

Black businessman has big plans for Montreal Expos

If Donald Watkins is successful in becoming sport's first black owner, he wants to move the team to D.C.

BY JEFFREY MCMURRAY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — An Alabama businessman said recently he wants to buy the Montreal Expos and move them to Washington, D.C., but baseball officials have been cool to the idea.

Donald Watkins, who runs a commercial bank in Birmingham, would be the first black controlling owner of a major league franchise. He is also involved in negotiations to purchase the Minnesota Twins and keep them in the Twin Cities.

But in an interview with The Associated Press, Watkins seemed to signal a preference for a Washington team with a downtown stadium that includes a Hall of Fame for black athletes.

Such a stadium would be privately financed, Watkins said, adding that he would shoulder the bulk of the expected \$350 million cost.

"Washington has a number of strategic advantages," Watkins said. "It's a larger market than Minnesota. Washington is an international destination city, and Washington has a fan base that can support a major league baseball team."

At a Judiciary Committee meeting earlier Wednesday, Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., recounted a conversation he had recently about baseball interests with Watkins, a law school classmate.

Sessions said Watkins told him he had asked baseball officials about whether there was any possibility of buying the Expos and moving them to the nation's capital, but was told that possibility was "not on the table."

A week later, Commissioner Bud Selig described Washington as the prime candidate for a relocated team.

Owners originally planned to dissolve two teams — likely the Expos and Twins — prior to this season, but legal hurdles delayed the process until next year. In the meantime, major league baseball purchased the Expos and local officials in Minnesota are scrambling to find an owner who won't move the Twins.

During the hearing, Bob



Donald Watkins is surrounded by the media as he leaves a meeting. He could become the first black MLB owner.

KRT Photo

DuPuy, baseball's chief legal officer, said baseball had to buy the Expos only because no other buyer could be found.

He said he never got the impression Watkins was inter-

ested in buying a team to keep it in Montreal, noting his current discussions over the Twins.

"Why shouldn't he be able to shop around?" Sessions asked.

DuPuy said baseball officials weren't preventing Watkins from talking with any franchise and that they would be "honored and delighted to have an African-American owner of a major league base-

ball team."

Watkins also has been in talks over the potential purchase of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, but he said recently that was now "very low on my radar screen."

Couple receives human rights medal from N.C. A&T State University

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

GREENSBORO — Civil rights activists Vincent Harding and Rosemarie Freney-Harding are the recipients of N.C. Agricultural and Technical State University's annual human rights medal. They were honored at the university's 42nd Sit-in Movement Celebration. The event was held on Feb. 1 to pay tribute to the A&T Four, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, Jibreel Khazan (formerly known as Ezell Blair Jr.) and the late David Richmond.

Harding, a religion and social transformation professor



Rosemarie Harding



Vincent Harding

at the University of Denver, and his wife were recognized for their work in the Southern Freedom movement.

In 1968, Harding became

the founding director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center and also served as the chairperson of the

nationally televised "Black Heritage" series.

Harding was one of the organizers and the first director of the Atlanta-based Institute of the Black World, serving from 1969 to 1974. Harding has lectured widely in this country and overseas on history, religion, literature, and peace and justice. He and Rosemarie conduct workshops and lead retreats on

the connections between personal spirituality and social responsibility. Harding was senior academic adviser to the award-winning PBS television series, "Eyes on the Prize."

Freney-Harding is co-chairperson of the Veterans of Hope Project, an interdisciplinary initiative on religion, culture and democratic renewal location at the Iliff School of

Theology in Denver, Co. She is also the project's special consultant for workshops and training and a member of the adjunct faculty at Iliff and the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work.

Freney-Harding has a private practice, integrating gratitude therapy, Feldenkrais, and family and personal counseling, in Denver Colo.

Thomas Day The Master of Mahogany

Thomas Day was an African-American born free in a slave state in 1801. Day moved to Milton, North Carolina to learn the cabinetmaking trade at which he prospered. In 1830, Day considered returning to Virginia to be with his wife—A North Carolina law prohibited free Blacks passage into the state. Day's threat was heard and as a result of the town's outcry, the state passed a law permitting Acquilla Wilson Day to join her husband in Milton.

The Yellow Tavern became Thomas Day's home and workshop in 1848. At that time Day was one of the largest fur-

niture manufacturers in North Carolina. Among his many projects, Day designed and built furniture commissioned by Governor David Reid for the Governor's Mansion in Raleigh. Governor Reid's collection is now part of a permanent exhibit in the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh.

A wealthy man and a respected community leader, Thomas Day carved his life into the hearts of generations through his furniture designs, now cherished heirlooms of days gone by. The Thomas Day House is listed on the Federal Register of Historic Landmarks.



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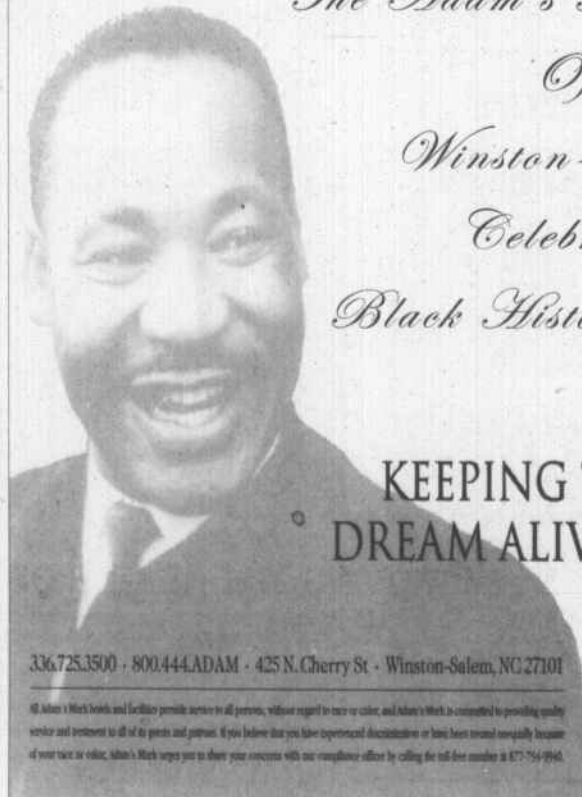
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