

sports

Crusader Pushes For Baseball To Honor Negro League Years

SMITHSBURG, Md. (AP)— It happened one day in 1979, an undramatic event marked only by the solitude of thought gained from the discovery of a worthwhile book.

For Smithsburg resident Todd Bolton, life since has never been quite the same. The book Bolton uncovered that day at the local library was Robert Peterson's "Only the Ball was White," a comprehensive study of Negro League baseball and its players.

To the baseball fan in Bolton, the book shed a new, sometimes troubling light on his favorite sport. To the historian in him, it was a reminder that there is much of America's baseball history yet to be told.

Bolton, who has become sort of a crusader, devoting as many as 15 hours a week documenting the accomplishments of Negro League players and pushing wherever possible for the recognition he believes is their due.

"We're a country that always prides itself on treating everyone equally," Bolton said. "But at times, it's a concept that seems the furthest thing from the truth. I guess that's a reason I'm involved with researching the Negro Leagues. These were some truly great athletes, but in comparison to the white players of that era what do we know of them? That's something I'd like to see changed."

Bolton said in many ways, the caliber of play in the Negro Leagues was as good if not better than the Major Leagues of the era. Yet to the broader American public, it remains an unknown fact, he said.

And so he works to get the work out, submitting articles to various publications, organizing promotional events and petitioning baseball's Hall of Fame committee to induct more Negro League players. For 13 years he's been at it, driven by a sense of equality he believes is sorely missing in mainstream society.

The names gush forth— Ben Taylor, Josh Gibson, Judy Johnson, "Cool Papa" Bell, Leon Day. Bolton rattles them off one after another with a gleam in his eye.

By his estimate, three-fourths of the players who competed during the Negro League era, which spanned 29 years from 1920 to 1948, had legitimate Major League ability. He backs his assertion, citing records indicating Negro League teams won the majority of exhibition games played against their white counterparts.

"It got to the point where (then baseball commissioner) Kenesaw Mountain Landis wanted the games stopped because the black teams were winning too many," Bolton said. "It was an exciting brand of baseball in the Negro Leagues. There was a real emphasis on offense that made for an entertaining play."

The season comprised of a 40- to 60-game schedule. To keep the Negro Leagues going financially, teams also barnstormed throughout the United States, playing semipro and pro ballclubs.

Segregation was a major barrier for the players to overcome. Not only did it affect them on the field, it often made life on the road more difficult to endure. Poor living and eating conditions along with racial harassment were common, Bolton said.

Yet in his conversations with Negro League players, Bolton seldom detects a sense of bitterness.

"It's a little surprising, but that's how many of them are," he said. "They just say it's the way life was and that they never missed anything, only America did."

In recent years, Bolton has worked hard to get the Hall of Fame to induct Leon Day, a former pitcher considered by many to have been equal in skill to the legendary Satchel Paige.

"Todd has helped bring back some fond memories for me," said Day, 75, of Baltimore. "The amount of interest he's shown is surprising for a fellow his age, but it really is appreciated. He's done a lot for the players over the years and I know they're all grateful."

A year ago, Bolton and a group of former Negro League players, including Day and Hall of Fame member Monte Irvin, placed a marker on the grave of Ben Taylor, who was perhaps the greatest first baseman of his era. A consistent .300 hitter and smooth fielder, Taylor was a player/manager for about six years in the Negro League and a manager for eight years.

Taylor died in obscurity, his grave left unmarked for 41 years after his death.

White Athletes Graduate At Higher Rate Than Blacks On Team Says NCAA

JACKSON, Miss. (AP)— White athletes are graduating at a significantly higher rate than their black teammates at Mississippi's two Southern Conference schools, according to NCAA reports.

The reports show, however, that black athletes perform better than non-athletes at Mississippi State and Ole Miss.

Overall, athletes at Ole Miss, State and Southern Mississippi graduated at rates comparable to the rest of the student body, the reports show, and athletes at predominantly black Jackson State and Mississippi Valley State fared much better than non-athletes.

The NCAA documents show whites entering MSU in 1983 or 1984 were more than twice as likely as their black teammates to earn a degree by 1990.

At the same time, 27 percent of black male athletes entering to State went on to earn a degree, compared with just 21 percent of black male non-athletes.

At Ole Miss, black athletes trailed white athletes in graduations, 55 percent to 32 percent. And black male athletes out-graduated black male non-athletes 36 percent to 27 percent.

The reports showed Ole Miss, Mississippi State and Jackson State outperformed the national football average of 60 percent, while Alcorn State, USM and Mississippi Valley State football teams did worse than the average.

In addition, Ole Miss, JSU and Mississippi State outperformed the national men's basketball average of 55 percent, while Southern Mississippi, Valley and Alcorn trailed

the national average.

Officials said the graduation rates vary from sport to sport, school to school and formula to formula. One measure, known as the "refined" rate, adjusts the graduation formula—which involves dividing the number of graduates by the number of incoming freshman to exclude outgoing transfer students and include incoming transfer students.

Top teams, using the "refined" formula:

- MSU baseball, 94 percent
- Ole Miss, 83 percent
- JSU football, 86 percent

At the lower end of the "refined" formula were:

- Mississippi Valley men's

basketball, 27 percent

USM men's basketball, 27 percent

Valley women's basketball, 27 percent

Alcorn State football, 29 percent

The NCAA reports, however, do not tell the whole story. For example only two of the nine men's basketball players at USM who started school in 1983 or 1984 had degrees six years later. Coach M.K. Turk said Randolph Keyes, John White and Derrick Hamilton are playing professional basketball, while Casey Fisher is a chaplain in the Army.

"It's their obligation to come back (to get their degrees) if they want to," Turk said.



DREAM TEAM MEMBER—Basketball star Karl Malone, a Utah Jazz forward and member of the Olympic "Dream Team," shared some surprising information about his feelings for late father recently on "Ebony/Jet Showcase." He also displayed his much talked about 18-wheel tractor trailer.

Simi Valley Works To Erase Bad Reputation

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP)— Working to erase stereotypes and show their communities can get along, hundreds of South Central Los Angeles residents joined Simi Valley suburbanites last week for a softball game.

"Basically we just wanted to come out in fellowship with this community and let them know there are no hard feelings," said Dwayne Tatnall, 32, an outfielder for South Central's KJLH-FM radio All-Star Team.

Deadly rioting rocked inner-city neighborhoods, including South Central, three months ago after a jury in this bedroom community acquitted four white police officers of meat charges stemming from the beating of a black motorist.

The March 1991 beating of Rodney King, videotaped by a bystander, focused national attention on the issue of police brutality.

"Simi got a bad reputation after the trial and maybe this will help," said outfielder Deedee Cavanaugh,

32, of Simi Valley. "I thought it was a good idea to get people out here and have a good time without any tensions."

More than 600 people turned out at Rancho Santa Susana Community Park, despite 100-degree temperatures. Five hundred of them came by bus from South Central Los Angeles, 40 miles away.

The South Central team won 6-1.

About six uniformed police officers were on duty at the park and there were no problems, said police Lt. Neal Rein.

The softball game was organized by Simi Valley resident Sue Davenport and Jan Hardy of South Central Los Angeles.

"No one liked the image the media gave our communities after the riots and trial," Ms. Davenport said. "I wanted to show that Simi Valley wasn't racist and Jan didn't want everyone to think that everyone in South Central is a gang banger or looter."

Barcelona Noting Few Blacks Visit Olympics

By Ben Holman
Capital News Service Correspondent

Barcelona—"Chercher la noir." My French friends will kill me for that. For it is a take-off of the tongue-in-cheek French expression, "Chercher la femme," which means roughly, "Look for the woman." And it's a Frenchman's way of saying there aren't many women around in a certain situation.

My crude equivalent means, "Look for the Blacks." And in this case I mean that there aren't very many American Blacks to be found here in Barcelona, beyond, of course, the many African-Americans on the USA Olympic team and their coaches and family.

Perhaps black Americans decided they might as well wait and make it to Atlanta in 1996.

If so, Joseph Robinson, Jr., who is here for these Olympics from Atlanta, thinks that was a mistake.

"I've been ecstatic about the way I've been treated," said the young banking specialist for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation office in Atlanta. "But now that you mention it, I haven't seen many other American Blacks here."

It is a little difficult to know for certain, however. For Barcelona, like most cosmopolitan European cities, have strong contingents of people of color among the resident population. Like in most European cities, these mainly are persons who have migrated here from former African colonies. And as is true in most cosmopolitan cities, you can't tell where a person is from these days by the clothing.

(Among the most popular items here are American sports teams T-shirts and caps. I took a strictly non-scientific survey and concluded that the San Francisco Forty-Niners are the most popular in T-shirts and the New York Yankees in caps. Apparently, the Spaniards are a few Super Bowls and World Series behind.)

Usually, the giveaway is language. When you pass a brother or sister babbling away in Spanish, you can bet he or she is not from Chicago, L.A. or Brooklyn. (Editor's note: Only about 600 African-Americans were among the 10,000 participants.)

Trial Set In Jemison Bribe Case

LAFAYETTE, La. (AP)—The Rev. T.J. Jemison pleaded innocent today to federal charges that he lied when he told a jury he didn't try to buy the silence of the victim in boxer Mike Tyson's rape trial.

U.S. Magistrate Pamela Tynes then set an Oct. 5 trial date and allowed Jemison to remain free on a \$100,000 unsecured appearance bond. Tynes said Jemison's travel won't be restricted as long as he appears in court when required.

Last month, a federal grand jury indicted Jemison, head of the nation's largest black religious denomination, with perjury for denying he offered \$1 million to a beauty contestant to drop rape allegations against Tyson, a former heavyweight boxing champion.

After Tyson was convicted, Miss Washington said that someone she refused to say who had offered her \$1 million to recant. Jemison acknowledged before the trial that he had called Miss Washington before the trial but denied offering any bribe.

The indictment says Jemison offered money several times. It included a transcript of a Dec. 30, 1991, telephone conversation in which he allegedly offered her father, Donald Washington, up to \$1 million.

Conviction of perjury carries a penalty of five years in prison and \$250,000 fine.

Residents Want Share In New Stadium Plans

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP)— The promise of major league baseball means payback time for inner-city residents who sacrificed homes and churches for the Sun-coast Dome.

And they mean good pay, not seasonal minimum wage.

"I think any time you take something from somebody, you need to give them something just as good or better back," said the Rev. John Copeland, a prominent black leader.

"If baseball comes here, we plan to share in whatever it produces. We don't plan for them to just have a baseball stadium and have us sweeping floors."

Friday, when it was announced that the owner of the San Francisco Giants had agreed to sell to a Tampa Bay group, the excitement bounded back to St. Petersburg's black community.

The Dome sits on the land that once was a thriving black community. The neighborhood was demolished in exchange for a promise of jobs when a major tenant was found for the covered stadium.

Baseball is expected to bring 800 to 2,000 full-time jobs within walking distance of some of the city's poorest neighborhoods, city officials have said.

State Rep. Doug "Tim" Jamerison grew up in the neighborhood that was razed for the Dome. His grandmother was one of the last residents to move. He said the city could take advantage of the opportunity and create programs to help people open their own businesses.

"My grandmother said, if I have to give up my property for progress, I will," said Jamerison.

"I am sure there is going to be a vigilance on those African-American members of the city council who understand the black community was promised they were going

to have a share of this growth in that area."

Jamerison said he is optimistic about baseball coming to the city and the benefits it could bring to south St. Petersburg, but is saving his celebrating for the day the Giants' moving van pulls up to the Dome.

Meanwhile, the cost of building the Dome has been a heavy drain on money that otherwise would have gone to inner-city repairs and social services. This year, the city received \$2.1 million in federal grant money, but spent 40 percent of it on debt on the stadium's land.

Fillyau said the city now need to direct money into improving housing in neighborhoods where as many as one-third of the homes are boarded-up.

YMCA Team Competes, Loses 54-43

The Garner Road Family YMCA 14 and Under team placed fourth at the AAU 14 and Under National Championship Game in Yakima, Washington.

On July 26, 1992 at 11:00 a.m. the Garner Road Allstars met the Performance Technical Institute (PTI) of Los Angeles, a team the "Y" placed second in the nation to in 1991. This close game was led by the Allstars high scorers Stephon McQueen with 15 points.

With 15 seconds to go the score tied at 46-46. The game went into overtime.

After several unsuccessful free throw attempts and four missed shots the game ended with PTI 54-43.

Coach Hank Mattocks noted that "we played really hard and I am pleased with the effort we made, we just missed easy opportunities."

Redskins Vs. Politics In Plan For Relocation

BY BARRY COOPER

In Washington, D.C., these days, the talk of the town isn't the economy or the coming presidential election. Everybody is talking about whether Washington Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke will follow through on his promise to build a 78,000-seat stadium outside the city in nearby Arlington, Va.

Caught in the middle are fans who don't want the Redskins leaving D.C., and also two of the country's most prominent black politicians.

D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly is facing the most visible battle of her young administration as she struggles to keep the Redskins from leaving.

On the other side is Virginia Gov. James Wilder, who is trying to entice the Redskins to move.

It's the first time in history that two black politicians have been opposed on such a visible issue. Granted, the location of the Redskins' new home won't affect the economy or unemployment figures, but you wouldn't know that judging by brouhaha underway in the nation's capital.

It seems everyone in D.C. wants the "Skins to stay. Wilder is trying to convince Virginia residents that the time is now for the state to have its first professional sports team.

The Redskins won't be going far. If they move to Virginia, they'll be just five miles from their present home at RFK Stadium. Still, the move is being hotly contested.

The controversy began when Cooke originally announced he would build the stadium within the District of Columbia. Mayor Kelly thought she had pulled off a coup. Then, Wilder began secret negotiations with Cooke. He said his state would come up with \$130 million for site improvements—twice what Mayor Kelly had offered—if the Redskins would move to a tract of land in Arlington.

Although he had already struck a deal with Kelly, Cooke shook hands with Wilder on a new deal.

Kelly was furious. She called Cooke "a billionaire bully" who played "two impoverished jurisdictions" against one another.

No one can say for sure where the Redskins will end up, and Wilder may have a tough time selling his financial package to the Virginia legislature. All governments are strapped for money, and Wilder may face considerable opposition in trying to gain so much money for a sports team.

Also, few average citizens of Virginia ever would get a chance to see the Redskins play. There already is a waiting list of some 40,000 for season tickets.