 1958 and the U.S. Open in both 1957 and 1958. She was also a finalist in the 1957 Australian Open.

The ATA worked to develop junior tennis players and their program yielded the first great African-American men's champion, Arthur Ashe. Prevented by Jim Crow laws from playing on the public tennis courts of his native Richmond, Virginia, Ashe nonetheless mastered the game. Mentored by Walter Johnson, who had coached Althea Gibson, Ashe won ATA championships and led UCLA to the NCAA tennis team championship in 1965, winning the singles championship himself. Ashe went on to become the first African American named to a Davis Cup team (1963) and the only man to win the U.S. National Championship and U.S. Open (1968), the year when the United States Professional Tennis Association replaced amateurs at Forest Lawn. He became the first African-American man to win two other grand slam events, the 1970 Australian Open and the 1975 All-England Lawn Tennis Men's Championship at Wimbledon.

In the late 1990s, African-American children inspired by Arthur Ashe began to come into their own. MaliVai Washington was a Wimbledon men's singles finalist in 1996. Even more dominant have been the Williams sisters, Venus and Serena. Venus has won grand slam events, including the 2000 and 2001 Wimbledon and U.S. Opens; but, younger sister Serena was the first African-American woman to win any grand slam event since Althea Gibson: she won the 1999 U.S. Open and the French Open (2002).

Major League Baseball and the Negro Leagues

In 1834, Robin Carver's *The Book of Sports*, established rules for a variety of games, including the American adaptation of the English game, rounders, called "Base or Goal Ball." Although Abner Doubleday is traditionally credited with creating the game, the Baseball Hall of Fame recognizes the 1845 rules created by Alexander Cartwright for the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York as the beginning of modern baseball. This club excluded African Americans. In contrast, the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) admitted some individual African-American players between 1858 and 1867. The first recorded African-American teams were the Uniques of Brooklyn and the Excelsiors of Philadelphia, who played in 1867. However, in December 1867, the NABBP voted to bar membership to any team with one or more African-American players, as well as all-black teams. They explained, "If colored clubs were admitted, there would be in all probability some division of feeling, whereas, by excluding them no injury could result to anyone."²

With the organization of the Cincinnati Red Stockings in 1869, professionalism arrived in baseball. The NABBP collapsed because of the split between amateur and professional ballplayers. When professional players organized the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players in 1871, the Philadelphia Pythians, Philadelphia's citywide champion all African-American team, was denied membership. Moses Fleetwood Walker, who, with his brother Weldy, helped organize the baseball team of Oberlin College and played varsity baseball for the

University of Michigan, signed in 1883 as barehanded catcher with the minor league, Toledo Blue Stockings. When Toledo joined the major league American Association in 1884, "Fleet" Walker became the first African-American professional baseball player. While he played without controversy in Toledo, Baltimore and Washington, DC, he was threatened in Louisville and Richmond. Walker continued to defy what became insurmountable player opposition led by Adrian "Cap" Anson of the Chicago White Stockings. Toledo teammate Tony Mullane conceded, "He was the best catcher I ever worked with," but admitted, "I disliked a Negro and whenever I had to pitch to him I used anything I wanted without looking at his signals."³ Released due to injury in 1884, "Fleet" Walker, along with other outstanding African-American players, including Lynn Live Oaks pitcher/second baseman John "Bud" Fowler, would compete in the International Association and International League on minor league teams from Canada and upstate New York. However, like the American Association in 1884, the International League caved in to player, spectator, and media pressure in 1887, after which it signed no new African-American talent. When "Fleet" Walker retired in 1890, professional baseball became entirely segregated. The color barrier would not be broken until Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers organization in late 1945.

Jackie Robinson's breakthrough transformed the majors fairly rapidly. The Boston Red Sox team, who had given Jackie Robinson a try-out in April 1945 and might have been the first desegregated team in the majors, was, in fact, the last team to integrate, bringing up Pumpsie Green in 1959. The minor leagues followed much more slowly, particularly in southern towns and cities, which in 1946, fielded 175 minor league teams. However, it wasn't until 1952 that a handful of teams signed a few black players including Percy Miller Jr., Nat Peeples, and Jim and Leander Tugerson.⁴ Most teams cited a lack of proper facilities for failing to desegregate, because hotels, restaurants, dressing rooms, and showers were still operating under Jim Crow laws.

Jacksonville, Florida, which cancelled Jackie Robinson's exhibition games in 1946, finally held its first desegregated game in 1953, when three black players from the Jacksonville Braves of the Class A South Atlantic league played in the stadium.⁵ One of the three was Hank Aaron, the Hall of Famer who holds the Major League Baseball record of 755 career home runs. Full integration of the minors wasn't achieved until 1964, following local black boycotts, and federal legislation and court decisions that struck down Jim Crow laws.

From 1885 until 1960, African Americans, segregated from the lucrative National and American leagues, joined together to create and sustain organized professional baseball teams and leagues. Thirty communities in 18 states, from Texas to New York, and the District of Columbia, hosted Negro League franchises during these years. While team ownership, names, and membership changed and leagues came and went, African-American players continued to pursue the sport, even at a fraction of the pay they would have received if not for their race. The Cuban Giants, originally formed in 1885 as the Argyle Athletics in Babylon, New York, was an African-American team, whose organizer, Frank Thompson, tried to make his players less threatening by suggesting they were Latin American visitors (who were allowed to play with white teams). Inspired by the Cuban Giants' success, African-American teams formed the League of Colored Baseball Clubs (LCBC). In 1888, the LCBC held the "Colored Championships of America" baseball tournament, which was won by the Cuban Giants over teams from Pittsburgh, New York, and Norfolk.

In 1901, Baltimore Orioles manager John J. McGraw tested the color line by trying to pass off Negro League second baseman Charlie Grant, who had high cheekbones and straight hair, as Charlie Tokohama, a Native American. White Sox President Charlie Comisky turned McGraw in, and McGraw was banned from the white leagues. This event, along with the formation of the Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Association and the growing popularity of baseball as the great American pastime, spurred a second wave of Negro League teams, including the Chicago American Giants and Indianapolis ABC's. Rube Foster brought together eight Midwestern team owners and, on February 14, 1920, the Negro National League was formed. He hoped to create a

formidable rival to the white leagues that would force them to accept African-American ballplayers. With the 1923 formation of the Eastern Colored League, a Colored World Series was held in 1924--the Kansas City Monarchs defeated the Hilldale Giants. The NNL and ECL showcased top African-American players, such as Smokey Joe Williams, James "Cool Papa" Bell, and Oscar Charleston, who was described as "fast enough to stand behind second base and outrun the longest line drive, powerful enough to loosen a ball's cover with one hand, fearless enough to snatch the hood off a Ku Klux Klansman."⁶ Sadly, with the mental illness and death of Rube Foster in 1930 and the insurmountable economic woes unleashed in 1929 by the Great Depression, both leagues failed.

It wasn't until 1937 that two solid leagues reemerged, the eastern-based Negro National League (NNL) (the third league of that name) and the western Negro American League (NAL). Future Hall of Famers Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Walter "Buck" Leonard, and Ray Dandridge all played during this era. Their speed, daring, and showmanship showcased their ample talents, kept the ballparks filled, and made the leagues financially successful. With Jackie Robinson's desegregation of Major League Baseball, the Negro Leagues fell victim to racial progress. The adversity of segregation that had created the Negro Leagues had also enabled them to attract and nurture African-American players without competition. Unwilling to contest the players who left them and unable to compete with the salaries offered by Major League baseball, the NNL disbanded in 1948, and the NAL folded in 1960.

Whether in the 1940s or the 1880s, African-American ballplayers in the Negro leagues had to tolerate difficult travel conditions created by segregated restaurants and hotels, inferior equipment and ballparks, and uncertain financial and contractual status. In return, they invigorated baseball, inspired young African-American athletes, and, through their excellence, disproved racist theories of athletic inferiority in the sport by which most Americans measured themselves.

By integrating baseball, Jackie Robinson not only became the premiere symbol of African-American pride in athletics, he also served as the point man in the assault on Jim Crow in all aspects of life in the United States. In the wake of his historic achievement, black reporters were admitted to the press gallery of the United States Senate in 1947. In 1948, President Truman ordered the Armed Forces to desegregate.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the arguments against segregation of public schools in the case of *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* and, in May 1955, ruled that separate was inherently unequal. In 1955, too, Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, precipitating the city bus boycott: eleven years after Jackie Robinson had defied the U.S. Army about the same practice and nine years after he swallowed his pride and rode for 16 hours in the back of the bus to get to spring training. By the time the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. uttered the words, "I have a dream," Jackie Robinson had retired from baseball and was already inducted into Baseball's Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York; King was a sophomore at Morehouse College when Robinson integrated baseball. The 1964 passage of the Civil Rights Act by the U.S. Congress finally mandated equal access to the hotels and restaurants that had barred Jackie Robinson 18 years earlier.

Conclusion

In 1997, 50 years after Jackie Robinson integrated Major League baseball, Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society found that 17% of Major League baseball players, 67% of the National Football League players, and 80% of the National Basketball Association players were of African origin. The accomplishment is significant, particularly since these three sports are the big three revenue sports in the United States, so players get a share of the salaries (both the lucrative contracts of the megastars and the modest salaries of average players) and advertising endorsement income associated with the sports. However, the representation of African Americans in coaching, management, and team ownership continues to

lag in these sports. Other professional sports have difficulty in attracting top African-American athletes, some because they require far more initial economic investment by the athlete and his or her family (ice hockey, tennis, golf, automobile racing), others (track and field, swimming, bowling, volleyball) because they cannot offer athletes the level of financial reward or coaching opportunities that baseball, football, and basketball offer. For African-American female athletes, the prospects are poorer because professional women's sports opportunities do not include football or baseball, and few girls can afford the expenses necessary to develop into, for example, world-class figure skaters. On a hopeful note, women, such as Anita De Franz, the first African-American (and woman) to serve on the International Olympic Committee, are exercising their leadership to broaden opportunity through sports. Recalling the obstacles overcome by African-Americans athletes over the past century, there is good reason for optimism for an even brighter future than present.

As instrumental as sports have been in the struggle for racial equality, there are concerns that the glamour of professional sports is luring many African-American children to abandon intellectual pursuits, thereby closing more doors to opportunity for economic and social advancement than it opens. As Arthur Ashe warned in 1979, "We have been on the same roads--sports and entertainment--too long. We need to pull over, fill up at the library, and speed away to Congress and to the Supreme Court, the unions and the business world."

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¹ "International Tennis Hall of Fame Class of 1971: Althea Gibson," http://www.tennisfame.org/enshrinees/althea_gibson.html, accessed May 19, 2002.

² Patricia C. McKissack and Fredrick McKissack, Jr. *Black Diamond: The Story of the Negro Baseball Leagues*. (New York: Scholastic Inc., 1994), p. 8.

³ McKissack, pp. 16-17.

⁴ Steven Lawson, review of *Brushing Back Jim Crow: The Integration of Minor-League Baseball in the American South*, by Bruce Adelson, *Southern Cultures*, 5 no. 4 (Winter 1999).

⁵ Charlie Patton. "Baseball's Aaron broke color line in Jacksonville," *Florida Times-Union*.

⁶ McKissack, p. 60.