

Boxers pan for gold in Colo.

Continued from page 1C
last year off just a jab and a straight right hand. This year she is going to implement five other punches to make it that much easier for her."

Courtney Hunter, a middleweight with a record of 7-2, believes whatever the professional women she has watched can do, she can do also.

"I'm a huge boxing fan, and I've seen a few professional women box," she said. "They

weren't exactly what I thought they should be, so I was like, 'I can do that, I can do it better than them. But the professional women boxing is proof that women can do the same thing as men. They have the combinations, the footwork, the slipping, the bobbing and weaving, and all the intensity of their male counterparts'"

Hunter's coach, Al Simpson, can't say enough about the ingredient Hunter has in the ring.

"That beginner's hunger is what Courtney has, even though Tameka still has a great deal of it, Courtney's going into a territory she's never been in so everything is unknown to her, but she has a hunger to do it," Simpson said. "She's able to have power in both her left and right hand, she's able to go original as well as south-paw, and being able to utilize that will throw her opponent off"

Forenza: Good car on cheap

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Suzuki nearly gave up the small car market a few years ago to concentrate on the small truck market.

That worked well enough, but the company decided to get back into the car market because it seemed nearly everyone else abandoned it as well.

Suzuki makes a couple of models, one of which is the Forenza. It's fairly innocuous, but once you notice it, millions of them seem to magically appear on the road.

I can kinda see why. The Forenza is blandly handsome and fairly competent for a small car. And it's inexpensive.

The Forenza gets by with a 2.0-liter, 127 hp four cylinder engine that produces 131 pounds-feet of torque. That gives the car a bit of spunk, especially with the five-speed transmission. The car would be even faster if the gear spacing didn't feel so sloppy.

Still, the Forenza is not a bad drive. Handling's OK, with ride quality about the same. There's enough oomph to get you out of sticky traffic situations but don't intentionally try to race someone. The engine runs out of steam quick.

The car's interior is nicely

finished. There's a lot of plastic, which is to be expected considering the car's meager cost. The seats are comfy and the fabric is somewhat grippy.

There is a good amount of standard equipment. Driver's side seat mounted side airbag, standard airbags, power steering, air conditioning, power package, height adjustable driver's seat, CD stereo with eight speakers and floor mats are standard. There wasn't a piece of optional equipment, so the \$13,699 base price is the as-tested price.

There are better cars, but not at this price. You could do better or worse but you could end up paying more either way.

New breed of heroes nothing like in Jackie Robinson's day

By Tony Castro
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
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LOS ANGELES - When Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball's color barrier, in 1947, his role in the historic breakthrough was hardly accidental. Baseball historians believe that any of a number of black ballplayers playing in the old Negro Leagues could have succeeded on the field as well as Robinson.

But Dodger General Manager Branch Rickey believed that whoever broke baseball's long history of segregation had to be someone who could succeed off the field as well - that he had to be the super black athlete and individual, which Robinson was.

In an era where few major league players were college men, Robinson had been a four-sport star at UCLA. But Rickey also knew that Robinson was a man of unique character. Years before the civil rights movement, Robinson had the courage to say no when ordered to the back of the bus in the Army, and was court-martialed.

The first black player in the major leagues, Rickey believed, had to be someone who could emerge in heroic proportions, if necessary. It was, after all, the age of the seemingly unblemished heroic figure in what was then the national pastime: the two biggest of that era being Joe DiMaggio, about whom the nation sang songs, and Ted Williams, a fighter plane hero in World War II.

Almost six decades later, it is apparent that Robinson not only broke the color barrier in baseball but also broke the mold for how America came to look on its sports heroes. No individual is immortalized more in baseball, not even Babe Ruth, than Robinson - the only player to have his uniform number, 42, retired by the major leagues.

"Jackie made it possible for white Americans to not only cheer for a black athlete but for white Americans to idolize a black athlete." Mickey

Mantle said of Robinson, against whom he played in four World Series.

Today, the heirs to Robinson's legacy include the majority of America's sports superstars - from the incomparable Muhammad Ali, who transcended boxing, to golf's Tiger Woods; from Heisman Trophy winners like Reggie Bush to NFL Hall of Fame quarterbacks like Warren Moon; from basketball legends such as Magic Johnson to potential Hall of Famers such as LeBron James.

While race has not disappeared from the American landscape as an issue, race in sports has achieved perhaps the greatest crossover of any aspect in national life. It wasn't that long ago that Michael Jordan had every kid in the country, no matter what color, wanting to be like Mike.

But the superstars of today, black and white, have before them an overpowering challenge that athletes like Robinson, Mantle, DiMaggio and Williams didn't have: a prying, sometimes unfriendly national sports news media and a curious public now wanting to know everything, including the dirt of public figures, heroes and celebrities.

It may not be that the one-time clean-cut sports hero

has disappeared, if he ever really existed, so much as that such an image has been replaced by the sports celebrity-star who, if not an anti-hero, is a modern-day icon reflecting the times as they are.

No athlete perhaps personifies the role that the black sports hero has carved out for himself than Kobe Bryant, the star-crossed basketball star of the Los Angeles Lakers. The scandal of Colorado will never completely go away. The blame for Shaq's departure from the Lakers is still his to deny. The rep for being a show-boating, ball-hog is justifiable.

But they are simply warts, minor imperfections like those on Redford's face, that remind us of human vulnerabilities - something that the marketing of America's pop culture heroes and superstars has always chosen to ignore, painting instead a one-dimensional image of all light and no shadows on the cult icon of the day.

Almost by sheer will, however, Kobe has forced sports and Madison Avenue to grudgingly grow up and finally begin portraying today's superstars in a more accurate and perhaps more healthy context.



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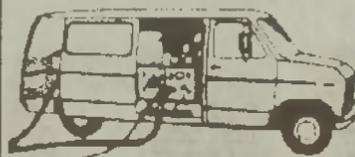
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