

SPECIAL REPORT

Black Athletes Forum Held

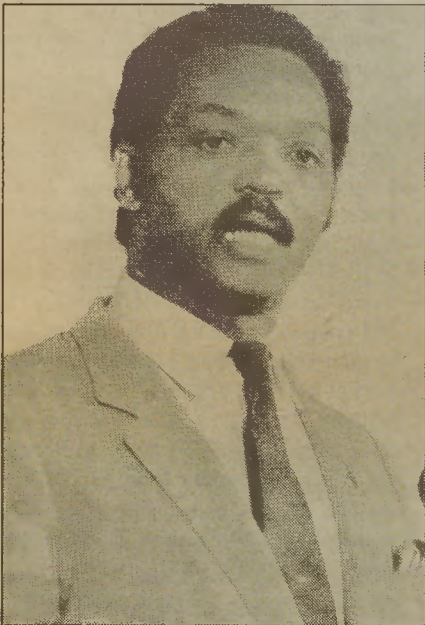
By JAMES WRIGHT

The fifth annual black athletes in America Forum was held on April 9-10 at the Blackburn Center on the campus of Howard University. The forum holds panels on the unique challenges being a Black athlete.

"It is time for the black athlete to reexamine him or herself in light of changes in our society," says Charles Fenell, co-coordinator of the forum and president of Sports Perspective, an advocacy group. "The black athlete can no longer continue to give and help others make money without getting something back."

The topics of the panels ranged from the vexing question of gender equity to parental involvement. The role of the media was also discussed along with a discussion on whether outside intervention is needed in the industry of sports.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson electrified the luncheon with his call for all in the room to become more active in the sports industry.



Rev. Jesse Jackson

"We are the gasoline of the sports world. If we stop the machines won't run. We have to use all the leverage we can in order for us to get what is due us."

The former North Carolina A&T quarterback used his own win/lose philosophy to make a point about speaking out.

"We have to be on the field to play the game. You can't play the game in the stands, you have to be on the field."

The two-time presidential candidate continued: "Playing means that an athlete must have access to black lawyers, accountants, doctors and other professionals. We must not be on the team but on the team."

The gender equity panel consisted of

Howard's women's basketball coach Sandra Tyler; Donna Lopiano, executive director, Women's Sports Foundation; Vivian Fuller, the first black female athletic director at a predominately white institution; James Whalen, president-Ithaca College; and the moderator, Emma Best, of the University of the District of Columbia.

The discussion focused on the problems of the black female athlete and how they can be solved.

Washington Post sports columnist moderated a hot panel on the role of the media. Glenn Harris, a Howard University graduate, chastised the sports communication industry for its poor hiring practices of minorities. *USA Today* sportswriter Valerie Lynn Dorsey urged black female journalists to look into sports writing.

Former Washington Redskin and WMAL sportscaster Rick "Doc" Walker explained to the audience the cultural advantages of having blacks on radio sportscasts. Frank Deford, the editor of the defunct *National Sports Daily*, and the only white on the panel, condemned racism and promised to influence his white brethren to mend their ways.

Maryland point guard Duane Simpkins moderated the parental involvement discussion. Simpkins urged all parents to get involved in their child's sports programs and know what is going on.

"I would not be standing before you today had it not been for my father," says Simpkins.

Elizabeth City State graduate Willie Stewart, the football coach at Anacostia High School, in Washington, D.C. lambasted coaches who view their athletes as meat.

"Parents have to be careful with whom their child deals with," says Stewart. "There are people out there who only want to make money off of kids and that is sickening."

Stewart is the winningest coach in D.C.'s history placing a number of athletes in the college ranks who eventually go on to the pros.

Other participants were A.K. Johnson of the Alexandria, Va. school district; David Smith, former Pittsburgh Steeler; and Candace Johnson Hampton, a student-athlete at the National Cathedral School in Washington, D.C.

Leroy Walker, president of the USOC and chancellor-emeritus of North Carolina Central University, stated in the outside intervention forum that federal monitoring of sports may be necessary.

"There is a great deal of skill duggery that goes on in sports and perhaps Congress should look into the industry. While I personally feel that the Congress is ineffective, its attention may put the industry on notice that they are being watched."



Leroy Walker (l) flanked by forum attendees.

Farrell followed up Walker's remarks with a militant stand: perhaps it is time for college athletes to boycott sports.

"Then, they (being the establishment) will have to listen to our concerns."

NCAA Executive Director Richard Lapchick and Donovan Gray, aide to Con-

gresswoman Collins.

"We're very pleased with the turnout," says Lee McElroy, who is chairman of Sports Perspectives International. "However, next year we will be looking for more participation."



Duane Simpkins (Maryland) drives against Duke's Bobby Hurley.