

THE PRESS COVERAGE OF THE
ENTRANCE OF JACKIE ROBINSON
INTO BASEBALL AS THE FIRST BLACK

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
CYNTHIA ROSE GOLDSTEIN
1973

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
MAY 08 1996 12050	JAN 07 2002 011214	JAN 06 2014
MAY 16 1997 JL 3613365	MAY 09 2002	
DEC 15 1997 848	MAR 26 2004 102103	
MAY 11 1998 MAGIC 2	JUN 11 2005 070805	
NOV 17 1998 236	MAY 02 2006 050106	
APR 19 1999 MAY 10 1999	MAY 04 2007 050407	
APR 18 2000 89	APR 08 2011 11	

ABSTRACT

THE PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ENTRANCE OF JACKIE ROBINSON INTO BASEBALL AS THE FIRST BLACK

By

Cynthia Rose Goldstein

In 1945, a revolution began to take place in baseball. Branch Rickey, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, a team in the National League, signed Jackie Robinson, a player from the Kansas City Monarchs, a team in the Negro American League, to a contract with the Dodgers. This study examines the press coverage of the entrance of Jackie Robinson into baseball as the first black. The study focuses on the sports pages of the major newspapers in the country at that time.

Seven of these major newspapers have been selected for this study, each for a different reason. The New York Times was included as the newspaper of record. The Washington Post was a liberal newspaper in the capital of the country and was expected to provide the view of politicians, with an eye toward future legislation. The San Francisco Examiner was a conservative West Coast paper. The Atlanta Constitution was a newspaper in the deep South, in a city without a national baseball team. The Detroit News was a midwestern newspaper, independent and moderate. The St. Louis Post Dispatch was an independent newspaper, on the Southern border but liberal. The

Chicago Tribune was a midwestern newspaper, independent and conservative.

The magazines included in the study were all those that published articles on Robinson's entrance into baseball. The books included were all those with references to that period in baseball history, which spanned the years 1945-1947.

Robinson's entrance into baseball is divided into three parts in this study. The first part concerns the hiring of Robinson by Branch Rickey in 1945. The second part deals with Robinson's year with the Montreal farm club of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1946. The third part discusses Robinson's first year with the Dodgers, culminating in his post-season award as Rookie of the Year in 1947. Each part includes a comparison of the newspaper coverage, followed by a comparison of the magazine coverage, of Robinson in baseball during those years. The conclusion summarizes the coverage, including a section about Robinson's entrance into baseball, as writers have remembered it in books and periodicals written since it happened.

X The role of the press as a mirror of society is clearly reflected in the press coverage of Jackie Robinson. As white Americans were just beginning to see black Americans as people, so the press was beginning to open its eyes. The hiring of Robinson was seen as such a sudden change, however, that it created animosity where

there might not have been any had there been a way to make such a change gradually. The press and the American people had images of black people which did not include a professional baseball player, let alone an intelligent, superb professional baseball player. Having those images shattered was hard to accept, and, in the case of the press, reflecting the new images was hard to do in writing. Thus, the coverage at first reflected the stereotypes of white Americans and the press about blacks; only at the end, in 1947, was the press able to drop those stereotypes and see Robinson as an individual rather than the "typical" black American.

Throughout the press coverage of Robinson, however, it is clear that most of those stereotypes and derogatory references were not considered as such at that time. This applies as well to the mention of race and singling out of Robinson and/or blacks in general for being black, when such a distinction was irrelevant to the subject. Only through the perspective gained by the passage of thirty years and the corresponding progress in journalism and in race relations is it possible to view that coverage, biased, derogatory and condescending as it was, as a product of its time.

THE PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ENTRANCE OF JACKIE ROBINSON
INTO BASEBALL AS THE FIRST BLACK

By

Cynthia Rose Goldstein

A THESIS

Sumbitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

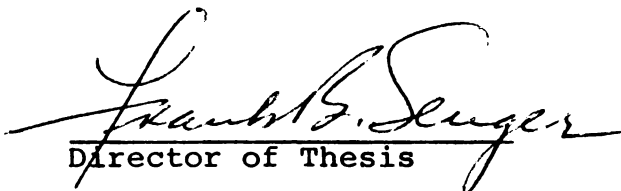
MASTER OF ARTS

School of Journalism

1973

20745

Accepted by the faculty of the School of Journalism,
College of Communication Arts, Michigan State University,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master
of Arts degree.


Director of Thesis

To A Negro Athlete*

by Cpl. Ephim G. Fozel

O swift black runner, were those epics true
Of demigods who deigned to race with man,
Or did the poets look on one like you,
Some nimble, liquid-limbed Numidian
Leading the Attic field against all odds,
And place him in their gallery of gods?

Your grim and gallant rivals strive in vain.
Their breath is harsh, their limber legs are tightening;
And the gap between you grows. They gasp and strain,
Lagging behind as thunder lags the lightening.
Your long limbs lope, your easy sinews travel
From sod to space, from atmosphere to gravel.

Here comes a hurdle! Take it, clearly leap it
With quick, bronze grace, with equipoise so fine,
The stadium is stunned. But, runner, keep it.
In stadia north of the Mason-Dixon line!
Your limbs can lift you high and take you far--
Runner, they cannot clear the color bar.

*Cpl. Ephim G. Fozel, "To A Negro Athlete,"
Opportunity, April-June, 1946, p. 90.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE HIRING	4
Newspapers	4
Periodicals	32
III. IN THE MINORS	36
Newspapers	36
Periodicals	44
IV. IN THE MAJORS	47
Newspapers	47
Periodicals	63
V. CONCLUSION	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Baseball evolved quickly from its invention as a game in 1869 to a professional sport, whose few players were a prestigious group. Until 1945, none of the players in organized baseball was black. Blacks who were lucky and skilled played in Negro leagues.

In 1945, however, a revolution began to take place. Branch Rickey, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, a team in the National League, signed Jackie Robinson, a player from the Kansas City Monarchs, a team in the Negro American League, to a contract with the Dodgers. That this was a surprise is an understatement. The fans, the owners, the players and the sportswriters were caught off guard. Sportswriters, however, were the only ones with the vehicles, the newspapers of the day, to discuss the situation, and they spoke for the fans, owners and players.

Tracing the moves of the two sides, Robinson and Rickey vs. the baseball world, through the eyes of these writers, provides a basis for comparison of coverage among newspapers, as well as a view of the course of events involved in the beginning of the baseball revolution. Such an examination of the entrance of Jackie Robinson into

baseball as the first black profits from such first-hand reports. Thus, this study focuses on the sports pages of the major newspapers in the country at that time.

Seven of these major newspapers have been selected for this study, each for a different reason. The New York Times was included as the newspaper of record. The Washington Post was a liberal newspaper in the capitol of the country and was expected to provide the view of politicians, with an eye toward future legislation. The San Francisco Examiner was a conservative West Coast paper. The Atlanta Constitution was a newspaper in the deep South, in a city without a national baseball team. The Detroit News was a midwestern newspaper, independent and moderate. The St. Louis Post Dispatch was an independent newspaper, on the Southern border but liberal. The Chicago Tribune was a midwestern newspaper, independent and conservative.

The magazines included in the study were all those that published articles on Robinson's entrance into baseball. The books included were all those with references to that period in baseball history, which spanned the years 1945-1947.

The role of the press in America has been at times that of leader and at times that of mirror. In the case of Robinson and baseball, the press had time to function only as a mirror. Thus, the press coverage of the entrance of Robinson into baseball reflected the feelings of the nation toward black people generally and particularly

toward black people integrating one of the revered American institutions, baseball.

At that time, the press coverage of blacks was not examined for comparison with the press coverage of whites. Nor was the press coverage of blacks by one newspaper examined for comparison with that of another newspaper. The idea that coverage of racial issues might be biased or unbalanced and therefore material for such comparisons had not been considered. This idea is, however, the major consideration of this study. It is important to note that such comparisons must be made by the standards of that day. Thus, although those comparisons were not made then, they may be made now, if one is careful to avoid interjecting the perspective of the present.

Robinson's entrance into baseball is divided into three parts in this study. The first part concerns the hiring of Robinson by Branch Rickey in 1945. The second part deals with Robinson's year with the Montreal farm club of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1946. The third part discusses Robinson's first year with the Dodgers, culminating in his post-season award as Rookie of the Year in 1947. Each part includes a comparison of the newspaper coverage, followed by a comparison of the magazine coverage, of Robinson in baseball during those years. The conclusion summarizes the coverage, including a section about Robinson's entrance into baseball, as writers have remembered it in books and periodicals written since it happened.

CHAPTER II

THE HIRING

Newspapers

Word of Jackie Robinson first appeared in any of the seven newspapers in this study on April 17, 1945, when he worked out with the Boston Red Sox. In an Associated Press (AP) sports story headed "Red Sox Test 3 Negroes," in the middle of the first sports page, the New York Times referred to "Jackie Robinson of Pasadena, Calif. . . ., former [University of California at Los Angeles] football and baseball star, who served overseas for thirty-one months as an Army lieutenant, . . ."¹ The point was that his military service was compensation for his being black, since World War II was almost over, and fighting in it gained one respectability. The same story was printed in the April 17 Washington Post in a bottom corner on the second of two sports pages. The Post, however, added a reference to Robinson as ". . . now a shortstop for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro-American League."² Two

¹"Red Sox Test 3 Negroes," New York Times, April 17, 1945, p. 26.

²"Three Negro Players Tryout With Red Sox," Washington Post, April 17, 1945, p. 10.

similar stories appeared in the Detroit News and the San Francisco Examiner on April 17, both in bottom corners of the first page of the sports section.

At the end of the month, Congressman Vito Marcantonio, of the American Labor Party of New York City, "introduced a resolution in the House asking for an investigation of what he called discrimination in the employment of big league players because of 'race, creed or color,'"³ according to an AP news story. While presenting his resolution, Marcantonio said, "Some Negro players definitely are good enough to make the big leagues. . . ."⁴ He added, "Baseball is America's greatest sport, and it's silly to pretend that Negroes are not among the best players, . . ."⁵ These last two statements were printed only by the New York Times, while the lead of the story was picked up by Bus Ham, a sports writer for the Washington Post, and by the San Francisco Examiner, the Detroit News, and the Chicago Tribune.

Marcantonio's proposed investigation prompted reporters to question Albert "Happy" Chandler, former

³Bus Ham, "Chandler Confers With Frick For Personal Guidance," Washington Post, April 27, 1945, p. 18; "'Hap' Calls For Frick," San Francisco Examiner, April 27, 1945, p. 19; "Wants 'Star' Game Played," Detroit News, April 26, 1945, p. 27; "Chandler and Frick Discuss Happy's Work," Chicago Tribune, April 27, 1945, p. 23.

⁴"Marcantonio Asks Study On Negroes," New York Times, April 25, 1945, p. 28.

⁵Ibid.

Governor of Kentucky, who had just become Commissioner of Baseball. On April 26 and 27, the results of this press conference were printed in the sports sections of several newspapers. Both the United Press (UP) and the AP picked up the story, which centered around Chandler's tactfully saying, "I am aware of no discrimination in fact," in answer to a question about "whether the Senator believed discriminatory the present absence of Negroes from professional baseball's playing ranks."⁶ Both the Atlanta Constitution and the Detroit News printed only that sentence from Chandler's statement. The St. Louis Post Dispatch, however, in a story "By a Special Correspondent of the Post-Dispatch," printed more of Chandler's statement, "The Negro player, like all others, must expect to be judged on his merits. And if he doesn't have the ability, he can't expect to make the grade."⁷ This could be considered an example of deliberately dealing with the symptoms rather than the cause. He never explained why it might be that no blacks had been able "to make the grade." The Post Dispatch also included Chandler's response to a question on whether he was aware of the tryouts by blacks recently, "Yes, and

⁶John L. Cutter, "Chandler Favors All-Star Game," Atlanta Constitution, April 26, 1945, p. 13; "Wants 'Star' Game Played," Detroit News, April 26, 1945, p. 27.

⁷"Game Needs Promoter, But Not a Policeman New Commissioner Says," St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 26, 1945, p. 2c.

I see no objection to that."⁸ This stand seemed liberal at the time, since the general feeling was that no blacks could be competent enough to try out.

On April 27, the San Francisco Examiner, the Chicago Tribune and the St. Louis Post Dispatch printed a news story that included the statement that Chandler had "briefly discussed with Negro representatives their request for opportunities to play in the big leagues."⁹ Chandler was quoted as saying, "I told them there was nothing I could do at this time but that I would be glad to hear fully what they had to say later."¹⁰

About a week later, he was still talking about what he was going to do. The Washington Post quoted him, in an AP story, as saying that he "would invite Negro leaders to 'sit across the table and talk this problem over.'"¹¹ The Detroit News quoted him, in a UP story,

Negroes should have a chance 'like everybody else' to play major league baseball. . . . The arrangements are yet to be worked out, but I believe that this is

⁸Ibid.

⁹"'Hap' Calls for Frick," San Francisco Examiner, April 27, 1945, p. 19; "Chandler and Frick Discuss Happy's Work," Chicago Tribune, April 27, 1945, p. 23; "Chandler Talks to Frick to Get Some Personal Guidance," St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 27, 1945, p. 4c.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹"Chandler to Move Baseball Headquarters to Cincinnati," Washington Post, May 4, 1945, p. 18.

a free country and everybody should have a chance to play its favorite pastime.¹²

This was followed a few days later, however, by the end of a Bus Ham story in the Examiner and the Post, which said that Chandler "plans no startling changes or innovations but has already said he will 'fully consider' the pressing question of Negroes playing in organized baseball."¹³

In the meantime, Branch Rickey, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, was prepared to hire a black player if the right one could be found. To carry out the search thoroughly, he needed a camouflage, which he provided by creating the U. S. Negro League. In a news story, the Times explained that "Rickey, except for his position as operator of Ebbets Field, where games will be played, and for his interest in the welfare of Negro baseball, will not be connected with the organization."¹⁴ Rickey himself said that "it is not my purpose to discuss today Negro players becoming members of clubs in our present organized baseball league or of white players becoming members of the proposed

¹²"'Hap' Speaks for Negroes," Detroit News, May 3, 1945, p. 1s.

¹³Bus Ham, "Story by MacPhail Decides Ball Club Moguls to Select Chandler as Czar," San Francisco Examiner, May 6, 1945, p. 16.

¹⁴"U. S. Negro League Is Launched With Brown Dodgers in Brooklyn," New York Times, May 8, 1945, p. 22; "Rickey Helps Negro League," Detroit News, May 8, 1945, p. 18; "Rickey Reveals Formation of Negro League," Washington Post, May 8, 1945, p. 16; "Negro League Organizes for '45 Baseball," Chicago Tribune, May 8, 1945, p. 32.

Negro baseball league."¹⁵ Thus, he successfully fooled the baseball world, which was more than willing to be fooled. Besides the Times coverage, the News, the Post and the Tribune all printed the same AP story on Rickey's forming the new league.

The most revealing story, however, was a column on the front sports page of the News by H. S. Salsinger, commenting on the possibility of blacks playing in the white leagues. Salsinger combined his own comments with those of John R. Williams, a black promoter of Negro baseball in Detroit. Williams was quoted,

Negro ball players today receive salaries equal to those paid in the high minor leagues. Consequently, there is a future for the Negro player who is able to make good and he is not particularly concerned whether or not he is admitted to white organized baseball where restrictions and formalities might prevent him from performing in his own inimitable and carefree fashion.¹⁶

To which Salsinger added,

/The Negro, playing in a white man's league, would have to conform to set standards of play. He would have to subdue his natural bent and inclinations. He would be robbed of the characteristics that distinguish him from his white contemporary. Without spontaneity, his main asset, the Negro would be just another fellow in uniform.¹⁷

Which was, of course, exactly what blacks wanted. Williams was quoted, "Speed, daring and mirth are the God-given

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶H. S. Salsinger, "The Umpire," Detroit News, May 8, 1945, p. 18.

¹⁷Ibid.

characteristics of Negro ball players, who play the game for the fun there is in it."¹⁸ Salsinger continued,

/"Negro baseball lacks the technique and finesse of white baseball, but it is more entertaining because it is spontaneous and in some ways unorthodox."¹⁹ He concluded,

/"To merge Negroes with whites would destroy the individual style that is their main asset."²⁰ Although the closest referent for "their" is whites, it seems clear that Salsinger intended "their" to refer back to "Negroes."

In a classic example of avoiding the issue, "Clark Griffith . . . owner of the Washington Senators . . . said today he challenged the right of Branch Rickey to 'set himself up as the guiding light behind a new colored United States league.'"²¹ This statement was from a news story in the Times on May 16, which faithfully reported Griffith's supposed concern that the new league have black leadership, though it could be speculated that his real concern was that white baseball and its white leadership not have any connection with blacks.

All this talk and camouflage action came to an abrupt end on October 24, 1945, when Rickey revealed the

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹"Griffith Attacks Rickey," New York Times, May 16, 1945, p. 23.

real reason behind his scouting of black players. He had hired a black player for his white Brooklyn Dodgers. The uproar was such that newspapers devoted large sections of the front sports page to it.

For example, the Times printed four stories under several headlines, of which one was, "Montreal Signs Negro Shortstop." The spread included a three-column picture of Robinson signing his contract, with the picture titled, "Organized Baseball Opens Its Ranks to Negro Player." A second headline read, "Robinson Joins Dodger Farm From Kansas City Monarchs to Establish a Precedent." After those two straightforward statements were two more subtle messages. A third headline was "4-Sport Star at U.C.L.A.," an attempt to give the signing some legitimacy by explaining that Robinson was no ordinary black athlete. The fourth headline, "Brooklyn Organization Set to Combat Criticism as Rickey Scouts Other Negroes," was designed to marshal the opposition and insure a suitably hysterical response, since scouting more when the one had not even shown himself to be a safe purchase was premature. In the story, this scouting turned out to be only a rumor.

Other papers had similar headlines, although a few were unique. For example, the Post Dispatch said, "Rickey's Signing of Negro Called a Revolutionary Step in Baseball," and the Examiner said, "Jackie Robinson, UCLA Athlete, 1st of Race to Join Organized Baseball." Only the Constitution did not print the story as the lead on the

sports page. It actually placed it on the following page,
an obvious indication of priorities.

Coverage, generally could not be described as individualistic. It appeared that the subject was too controversial to do anything but print the wire stories. The Times, however, began, "For the first time in the long history of organized baseball a Negro player officially has been taken into its ranks,"²² a slight but important variation on one of the AP leads, "The first Negro player ever to be admitted to organized baseball. . ."²³, which the Times used in another story. The difference between the two leads was that the first implied that the change was welcome, while the second implied nothing. The idea that gradually became clear was that "organized" was another word for "white," a euphemism which seems to have originated with the belief by white baseball that black baseball was unorganized, a point clearly made in the earlier News story by Salsinger.

The main AP story was written by Sid Feder and picked up in two basic versions, one of which the News and Post Dispatch carried, and the other of which the Times, Post, Constitution, Examiner and Tribune carried. The former version included such comments as ". . . Rickey, Jr.

²²"Montreal Signs Negro Shortstop," New York Times, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 17.

²³"Robinson Gets Bonus to Sign," ibid.

said today the Dodgers may have the alligator by the tail in signing the first Negro ever admitted to organized baseball, but if trouble's ahead 'we won't avoid it,'"²⁴ and Rickey's "ivory-hunting operatives went about their search. . . ."²⁵ Also included was an unclear, anxiety-arousing statement, "According to the word around the Royal's bailiwick here, he is only one of about a couple of dozen Negro players Rickey's scouts have rounded up. . . ."²⁶

The second version was more straightforward and was a rationalization for hiring Robinson. One sentence began, "Three Brooklyn scouts, operating independently and none aware of the others' activities, were said to have reported unanimously that Robinson was the ideal Negro star to lead the invasion of organized baseball. . . ."²⁷

The Tribune added an interesting twist to its lead:

²⁴"Negroes Crash 'Last Barrier'--Base Ball," Detroit News, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 21; Sid Feder, "Rickey's Signing of Negro Called a Revolutionary Step in Baseball," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 6c.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷"Rickey Takes Slap At Negro Leagues," New York Times, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 17; Sid Feder, "Brooklyn Farm Club Signs Negro Shortstop," Washington Post, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 14; Sid Feder, "Dodgers Sign Negro Player For Montreal," Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 11; Sid Feder, "Rickey Signs Negro for Montreal Club," San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 17; "Robinson Wins Rickey Scouts' Indorsement," Chicago Tribune, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 27.

"Jackie Robinson, lean six foot Negro shortstop . . . represents the first fruit. . ."²⁸ of Rickey's search. One of the headlines for that story, "Hailed as Nation's Top Negro Star," raised an important point, whether Robinson was the top star or only the top black star, and who thought which and why. Based on his UCLA career, in which he played four varsity sports, of which baseball was not his best, he may have been the best all-round athlete in the country. Besides the four sports, the important thing was that his competition was mostly white. Therefore, there was no reason why he should have been hailed only as the top black athlete, other than that the white baseball world could not accept a black as the best.

Most stories about the hiring of Robinson said, "The word . . . came as a complete surprise"; in an AP story by Sid Feder, however, the Constitution and the Tribune had a different approach,

To those who heard the Dodger president . . . last April, tonight's announcement possibly came as no complete surprise. At that time Rickey said: "Most vital in considering the Negro and organized baseball is the question of maturity. Admitting that racial equality in all sports must be an eventual fact, is this the right time to proclaim it in baseball? Is it too soon? Would the Negro cause--and he has a cause--be thrown for a loss. . .?"²⁹

Within the same story, Rickey was quoted as saying

²⁸Chicago Tribune, ibid.

²⁹Sid Feder, "Dodgers Sign Negro Player For Montreal," Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 11; Chicago Tribune, ibid.

that "he did not anticipate that there would be any trouble with the other players over Robinson's presence. . . ,"³⁰ and his son was quoted as saying that "there might be difficulties for the quiet six-foot, 190-pounder from both players and fans alike in some quarters."³¹

The Post printed a news story under the by-line of Jack Hand which, although an AP release, was not picked up by any of these other papers until the next day, when the Tribune and the Post Dispatch also printed it. The lead included, ". . . Jackie Robinson, the first Negro to crash the portals of modern organized baseball, . . ."³², with the word "crash" implying aggressiveness on the part of Robinson. This aggressiveness was contradicted, however, by these same newspapers in their interviews with him. Adjectives and adverbs included "quiet" and "sincerely." Quotes were such as,

Robinson, himself, had little to say. "Of course I can't begin to tell you how happy I am that I am the first member of my race in organized ball," he declared. "I realize how much it means to me, to my race and to baseball. I can only say I'll do my best to come through in every manner."³³

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Jack Hand, "Brooklyn Boss Confident Negro Shortstop Will Click," Washington Post, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 22; "Rickey Calls Robinson Top Ball Prospect," Chicago Tribune, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 29; "Negro Player's Contract to Bramhan's O.K.," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 6c.

³³Ibid.

One quote from the Jack Hand story expressed this feeling, as well as making an ironic comment. Rickey said, "In talking to this young gentleman I considered only the Negro himself. . . ,"³⁴ which, of course, was exactly what he did consider, though he probably meant to say, "In talking to this young Negro I considered only the gentleman himself"; the latter would give the public the impression that Robinson was more than a typical black, even a gentleman.

The lead story in the Times contained an interesting statement, "Negro players have gained tryouts with major league clubs, notably two. . . . Until Robinson was signed by Montreal, though, no Negro had affixed his signature to an organized baseball contract."³⁵ The phrase "Negro players" implied quite a few, as though baseball had not really been discriminating, just that the blacks were not good enough. The phrase "notably two," however, gave it away, because it should have read, "only two," which was the truth, thus making "Negro players" seem absurd.

A position taken in this story, which was debatable, was,

Signing of this player, according to Secretary Harold Parrott of the Dodgers, was not a sudden move to be

³⁴Washington Post, ibid.

³⁵"Montreal Signs Negro Shortstop," New York Times, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 17.

interpreted merely as a gesture toward the solution of a racial problem. Robinson was signed on his merits as a shortstop--after he had been scouted for a long time.³⁶

Other stories indicate that although he had been scouted for a long time, it may not have been to determine his merits as a shortstop, but rather, perhaps, to determine his suitability for being part of a gesture toward the solution of a racial problem.

The statement in the story based on the least amount of evidence was made by Rickey concerning blacks going right to the major leagues, rather than going first to a farm club, as Robinson was doing. Rickey said, ". . . I don't think there is a Negro player anywhere who is ready."³⁷

At any rate, the real surprise was not the signing itself, but the reaction by the Negro league. Expected to be grateful and jubilant, officials of the black league were angry at being taken advantage of. An AP news story on the subject was part of almost every paper's coverage of the hiring. The story said,

The reaction of the Monarch's co-owner [T. Y. Baird] was, perhaps, the most interesting obtained, to the signing of the first Negro player to a contract in organized ball. It had been generally felt--and no doubt by Rickey, himself--that the revolutionary move would be universally hailed by Negro baseball as the

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

long-sought opening wedge into the big leagues. Owner Baird's beef was, therefore, a considerable surprise.³⁸

Then, quickly picking up Baird's position, the story exaggerated the implications of Rickey's action,

This probably was the first inkling Chandler had that his new \$50,000-a-year job would call for him to act as adjudicator between the Negro leagues, now threatened with wholesale raiding by Rickey, and the teams of organized white baseball which hired him.³⁹

The most incorrect comment in the story, however, was, "If there had been any expectation that the announcement of Robinson's signing would rouse a storm of controversy in organized baseball circles, it failed to develop immediately."⁴⁰ This story was printed by the Times, the Post Dispatch, the News and the Tribune, along with all the other stories indicating that, indeed, such a controversy had developed immediately.

Important people in baseball took the opportunity of Robinson's signing to reveal their own positions. Clark Griffith, president of the Washington Senators, ignored the issue entirely, "The only question that occurs to me is whether organized ball has the right to sign a

³⁸"Will Appeal to Chandler," New York Times, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 17; "Mixed Reaction to Signing; Monarch Official Protests," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 6c; "Monarchs Protest, Wins Rickey Scouts' Indorsement," Chicago Tribune, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 27.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

player from the Negro league."⁴¹ Joseph A. Brown, secretary of the Buffalo Bisons said, "Very surprising, it's hard to believe. I can't understand it."⁴² Frank Shaughnessy, president of the International League, said,

As long as the fellow's the right type and can make good and can get along with other players, he can play ball. . . . I don't think that much prejudice exists any longer. I believe such things are more political than social now.⁴³

These quotes were part of an AP story, picked up by the Times, the Examiner, the Post, and the News, as part of their coverage of the signing.

The next day brought an editorial in the Post Dispatch, called "Mr. Rickey's Action," the first recognition of the signing outside of any of the sports sections. Rickey was referred to as "a man of strong convictions and willingness to break new trails."⁴⁴ In support of him, it said, "Despite the prejudice that will show itself at this latest move of Rickey's, he is not the type of man to back down. Against prejudice, he has reason and fairness on his side."⁴⁵ A stirring conclusion to

⁴¹"Club Heads Give Views," New York Times, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 17; "Robinson Comment," San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 17; "Griff Questions Right of Purchase," Washington Post, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 14; "Monarchs Protest," Detroit News, Oct. 24, 1945, p. 21.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

(⁴⁴Editorial, "Mr. Rickey's Action," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 2c.

⁴⁵Ibid.

the editorial, designed to enlist the support of all those Americans who supported the war, stated, "It's called the Great American Game. Rickey's action has given a fuller meaning in this case to the adjective, 'American.'"⁴⁶

The Examiner did not print the "portals of modern organized baseball" story until October 25, and its copy of the story began, "The 'day after' comment by baseball men and sports editors was largely favorable and Representative Powell, Democrat of New York, hailed the signing as 'a definite step toward winning the peace,'"⁴⁷ another analogy to war.

The News printed a news story called "'Wait and See' Today's Attitude," which included contradictions from two earlier stories. The first case was "Rickey moved to forestall any player resentment, announcing that he would take 'adequate steps' if players openly worked against Robinson."⁴⁸ Such player behavior hardly fit an earlier statement by Rickey from the "portals" story, "I hope [Robinson] will not have to undergo undue pressure that might harm his future. As far as any trouble with his own teammates and hotel and travel problems I feel all have

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷ Jack Hand, "Robinson to Make Grade, Says Rickey," San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 25.

⁴⁸"'Wait and See' Today's Attitude," Detroit News, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 45.

been over-stressed.⁴⁹ The second case was, "The discussion of the signing of Jackie Robinson, first Negro to be accepted by organized base ball, simmered down to a 'wait-and-see' attitude today."⁵⁰ An earlier story had said an immediate furor did not result. In both cases, the more recent news was more accurate. Incidentally, the use of the word "accepted" in the second case was particularly appropriate, though premature. Analyzing the first reactions of the baseball world to the signing, the News story said,

With few exceptions, base ball men and sports writers both north and south of the Mason-Dixon Line agreed that it was eminently fair that a Negro should have a chance to play in organized base ball and to make the major leagues if he is good enough.⁵¹

In case anyone still thought the signing was no big deal, the Times and the Constitution printed a UP news story that began,

/ Organized baseball's explosive new question on the admission of Negro players met reaction tonight ranging from high praise of Brooklyn's action in dropping the color barrier to a flat opinion by Rogers Hornsby that it won't work.⁵²

The story continued, "Major leaguers of Southern origin

⁴⁹See notes 33 and 48.

⁵⁰"'Wait and See' . . .," ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²"Reactions Are Varied," New York Times, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 17; "Signing of Negro Player Won't Work, Says Hornsby," Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 14.

were almost unanimous in finding no objection to the signing of Robinson--so long as he played on another team."⁵³ The story quoted a New York Post editorial that could have been the most condescending writing on the subject, indicated by the word "colored," which, even at that time, had been replaced in newspaper stories by "Negro."

/ "The chance afforded this colored ball player represents the first success scored by all the individuals who have been clamoring for big league baseball to end its so-called discrimination against colored ball players."⁵⁴ /

A Times news story on October 25 reinforced the impression that Rickey, not Robinson, was being seen as the motivating force behind the signing. The story quoted Rickey, "I have not been pushed into this. I signed Robinson in spite of the pressure-groups who are only exploiting the Negroes, instead of advancing their cause. I signed him because I knew of no reason why I shouldn't."⁵⁵

In another Times news story, Griffith was quoted as saying that "the contracts of Negro teams should be recognized by organized baseball."⁵⁶ This was a noble thought, which he then corrupted when he said, "In the

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵"Rickey Takes Slap At Negro Leagues," New York Times, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 17.

⁵⁶"Griffith Backs Monarchs," New York Times, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 17.

eyes of organized baseball, the Negro teams today should have the same status as minor leagues. . . ."57 There are two interpretations for his selection of minor, rather than major, leagues. The first is that major league teams could more easily get players from minor league teams than from other major league teams. The second interpretation is that since he probably shared the opinion of the baseball world that the black teams were inferior in ability to the white major league teams, he probably felt that the black teams were on a level with the white minor league teams.

The next step in the hiring of Robinson was having the contract approved by the President of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, William Bramham, who used the occasion to explain his feelings on the subject. First, the Times printed an AP news story which said that "Bramham . . . made it clear that the contract of the Negro star would be treated like that of any other player. . . ."58 That AP story and a similar UP story then showed exactly how the contract was treated-- differently. Both wires included a statement by Bramham in which he said, "Why should we raid their ranks, grab a player and put him, his baseball associates and his race

57 Ibid.

58 "Judge Bramham Caustic," New York Times, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 14.

in a position that will inevitably prove harmful?"⁵⁹

Later statements indicated that the harm he was talking about concerned the black race. He later said,

It is my opinion that if the Negro is left alone and aided by his own unselfish friends of the white race, he will work out his own salvation in all lines of endeavor. It is those of the carpetbagger stripe of the white race, under the guise of helping but in truth using the Negro for their own selfish interest, who retard the race. The Negro is making rapid strides in baseball, as well as other lines of endeavor. . . . When the Negro needs counsel, guidance or assistance from his white friends, he will let it be known and will be found meeting with a ready response, unaccompanied by ostentation or trumpeting.⁶⁰

Not only did he make it clear that he thought Rickey was that selfish, carpetbagging type, but he appeared to be the only person who realized that Rickey went to Robinson and not the other way around. The Post Dispatch, the Tribune, the Examiner and the News carried a wire story exactly as the Times did. The Post, however, carried the UP story but added its own lead, which changed the meaning. The lead said, "Bramham . . . said today he would approve the signing of a Negro player by Montreal, although it might prove harmful to the game."⁶¹ This lead, while

⁵⁹Ibid. and "Negro Player's Contract to Get Bramham's O.K.," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 6c; "Bramham to O.K. Signing of Robinson," Chicago Tribune, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 32; "Head of Minor Leagues To Okeh Robinson Pact," San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 18; "Minor League Chief Assails Branch Rickey," Detroit News, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 25; "Minor League Head Blasts Rickey Deal," Washington Post, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 26.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Washington Post, ibid.

interpretative on the part of the Post, was a more accurate representation of Bramham's feelings and beliefs than the direct quotes from his press conference. This is, he was more concerned for the game, the white man's game, than the race, the black race. If any doubt remained about Bramham's feelings of condescension toward blacks, a quote from a small news story should have cleared things up, "Father Divine will have to look to his laurels for we can expect Rickey temple to be in the course of construction in Harlem soon."⁶²

Robinson was still acting and being seen as grateful. A story including an interview with him, which was printed in the Times, said,

The former collegian, who was born in Georgia and raised in California, appeared completely at ease. He modestly asserted that he realized his entry into organized baseball--the first member of his race to have the opportunity--was a great responsibility. "I hope to make good and open the way for others in my race to do likewise," he explained. "I sincerely hope that I am able and lucky enough to make the grade."⁶³

Also on October 25, the Times, the News, and the Post printed a UP news story on Satchel Paige's reaction to the signing. Paige had "fathered Robinson throughout his professional baseball career, . . ."⁶⁴ The story said

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³"Rickey Cites Wire To Refute Critics," New York Times, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 14.

⁶⁴"Satchel Paige Hails Action," New York Times, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 14; "Satchel's Advice," Detroit News, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 45; "Satchelfoot Paige Is Happy Over Robinson Deal," Washington Post, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 26.

Paige "wistfully hailed" the signing and quoted him,
 / ". . . Robinson is the greatest colored player I have ever
 seen . . . finally breaking the racial barrier of
 professional baseball with natural ability that will carry
 him to the majors within a year."⁶⁵ ,

/ In line with this, the owners of the Monarchs,
 for whom Robinson had played, decided not to protest his
 signing. / The Times, the Post, the Tribune and the News
 all carried this story, as did / the Examiner, / which added
 a headline somewhat lacking in taste, "Kansas City Club
 'Frees' Robinson," / a play on the slavery idea.

With all the business taken care of and the news
 stories out of the way, columns and editorials were devoted
 to the signing. The Post published an editorial on
 October 27 called, "Negroes In Baseball," expressing a
 seemingly sincere concern for blacks but ending by raising
 the question of robbing the black leagues. The editorial
 said:

The career in organized baseball of Jackie Robinson,
 a Negro shortstop, will be worth close attention as
 an excellent test of whether all the recent laws and
 rulings aimed at an end of racial discrimination really
 reflect a change of popular feeling.) The success of
 this great innovation will depend not only on the
 attitudes of the crowds, and the consequent effect on
 attendance figures, but also on the attitude of
 Jackson's white colleagues.⁶⁶

It ended, however,

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Editorial, "Negroes In Baseball," Washington
Post, Oct. 27, 1945, p. 10.

For many years the Negroes have had professional leagues of their own . . . This raises a delicate question in equity . . . A general competition among major and minor league club owners for the best Negro ball players would certainly wreck the Negro leagues and with them the not inconsiderable capital investments of Negro entrepreneurs.⁶⁷

Wray's Column, carried by the Post Dispatch, was called, "Robinson Case May Cause Headache," on October 26. Wray took the role of the disinterested observer and saw the solution to the problem as a matter of time. He explained,

The Negro very definitely has crossed the threshold of organized baseball . . . Many doubt that [Robinson] will make the grade and advance to the major leagues. . . . If he should there no doubt will develop unpleasantness for himself, his club, his fellow players and the spectators in certain localities--for a time.⁶⁸

He continued,

Readjustment of entrenched prejudices here and there will come slowly . . . In the interim friction may develop . . . But the situation has been eased by the fact that Negroes are welcomed on college teams, where, in many instances, they have become popular . . . The natural supposition is that the collegiate attitude toward the Negro in sports could easily become national . . . But don't get sold on that idea too readily . . . Old Doctor Time will have to take over this case.⁶⁹

An editorial called "Jackie Robinson's Case" appeared in the News on October 26. It began, "More than most sports, organized base ball clings to the accustomed

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Wray's Column, "Robinson Case May Cause Headache," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 6c.

⁶⁹Ibid.

way, and if the color line has persisted in it, we suspect the survival is to be accounted less a prejudice than a tradition."⁷⁰ The two were not mutually exclusive, as was implied. Next followed a glittering generality: "Among artists themselves, the color line, like nationality, figures scarcely at all, and as time goes by this becomes more nearly true of audiences."⁷¹ The words "artists" and "audiences" should have been reversed. The editorial concluded, "Everything in [Robinson's] record and background suggests he will be a credit to pro sport, from which it will follow that he will be a credit to his race."⁷² His being a credit to his race and his being a credit to pro sport were quite definitely unrelated or, if necessary, one might choose the reverse order from the News.

In his column, "The Low Down," in the Examiner, on October 25, Prescott Sullivan wrote the most sarcastic, cynical commentary on the signing. He said,

We get a laugh out of the way the baseball moguls are applauding Montreal for being the first club in organized baseball to sign a Negro . . . to a player's contract . . . That's a funny thing because if baseball's big-wigs are really sincere in what they are saying then they sure have executed a speedy right about face. . . . baseball would have you believe that its been for the Negro all the time. Naturally,

⁷⁰Editorial, "Jackie Robinson's Case," Detroit News, Oct. 26, 1945, p. 22.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

anyone with an ounce of savvy isn't going to fall for that malarkey.⁷³

He continued,

. . . baseball, quite humorously, kept insisting that it had only one yardstick with which to measure a man's qualifications as a ball player. That, it said, was one of ability. . . . Jackie Robinson . . . has a heavy responsibility to carry now that he has become the first of his race to be admitted to baseball's sacred halls . . . Perhaps organized baseball will find him fully cooperative. . . As we say, a great deal depends on what Jackie Robinson makes of his opportunity.⁷⁴

In his column, "This Morning," in the Post, on October 27, Shirley Povich began:

Before you could say Jack Robinson, Branch Rickey signed the colored boy of the same name. . . Now, following the first dither of reaction to the admission of a Negro into organized baseball, the case has subsided to a "wait-and-see" state.⁷⁵

He went on to explain Rickey's motives:

Now Rickey becomes the first club owner to sign a Negro player, and his motive must be put down as sincere. . . The colored population is too small to be a turnstile factor. And the Dodgers have been doing very well at the gate without colored talent.⁷⁶

Then, he added:

One reason why other big leagues have not considered signing colored ballplayers is because, no doubt, they make more money out of renting their parks to Negro teams. . . The fact is that there were more

⁷³Prescott Sullivan, "The Low Down," San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 25.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Shirley Povich, "This Morning," Washington Post, Oct. 27, 1945, p. 18.

⁷⁶Ibid.

colored ballplayers of big league caliber 10 or 15 years ago than there are today.⁷⁷

Wray's Column on October 28 again dealt with the signing of Robinson, of whom Wray said, ". . . a problem child. . . Organized Baseball has its Jackie Robinson. . ." ⁷⁸

The column continued,

The bomb-like announcement of the signing of Jackie Robinson, Negro infielder, to play with Montreal, in organized baseball, is still echoing around the world. . . Negroes everywhere are greatly interested . . . the Defender, Chicago Negro publication, asked this writer, and presumably others throughout the country, for an "honest opinion as to the signing of Robinson." . . . (Many commentators have approached this subject with extreme caution, leaving the impression that they were pulling their punches.⁷⁹)

Wray summarized the situation:

There has to be a first time for everything . . . The "Negro-in-baseball" debate may as well have its beginning now as later . . . Opinions thus far expressed are sympathetic but the (prevailing belief) ^{questionable} seems to be that neither baseball nor the Negro player himself is ready for major league advancement.) . . . Perhaps Montreal's experiment will prove this. . . . The big worry of baseball magnates over the signing of Negro athletes probably will be as to the attitude of the white players, rather than that of the spectators . . . Many big leaguers are from southern areas.⁸⁰

This last part contradicted the earlier News editorial and made more sense.

Nothing was written on Robinson for two weeks,

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Wray's Column, "Postwar Problems Perplex Promoters," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 28, 1945, p. 1B.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

until November 13, when the Negro leagues did an about-face and filed a protest with Chandler on the hiring of Robinson. Chandler refused to consider the protest on the grounds that he had no jurisdiction over the Negro leagues. The Post, the News, the Tribune, the Post Dispatch and the Times all carried the AP news story on his refusal. Only Shirley Povich in the Post had any comment. In his "This Morning" column on November 14, he said, "Commissioner Chandler tosses out protest of Negro leagues. . . . It was scant consideration, in fact none at all. . . . The case seems to deserve a better answer."⁸¹

In New York, a committee appointed by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia to investigate discrimination in baseball reported back. The Times carried the report, which included such ambivalent statements as to render the committee unbelievable. The report began,

. . . four Negro leagues . . . are loosely organized and it would be difficult to say that they operate with any proximity to the quality of discipline and training achieved in white organized baseball. . . . This makes it difficult for Negro boys to get the training necessary to qualify them for participation in big league organized ball. . . . Most people admit that the Negro leagues, under present arrangements, can never produce players qualified for big league competition.⁸²

The report then switched, however, to a different position:

⁸¹Shirley Povich, "This Morning," Washington Post, Nov. 14, 1945, p. 22.

⁸²"Committee Report to Mayor Asks Equal Rights for Negro in Baseball," New York Times, Nov. 19, 1945, p. 15.

We have not found a single individual who would admit that Negroes do not possess potential physical capacities which would make them worthy of major league competition. . . We admit that the reason Negroes are excluded from organized baseball is sheer prejudice and tradition. . . it is not the responsibility of the Negroes to prepare players to participate in major league competition . . . We believe that the only equitable solution to this problem is that individuals be treated alike and with relation to their abilities throughout organized baseball.⁸³

The Times picked up on this report in an editorial on November 20, in which it appealed to the Americanism in people and said,

Good sportsmanship alone is sufficient argument for seeing to it that Negroes have a chance to play in organized baseball. . . . [There is no physical impediment known that would keep [the black] from becoming a major league player--except his color.] . . . If we are willing to let Negroes as soldiers fight wars on our team, we should not ask questions about color in the great American game.⁸⁴

Periodicals

Periodicals, generally, had limited coverage of the hiring of Jackie Robinson. The black monthly magazine, Opportunity, however, printed an essay by William Brower called "Time for Baseball to Erase the Blackball," commenting:

. . . we think that now is the psychologically convenient time for men in high places to erase the blackball which ethnologically enjoins the Negro from Organized Baseball. . . Every racial element of our

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Editorial, "Negroes In Baseball," ibid., Nov. 20, 1945, p. 20.

polyglot population . . . can find expression of its talent in professional baseball, with the sole exception of the Negro . . . there are Negro players whose skills qualify them for major league play, but are boycotted because of their skin. . . But reactionary moguls of Organized Baseball have been content to remain ostensibly oblivious to their qualifications.⁸⁵

The situation did not appear to change between 1942 and 1945.

In their November 5, 1945 issues, both Time and Newsweek covered the signing. The lead of the Newsweek story, under the heading, "A Negro on the Farm," read, "Organized baseball formally broke ranks for the first time last week on the touchy topic of Negro players."⁸⁶ It included such statements as, "Brooklyn officials emphasized the decision is not a hasty one," "Robinson, selected strictly on merit, 'is the best'" and "Reaction to Robinson's signing was generally noncommittal."⁸⁷

The Time story, on the other hand, was optimistic and centered on Rickey. Called "Branch Breaks the Ice," it began,

Last week . . . Rickey called in reporters--not to make a confession but to tell the world that Brooklyn had signed Jack Roosevelt Robinson, a Negro shortstop.

⁸⁵William A. Brower, "Time for Baseball to Erase the Blackball," Opportunity, June, 1942, pp. 164-65.

⁸⁶"A Negro On the Farm," Newsweek, Nov. 5, 1945, p. 94.

⁸⁷Ibid.

. . . Most baseball men, after an initial blush, realized that it could and perhaps would work.⁸⁸

Saturday Review of Literature published an editorial by the managing editor, John Winterich, on the signing on November 24. It was full of platitudes and words designed to unite the people under the American flag. It began,

A Negro named Jackie Robinson may well become one of the stouter bulwarks of a tolerant and understanding America. . . There is no present indication that such attention, if he ever comes to merit it, will go to Mr. Robinson's head. There is every indication that it will not. Mr. Robinson knows what he is up against, or to put it a little more accurately, what is up against him. (Mr. Robinson will be the first Negro player in modern organized baseball . . . he will crusade by not crusading. He has seen tolerance breed tolerance before.⁸⁹)

Winterich concluded:

Of course the thing is entirely possible. It is absolutely inevitable if America is going to live up to its high protestations of democracy. And there is no better place to begin than on a baseball diamond. . . . Whether Jackie Robinson is or is not a good ballplayer is the only question at issue.⁹⁰

Actually, that was the only question not at issue.

On November 26, Life covered the signing and said, as expected, "Robinson, . . . is one of the best Negro athletes in the U. S."⁹¹ Life was also optimistic,

⁸⁸"Branch Breaks the Ice," Time, Nov. 5, 1945, p. 77.

⁸⁹John T. Winterich, "Playing Ball," Saturday Review of Literature, Nov. 24, 1945, p. 12.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹"Jackie Robinson--Brooklyn Dodgers sign first Negro to play for organized baseball," Life, Nov. 26, 1945, p. 133.

If Robinson makes good, the major-league teams may sign up other Negro players, many of whom are of big-league caliber. Although some ballplayers and club owners have expressed disapproval, most of baseball seemed willing to give Robinson a fair chance.⁹²

⁹²Ibid.

CHAPTER III

IN THE MINORS

Newspapers

During the winter of 1945-6 another black player, John Wright, was hired by Rickey for Montreal, and in the spring of 1946 he and Jackie Robinson began training in the South with the rest of the Brooklyn teams. In the meantime, Commissioner Chandler was still haggling with and about the Negro leagues. On January 21, 1946, an AP interview with him was printed by the Times, the Tribune, the Post Dispatch, the Post and the News. The story said that Chandler ". . . also revealed that Negro diamond leaders have discussed the question of reorganizing their leagues on a basis that would permit their entry into organized baseball."¹ Chandler himself diplomatically explained, "I told them to get their house in order, then come to baseball

¹"Sound Basis Urged For Negro Leagues," New York Times, Jan. 21, 1946, p. 18; "Chandler Tells Of Aid To Negro Ball Leagues," Chicago Tribune, Jan. 21, 1946, p. 22; "Chandler Says All Baseball Should Be Under One Head," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Jan. 21, 1946, p. 4B; "Negro Baseball Leagues Ask Recognition," Washington Post, Jan. 21, 1946, p. 13; "'Hap' Says Negro Leagues Can Be Organized," Detroit News, Jan. 21, 1946, p. 17.

with a petition for recognition."² He continued, "The Negro leagues favor keeping their own boys and with their leagues on a sound basis, with a contract like the one we used, they expect these boys to want to stay in their own class."³ Chandler's and, seemingly, the Negro League's assumption that the black players and leagues were indeed inferior to the white major leagues was ironic. It was interesting that Chandler and the rest of the white baseball world immediately took the position of authority, as though they had a mandate to establish a hierarchy of baseball leagues.

Only the Times picked up an AP news story on January 23 in which Dr. J. B. Martin, president of the Negro American Baseball League, disagreed with Chandler's statements, ". . . there was no mention of Negro leagues wanting to hold their players if they had a chance to advance."⁴ Again only the Times printed the following AP news story, on February 27, which reported:

The marriage of Jackie Robinson, outstanding Negro athlete signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers organization, and Rachel Isum of Los Angeles was disclosed today. Robinson, 27, former four-sport star at U.C.L.A., and Miss Isum, 23, a former nurse, were wed here Feb. 10.⁵

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴"Chandler Is Challenged," New York Times, Jan. 23, 1946, p. 23.

⁵"Jackie Robinson Married," ibid., Feb. 27, 1946, p. 28.

On March 5, the Tribune and the Post printed an AP news story about Robinson at the first day of Dodger training camp. The story began, "Baseball broke a precedent of long standing today . . .," and continued, "Before an uninterested gathering of seven spectators.) . . ." ⁶ The Times printed a similar story by one of its own reporters, Roscoe McGowan. His lead was, "Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, first Negro to be signed to an organized baseball contract since the turn of the century, . . . sounded the keynote of the difficult symphony he will attempt to lead for his race." ⁷ He continued, "Robinson answered all questions from newspapermen readily and frankly." ⁸ The other stories concluded, "Robinson . . . was so busy answering reporters and posing for photographers that he had little time for a real workout," ⁹ but McGowan ended with a discretely revealing statements, "Both Negro players have been housed in Sanford, Robinson at the home of David Brock, well-to-do Negro realtor, and will don their uniforms there each day instead of in the clubhouse." ¹⁰

⁶"2 Negro Players Start Workout With Montreal," Chicago Tribune, March 5, 1946, p. 22; "2 Negroes Begin Drill With Royals," Washington Post, March 5, 1946, p. 16.

⁷Roscoe McGowan, "Robinson, Wright, Negro Players, Start Training at Sanford Camp," New York Times, March 5, 1946, p. 28.

⁸Ibid.

⁹See note 6.

¹⁰McGowan, ibid.

Only the Post and the Examiner mentioned that on March 7 "Negro Jackie Robinson played his first intrasquad game. . . ." ¹¹

On March 18, the Dodgers played their first exhibition game, and Robinson played in it. The UP news story, carried only by the Post, began, "For the first time in the history of southern baseball training, a Negro participated in an exhibition game today when Jackie Robinson. . . ." ¹² The AP lead, printed in the Constitution, the News, the Tribune and the Examiner was, "A precedent for baseball training in the south was set today. . . ." ¹³ McGowan, who covered the Dodgers for the Times, began his story, "The precedent-breaking participation of a Negro in a baseball game with white players here this afternoon seemingly was taken in stride by a majority of the 4,000 spectators. . . ." ¹⁴ The AP story said, "It was the first time a Negro player ever participated with whites in an exhibition game for which admission was charged in the

¹¹"Robinson in Line-up," Washington Post, March 7, 1946, p. 21; San Francisco Examiner, March 7, 1946, p. 19.

¹²"1000 Negroes Watch Hitless First Effort by Robinson," Washington Post, March 18, 1946, p. 10.

¹³"Dodgers Beat Montreal, 7-2; Negro Plays," Atlanta Constitution, March 18, 1946, p. 16; "Robinson Hitless in Debut," Detroit News, March 18, 1946, p. 18; "Dixie History Made; Negro In Dodgers' Game," Chicago Tribune, March 18, 1946, p. 27; "Robinson Is Applauded," San Francisco Examiner, March 18, 1946, p. 17.

¹⁴Roscoe McGowan, "Dodgers Conquer Montreal By 7-2," New York Times, March 18, 1946, p. 16.

State of Florida."¹⁵ Two other subjects were discussed in the stories. One was Robinson's play, and the other was the black fans. About Robinson, McGowan said matter-of-factly,

Jackie Robinson, the Negro signed to a Montreal contract by Branch Rickey, Brooklyn president, played five innings at second base for the Royals, had two chances afield, made no hits in three trips to the plate but stole one base and scored a run.¹⁶

The AP story said,

When he came to bat for the first time the Negroes applauded. The whites, sitting back of third base, didn't engage in handclapping until Herman had caught the foul fly. However, in his next two times at the plate Robinson was applauded by both whites and Negroes as he took his place in the batter's box.¹⁷

The concluding paragraph of the stories was revealing.

The wire stories explained straightforwardly, ". . . 1000 Negroes, who overflowed the 'Jim Crow' section making it necessary for about 200 of them to stand back of the right field foul line,"¹⁸ while McGowan was a bit more involved,

There was an overflow crowd of Negro spectators--nearly 1,000--and the small Jim Crow bleachers section allotted to them was entirely inadequate, many of them standing out beyond the rightfield foul line.¹⁹

In an editorial on March 20 called, "Race Barriers

¹⁵See note 13.

¹⁶McGowan, ibid.

¹⁷See note 13.

¹⁸See notes 12 and 13.

¹⁹McGowan, ibid.

Down," the Times discussed that game and its implications.

It said,

For Jackie Robinson, the Montreal second baseman, it was his first trial under fire. Robinson is a Negro. The game was the first time a Negro had appeared as such in a line-up of organized baseball since the Eighteen Eighties, . . . No attempt has been made to disguise Robinson's racial heritage. On the contrary, he is a test case. . . The crowd at Daytona Beach took Robinson's first appearance in a matter-of-fact manner, according to reports. There was friendly applause and no jeers.²⁰

It concluded, "We hope Robinson makes a success of his efforts. If the crowds that watch him . . . will accept his presence as a matter of course, . . . another racial barrier will be down."²¹

Thus, things went smoothly until March 22, when the team went to Jacksonville, Florida. The Post Dispatch, the News and the Tribune printed an AP news story that explained that a city law prohibited blacks and whites from playing against each other in municipal parks. The story included an interview with a city official who "said the Montreal Club could bring second baseman Robinson or any other Negro player it wished to Jacksonville but that no Negro player would be permitted to play."²² The

²⁰Editorial, "Race Barriers Down," New York Times, March 20, 1946, p. 22.

²¹Ibid.

²²"Montreal Can't Use Negro Players in Jacksonville," St. Louis Post Dispatch, March 22, 1946, p. 5B; "Negroes Barred From Exhibition," Detroit News, March 22, 1946, p. 25; "Board Prohibits Negro Stars In Florida Game," Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1946, p. 24.

International News Service sports editor wrote a story for the Examiner, which began, "Jackie Robinson, Negro ball player from U.C.L.A. was barred today. . ."²³ McGowan's story for the Times included a submissive quote from Rickey, who said, "We have no intention of attempting to go counter to any city government's laws or regulations. If we are notified that Robinson cannot play in Jacksonville, of course he will not play."²⁴ McGowan concluded, "Thus Jacksonville . . . became the first Southern municipality to announce such a taboo openly and officially."²⁵

The next day, March 23, it was official. The Post, the Times and the Tribune printed an AP news story which began, "A controversy over participation of Jackie Robinson and John Wright, Negro players for Montreal . . . resulted in cancellation of the contest today."²⁶ The Royals, whom Montreal had been scheduled to play, issued a statement that said, "We had nothing to do with the cancellation. We were willing to go ahead with the game if we could persuade

²³Davis J. Walsh, "City Bars Robinson," San Francisco Examiner, March 22, 1946, p. 19.

²⁴Roscoe McGowan, "Florida City Bars Montreal Negroes," New York Times, March 22, 1946, p. 25.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶"Negro Players Barred, Game In Jacksonville Cancelled," Washington Post, March 23, 1946, p. 15; "Royals' Game Off At Jacksonville," New York Times, March 23, 1946, p. 17; "Negro Players One Nine; Florida City Bars Game," Chicago Tribune, March 23, 1946, p. 19.

Montreal to leave Robinson at Daytona Beach. . . ."27'
 No editorials or columns followed this incident.

In spite of such setbacks, Robinson moved successfully into regular season play and, on August 13, the Times printed a UP news story, which said, "Jackie Robinson, the Montreal Royals' 'test case' infielder, stood on the threshold of the major leagues today after overcoming injuries, rival pitchers and the racial barrier."²⁸ Rickey was mentioned as the person "who broke a long-standing baseball precedent in signing Robinson last winter. . . ."29 The signing was still not referred to in connection with racism, as it would be now, but only with tradition and precedent.

On September 15, with the end of the season, Robinson won the batting title of the International League and led his team to the pennant. The stories announcing this were all at the bottom of sports pages, The Times, the Post, the News and the Tribune all printed an AP news story with the lead, "Jackie Robinson's dreams of becoming the first Negro since 1900 to play major league baseball are closer to realization. . . ."30 Actually,

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸"Robinson to Get Trial," New York Times, August 13, 1946, p. 20.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰"Robinson Tops League," New York Times, Sept. 15, 1946, p. 12; "Batting King Jackie Robinson Knocks at Major

they could more accurately be described as Rickey's dreams for Robinson. The Post added its own conclusion to the story,

There is little doubt that the plucky infielder, who was a vital cog in the Royal's pennant winning machine, will be at the Dodgers' training camp next spring and it won't surprise anyone who has seen him in action with the Royals this season if he is a member of Brooklyn's 1947 National League entry.³¹

The Examiner, however, had a more unusual story, under the headline, "Brown Runnerup to Robinson For International Bat Crown." The focus of the story was Brown, even though he was second, who was also from California but was white. The lead was, "Brown . . . was beaten out . . . only by Jackie Robinson of the Montreal Royals. . ."³² Robinson was mentioned later in the story as "former UCLA all around athlete who is owned by the Brooklyn Dodgers."³³

Periodicals

Periodicals did not really cover Robinson's first season in the minors. Collier's published a two-page

League Door," Washington Post, Sept. 15, 1946, p. 1R; "Jackie Robinson Wins Batting Title," Detroit News, Sept. 15, 1946, p. 1; "International Bat Honors Won By Negro Star," Chicago Tribune, Sept. 15, 1946, part II, page 1.

³¹"Batting King Jackie Robinson Knocks at Major League Door," Washington Post, Sept. 15, 1946, p. 1R.

³²"Brown Runnerup to Robinson For International Bat Crown," San Francisco Examiner, Sept. 15, 1946, p. 22.

³³Ibid.

interview with Robinson by Arthur Mann. Robinson was referred to as "the dark jack rabbit" and verbs used included "puzzles," "murmurs," "confided" and "confesses.") He "was particularly distressed" and "paused to grin and chuckle."³⁴ No words were used to indicate strength of character or intelligence. He was compared with Jim Thorpe, a famous Indian athlete, in two respects. One was, "Like Thorpe, Robinson is least brilliant in baseball, yet several Brooklyn scouts were unanimous in the opinion that he was the very best Negro player in the country."³⁵ The other was, "But where Thorpe was a constant problem in behaviorism, Robinson doesn't smoke or drink."³⁶ Robinson was quoted as saying, "You stand ten of us colored boys in a row at a night game, and Feller couldn't pick me out."³⁷ Thus, it is somewhat surprising that Mann managed to conclude, "He comes into organized baseball with a confidence that is exceeded only by his modesty."³⁸

Newsweek and Time reported on him at the end of the season in stories full of superlatives and compliments. Newsweek called its story, "Royal Robinson" and began,

³⁴Arthur Mann, "Say Jack Robinson," Collier's, March 2, 1946, pp. 67-68.

³⁵Ibid., p. 67.

³⁶Ibid., p. 68.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

". . . Jack Robinson, first Negro to play organized baseball in modern times."³⁹ It continued, "He had little baseball experience--" and "The pressure of being a test case was heavy on Robinson. He tried too hard."⁴⁰ It concluded, however, with comments such as, "Branch Rickey's racial 'guinea pig' was a standout ball player," "popular Robbie" and a quote from Robinson, "I've had great luck and great treatment. This is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me."⁴¹ Time called its story, "Jackie Makes Good," and captioned a picture, "Jackie Robinson--He beat out bunts and an old prejudice." He was referred to as "rangy, graceful Jackie Robinson" who "neither drinks nor smokes."⁴² The story said,

. . . Jackie Robinson was blazing the way for other Negro ballplayers and he was jittery. . . All he seemed to have was dazzling speed on the bases and a modest, earnest attitude that quickly put him in solid with his white Montreal teammates.⁴³

The story concluded that Robinson "had already accomplished his mission. Other big-league moguls were already hunting around for Negro rookies of promise."⁴⁴

³⁹"Baseball: Royal Robinson," Newsweek, Aug. 26, 1946, p. 71.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 72.

⁴²"Jackie Makes Good," Time, Aug. 26, 1946, pp. 63-64.

⁴³Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 64.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE MAJORS

Newspapers

During the winter before the 1947 season, it was expected that Robinson would move up to the Dodgers. Nothing happened to confirm this, however, and on January 14, 1947, John Drebing, a reporter for the Times, interviewed Rickey on the subject. Drebing reported

Asked point-blank why Robinson, who led the International League at bat last summer, was not being made an outright member of the Dodgers, Rickey repeated the stand he had taken several times on what he admits is a controversial and "delicate subject." . . . "I want to assure you," said Rickey, "that Robinson will receive the fairest chance in the world to make the Dodgers and our only aim is to work this problem to the best benefit of all concerned. I am confident the course we are following will prove the most satisfactory in the end. I want his promotion to the Dodgers to come as a natural development, not as something forced. (And above all else I want the players on the Dodgers to desire his presence on the team.) Playing against him in more than a dozen games, they will receive ample opportunity for judging him. If Robinson has the ability and merits a place with the Brooklyn Club he surely will be on the team!"¹

By April 11, in fact, he earned that place and

¹John Drebing, "Rickey Reveals Venezuela, Cuba Treks By Dodgers, Yanks," New York Times, Jan. 14, 1947, p. 33.

joined the Dodgers, according to headlines, lead stories and pictures in the newspapers. The Times printed its own story by Louis Effrat, while the Post and the News carried the UP story, and the Post Dispatch, the Tribune, the Examiner and the Constitution carried the AP story. The leads were about the same, with the AP starting, "Jackie Robinson, brilliant Negro infielder, today became the first of his race to break into modern major league baseball,"² the UP starting, "Jackie Roosevelt Robinson became the first Negro baseball player in the major leagues today. . ."³ and the Times starting, "Jackie Robinson, 28-year-old infielder, yesterday became the first Negro to achieve major-league baseball status in modern times."⁴ Slightly condescending, the Times continued, ". . . it was a history-making day for the well-proportioned lad."⁵ Effrat explained,

²"'I'm on the Spot,' Says Jackie Robinson; Confident He can Win Fans Over," St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 11, 1947, p. 2E; "Robinson Becomes a Dodger as He Helps Royals Win, 4-3," Chicago Tribune, April 11, 1947, p. 27; Joe Reichler, "Robinson Gets Big League Chance!" San Francisco Examiner, April 11, 1947, p. 19; "Robinson Bought by Brooklyn," Atlanta Constitution, April 11, 1947, p. 14.

³"Jackie Robinson Signed by Dodgers," Washington Post, April 11, 1947, p. 4H; "Jackie Robinson Faces Yankees First," Detroit News, April 11, 1947, p. 41.

⁴Louis Effrat, "Dodgers Purchase Robinson, First Negro in Modern Major League Baseball," New York Times, April 11, 1947, p. 20.

⁵Ibid.

*The call for Robinson was no surprise. Most baseball persons had been expecting it.) After all, he had proved his right to the opportunity by his extraordinary work in the AAA minor league, . . . Robinson's path in the immediate future may not be too smooth, however. He may run into antipathy from *Southerners who form about 60 per cent of the league's playing strength.) In fact, it is rumored that a number of Dodgers expressed themselves unhappy at the possibility of having to play with Jackie.⁶

Effrat said, "Jackie, himself, expected no trouble. He said he was 'thrilled and its what I've been waiting for.'"⁷ Effrat also interviewed Rickey, who "declared he did not expect trouble from other players, because of Robinson. 'We are all agreed,' he said, 'that Jackie is ready for the chance.'"⁸

The Post said that ". . . his coaches and the Dodger organization were unanimous in believing that Robinson should be on the Dodgers. The (Dodger players)* received the news placidly and had no comment."⁹) The News said that ". . . (most base ball men agreed that the (the Negro not only will stay up but probably become a)* star."¹⁰) The story said of Robinson,

(He was confident that he could make good in the majors, thus opening the door for others of his race

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹"Jackie Robinson Signed by Dodgers," Washington Post, April 11, 1947, p. 4H.

¹⁰"Jackie Robinson Faces Yankees First," Detroit News, April 11, 1947, p. 41.

to compete on equal footing. . . . He already has proved he can produce despite pressure. He became the first Negro in organized base ball. . . . More important, he became one of the best-liked men on the team, both with his mates and with the fans.¹¹

The story concluded, "News of the promotion was taken calmly by Dodger players."¹²

Both the Examiner and the Tribune quoted Robinson as saying, "I am happy to be with the Dodgers. I am glad that Mr. Rickey and the others on the Brooklyn club have the confidence in me and I certainly shall give them the best in me."¹³ The Post Dispatch printed a longer story, in which it quoted Robinson as saying, "I am on the spot and I know it. But I'm prepared for it. I am certain I can win them over in Brooklyn as I did in Montreal."¹⁴ The story referred to ". . . the sensitive ex-collegian. . . ." and said, "the brilliant 28-year-old former U.C.L.A. all-round athlete . . . was still in a daze. . . ."¹⁵ Continuing with its sugar-and-spice coverage, the story said,

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Joe Reichler, "Robinson Gets Big League Chance!" San Francisco Examiner, April 11, 1947, p. 19; "Robinson Becomes a Dodger as He Helps Royals Win, 4-3," Chicago Tribune, April 11, 1947, p. 27.

¹⁴"'I'm on the Spot,' Says Jackie Robinson; Confident He Can Win Fans Over," St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 11, 1947, p. 2E.

¹⁵Ibid.

While Robby naturally was elated with the news of his advancement, . . . he surprisingly said it did not give him quite the thrill he got when he signed his first contract to play in organized ball. . . . The well-built athlete . . . did not care to predict how he would fare in the big time . . . Robby is convinced he can break down the barrier of prejudice. "Once the ice is broken and the idea accepted, it will become a natural thing for Negro players to mingle with white players in organized ball."¹⁶

That day, Wray's Column in the Post Dispatch was headed "Robinson Looks Like a Sure Shot" and began,

Now that Jackie Robinson, Negro infielder for the Dodgers, has crashed the major leagues, the first of his race to win such a concession from ancient prejudices, speculation as to the effect of Branch Rickey's pioneering in Ethiopian fields is beginning to steam up.¹⁷

He continued optimistically,

. . . we can dismiss all fears of prejudice developing from Jackie's advent to pro baseball . . . Robinson is more apt to help wipe out ancient prejudice than to revive it. . . He has won a place in history (and on his team) the hard way and in the face of obstacles thought insuperable, once upon a time. . . College-bred, intelligent and socially inclined, Robinson seems another inter-racial good-will ambassador.¹⁸

Wray added, however,

Whether the success of Jackie in making the big league grade will inspire Negroes widely to take up baseball with a view to "making" the majors depends in part on his success as a player and his treatment by fans and teammates. . .¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Wray's Column, "Robinson Looks Like a Sure Shot," St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 11, 1947, p. 3E.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

An editorial in the Times the next day was angrier.

It said,

If Robinson had been a white man the name would have been there long before this, . . . Robinson's elevation to the parent club should have been almost automatic, but the color line has always been drawn in modern baseball.²⁰

It concluded with an appeal, familiar by then, to the "Americanism" in people,

It is the expressed wish of Robinson that he be judged strictly as a ballplayer. This must also be the hope of all those who believe that the principle of no discrimination because of race or religion is one of the finest attributes of what we like to call Americanism.²¹

Naturally, Robinson's first game as a Dodger drew special attention from the press. The AP news story on the game, carried by the Post, the Examiner and the Tribune, began "Jackie Robinson, Negro Brooklyn infielder. . . ." and went on to say, melodramatically, "The flashy Montreal alumnus, trying desperately to answer the pleas of . . . fans . . ." ²² had driven in three runs, although he had not had a hit. He also played the whole game, as the manager, Clyde Sukeforth, said, "because I want him to get the feel of playing in the big leagues."²³ The News carried a

²⁰ Editorial, "J. Robinson, Ballplayer," New York Times, April 12, 1947, p. 16.

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Montreal Topples Dodger Club, 4-3," Washington Post, April 11, 1947, p. 5B; "Robinson Is Hitless," San Francisco Examiner, April 12, 1947, p. 14.

²³ Ibid.

similar UP story, but the Times printed its own story by Louis Effrat.) The lead was, "With Jackie Robinson, first Negro with a major league club since 1884, playing nine innings at first base flawlessly,. . ."²⁴ Effrat said, "The 28-year-old Robinson . . . received (a pleasant reception from the fans and the players."²⁵*) In an account of Robinson's part in the game, he said, "Robinson, though hitless, drove home three Brooklyn runs, two with well-drilled outfield flies. On the field, he handled fifteen chances like a veteran. Two were difficult ones, but Robby did his part neatly."²⁶

Prescott Sullivan, of the Examiner, began his column "The Low Down" unsurprisingly, "Jackie Robinson, first Negro to crash organized baseball's color line," ²⁷ On April 12, only one person who objected to Robinson was willing to speak out. Dixie Walker, a Southern Dodger, was interviewed in an AP story carried by the Examiner and called "Dixie Explains Stand on Negro." It said, "'It is up to Robinson to prove he is the best man for his position,'

²⁴Louis Effrat, "Robinson Hitless, but Drives In Three Runs as Dodgers Overpower Yankees," New York Times, April 12, 1947, p. 12.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Prescott Sullivan, "The Low Down," San Francisco Examiner, April 12, 1947, p. 14.

Dixie said in his southern drawl--. . . ."28 The Post carried a UP news story called "Hopper to Dodgers?" which was based on the fact that Sukeforth was only a temporary manager for the Dodgers, replacing Leo Durocher, and a permanent manager would have to be found. The story explained the UP's, and presumably the Post's since it chose to print the story, choice for the position,

Hopper [manager of the Montreal Royals] . . . handled the Robinson situation successfully last year and would seem like a logical choice to help the first colored player in the history of modern major league baseball make the big time.²⁹

The next day Robinson got his first hit, although it did not affect the game, which the Dodgers lost. The interesting thing was that the stories covering the game and his hit, printed in the Post Dispatch, the News and the Examiner, did not mention Robinson's race.

On April 13, the Post Dispatch printed a cliché-ridden editorial in support of Rickey's move. It began, "Jackie Robinson, a Negro . . ." and referred to him as ". . . the first of his race to reach a major league."³⁰ It said, "Branch Rickey knows a good man when he sees one. He chose Robinson to test an invisible color line that had

²⁸"Dixie Explains Stand on Negro," ibid., April 12, 1947, p. 14.

²⁹"Hopper To Dodgers?", Washington Post, April 12, 1947, p. 14.

³⁰Editorial, "Branch Rickey Picks a Player," St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 13, 1947, p. 2E.

no place in the national pastime," and concluded, predictably, ". . . from here on out, it isn't he alone who is on the spot. It's the Great American Game."³¹

An AP news story on the approaching opening day of the baseball season appeared in the Tribune and, in the Constitution, under the byline of Gayle Talbot. Talbot wrote his own lead, "An important brink of baseball, history, from which will date the entrance of the American Negro into the big leagues. . . ."³² The story said, "After months of conjecture, Jackie Robinson, a swift Negro . . . has been signed . . ." and later called him ". . . the speedy U.C.L.A. graduate. . ."³³ Also included was the expected "first time" bit, but in this case the responsibility was placed on Robinson, not baseball,

Never before, since the modern National and American leagues were organized, has a Negro appeared in a big-league uniform. The nation's fans will watch with great interest Robinson's effort to prove he can hit major league pitching.³⁴

On April 15, three newspapers picked up an AP news story on opening day. The Post, the Tribune and the

³¹Ibid.

³²Gayle Talbot, "Innovations Make Baseball History As Big League Play Opens Monday," Atlanta Constitution, April 13, 1947, p. 2D.

³³Gayle Talbot, "Innovations Make Baseball History As Big League Play Opens Monday," Atlanta Constitution, April 13, 1947, p. 2D; "Truman To Open 1947 Baseball Race Tomorrow," Chicago Tribune, April 13, 1947, part 2, p. 3.

³⁴Ibid.

Examiner printed the story by Jack Hand which mentioned Robinson as ". . . the first Negro to play a major league game in modern days" and referred to ". . . the official unveiling of Jackie Robinson as a major leaguer."³⁵

On April 16, the Dodgers opened at home, and Robinson did not get a hit. (In the AP story covering the game, carried by the Post Dispatch, the News, the Tribune and the Post, Robinson was mentioned as the "first Negro to play in modern big league baseball, . . ."³⁶ In a report on Robinson and the Dodgers in the Constitution, Steve Snider laid it on the line,

But on another point, Dodger fans were sharply divided. That point is Jackie Robinson, first recognized Negro in the majors, who has tied into the scramble for Brooklyn's first base job. Opposing factions already had lined up in the three-game exhibition series with the New York Yankees, with Robinson receiving mostly cheers and some of the established Dodgers, including Dixie Walker, coming in for a share of booing because of an impression that they, as Southerners, had tried to block Jackie's transfer to the Dodgers. All hands, still including Walker, have denied it, Robinson, himself, had high hopes. "The Dodger players have

³⁵Jack Hand, "Four Clubs Start With New Pilots," Washington Post, April 15, 1947, p. 17; "Expect Record Major League Opening Crowds," Chicago Tribune, April 15, 1947, p. 23; Jack Hand, "Debut Postponed, Majors On Today," San Francisco Examiner, April 15, 1947, p. 21.

³⁶"29 Rookies Make Debuts, but Veterans Steal the Show in Major Leagues' Opening Games," St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 18, 1947, p. 2B; Detroit News, April 16, 1947, p. 29; "Robinson Fails At Plate, But Dodgers Win, 5-3," Chicago Tribune, April 16, 1947, p. 33; "Pete Reiser Sparks Bum To 5-3 Win," Washington Post, April 16, 1947, p. 21.

been great to me," he said. "Sure, I'm on a spot but after a year at Montreal, I hope I'm ready for it."³⁷

In his column in the Examiner on questions for the coming season, Prescott Sullivan concluded with one on Robinson, "And, last but not least, will Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn), first Negro to cross organized baseball's color line, make the big league grade?"³⁸ In his column, "Sports of the Times," Arthur Daley, of the Times, mentioned Robinson on April 16. He said, "The debut of Jackie Robinson was quite uneventful. . . The muscular Negro minds his own business and shrewdly makes no effort to push himself. He speaks quietly when spoken to and already has made a strong impression."³⁹)

The next three weeks went smoothly for Robinson and the Dodgers, and Burt Shotten was appointed manager of the team. Then, on May 9, with a series with the St. Louis Cardinals approaching, problems arose. Stanley Woodward, sports editor for the New York Herald Tribune, had written a story so controversial that the Herald Tribune copyrighted it. Both the Post and the News, reprinted it. The story reported that the Cardinals had planned to strike if they had to play against Robinson

³⁷Steve Snider, "Durocher Still Rules As Hero of Flatbush," Atlanta Constitution, April 16, 1947, p. 11.

³⁸Prescott Sullivan, "The Low Down," San Francisco Examiner, April 16, 1947, p. 32.

³⁹Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times," New York Times, April 16, 1947, p. 32.

but that the plans had been found out and that important people in baseball had threatened terrible things if the strike were not called off; the strike did not take place and the players denied it was ever planned. The important people included Ford Frick, head of the National League, and Sam Breadon, owner of the Cardinals, who both flew to St. Louis to discuss the situation with the Cardinal team. According to Woodward, Frick told the team,

If you do this you will be suspended from the league. You will find that the friends you think you have in the press box will not support you, that you will be outcasts. I do not care if half the league strikes. Those who do it will encounter quick retribution. All will be suspended and I don't care if it wrecks the National League for five years. This is the United States of America and one citizen has as much right to play as another. The National League will go down the line with Robinson whatever the consequences. You will find if you go through with your intention, you have been guilty of complete madness.⁴⁰

Woodward himself followed this with a long history and editorial at the end of the story which was never quoted nor mentioned in any other paper but seemed to be the most important part of the story,

It is understood the players involved . . . will say . . . that their object is to gain the right to have a say on who shall be eligible to play in the major leagues. . . It is not generally known that other less serious difficulties have attended elevation of Robinson to the major leagues. Through it all, the Brooklyn first baseman, whose intelligence and degree of education are far beyond that of the average ball player, has behaved himself in an exemplary manner.

⁴⁰Stanley Woodward, "Frick Heads Off Strike On Robinson," Washington Post, May 9, 1947, p. 6B; Stanley Woodward, "Strike Story," Detroit News, May 9, 1947, p. 41.

It is generally believed by baseball men that he has enough ability to play on any club in the majors. This ability has asserted itself in spite of the fact that he hasn't had anything resembling a fair chance. He has been so burdened with letters and telegrams from well-wishers and efforts to exploit him that he has had no chance to concentrate. It is almost impossible to elicit comments about Robinson's presence in the National League from anyone connected with baseball. Neither club owners nor players have anything to say for publication. This leads to the conclusion that the coziness of both parties, plus natural cupidity which warns against loss of salaries of a gate attraction, will keep the reactionary element under cover. When Robinson joined the Montreal club last year, there was resentment among some Royal players. There was also a fear on the part of league officials that trouble would be forthcoming when the Royals played in Baltimore. Both the resentment and the fear were dissipated in three months. Robinson was cheered as wholeheartedly in Baltimore as anywhere else. Incidentally, Baltimore had its biggest attendance in 1946 and the incidence of Negroes in the crowd was not out of proportion. Since Robinson has played with Brooklyn many difficulties have loomed, sometimes forbiddingly, but have been circumvented. This was in part due to the sportsmanship of the fans and in part to the intelligence and planning of the Brooklyn management.⁴¹

Other newspapers wrote stories about this story.

The Constitution, the Tribune, the Examiner and the Post Dispatch published the AP report on the incident under the byline of Bob Broeg. The next day, however, an almost-as-exciting story on Robinson broke. It seemed that Robinson had been getting threatening mail all along which he never publicized but which Rickey was now publicizing. The AP news story, carried by the Constitution, the Tribune, and the Examiner, began, "Jackie Robinson, controversial figure as the first Negro baseball player in modern major league

⁴¹Ibid.

history, . . ." and went on to say, "It was the second time in 24 hours that the Brooklyn Dodger first sacker had been named in anti-racial diamond developments."⁴² The Times published a supportive story which commented that ". . . accumulation of such incidents certainly handicap Robinson in his efforts to make good by putting him under abnormal pressure."⁴³ It ended,

Resentment of Robinson's presence has not been evident among the Dodgers, who are most intimately concerned. His team-mates appear to accept him. If any of them object to him, they at least have maintained a discreet silence.⁴⁴

The same day, the Post Dispatch picked up an AP news story, in a vote of confidence, which said, "Branch Rickey . . . indicated today he intends using Jackie Robinson, first Negro baseball player in modern major league history, at first base despite recent reported anti-racial diamond developments."⁴⁵ The story even quoted Shotten as saying, "The players in the league have been bending over backward

⁴²"Jackie Robinson Gets Threatening Letters," Atlanta Constitution, May 10, 1947, p. 3; "Robinson Threatened Thru Mails, Branch Rickey Reveals," Chicago Tribune, May 10, 1947, p. 17; "Threat Letters To Jackie Sifted By N.Y. Police," San Francisco Examiner, May 10, 1947, p. 17.

⁴³"Robinson Reveals Written Threats," New York Times, May 10, 1947, p. 16.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵"Dodgers Sell Schultz to Philadelphia for \$50,000," St. Louis Post Dispatch, May 10, 1947, p. 6A.

to see that [Robinson] gets a fair break."⁴⁶ The next day, however, in his "Sports Parade" in the Examiner, Curley Grieve disagreed with that story,

It is by no means certain that Jackie Robinson will fill the bill as the Dodger first-sacker . . . So it seems a pretty good guess that if the UCLA athlete makes the grade in the majors, it will not be at first base, but at second or third.⁴⁷

Also on May 11, J. Ray Stockton, sports editor of the Post Dispatch, made a strange comment on the Robinson situation in his column "Extra Innings." He said, "That's the American Way. We do a lot of popping off, but when we get down to cases, we usually line up on the fair, democratic side."⁴⁸ If anything, Robinson's case demonstrated that the reverse was true: there wasn't much popping off (verbal complaining), but, in getting down to cases, the line was on the unfair, undemocratic side. This, of course, referred to off-the-field activities. On the field, Stockton's commentary may have been more accurate,

(Baseball probably leans backward in the case of Robinson, because he is a Negro, and because Jackie at the moment is a one-man minority in the major league picture. But if the dugouts treat Jackie just as they treat any other enemy player, especially the good ones, they'll give him a riding, eventually. That's baseball.) But our guess is that Jackie, who

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Curley Grieve, "Sports Parade," San Francisco Examiner, May 11, 1947, p. 28.

⁴⁸J. Ray Stockton, "Extra Innings," St. Louis Post Dispatch, May 11, 1947, p. 1E.

has a better education than many ball players, will understand and be able to take it.⁴⁹

The rest of the season went smoothly, and on September 13, Sporting News awarded Robinson the "Rookie of the Year" cup. The Times, the Post, the Constitution, the Examiner and the Post Dispatch printed the small AP news story, which quoted the editor of Sporting News, J. G. Taylor Spink, as saying that Robinson was chosen on the basis of "stark baseball values. . . The sociological experiment that Robinson represented, the trail-blazing he did, the barriers he broke down did not enter into the decision."⁵⁰

The next month, however, found Robinson eyeing the exit door of baseball. The Times, the Examiner, the Tribune and the Constitution printed a brief AP news story on October 26 which began, "Jackie Robinson, the Brooklyn Dodgers' first baseman and first Negro to make the grade in the major leagues, says he plans to quit baseball after 'about three more years.'"⁵¹ The story continued:

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Robinson 'Rookie of Year,'" New York Times, Sept. 13, 1947, p. 15; "Robinson Chosen 'Rookie of Year,'" Washington Post, Sept. 13, 1947, p. 12; "Jackie Robinson Rookie of Year," Atlanta Constitution, Sept. 13, 1947, p. 7; "Rookie of Year Cup To Jackie," San Francisco Examiner, Sept. 13, 1947, p. 17; "Rookie of Year Rating For Jackie Robinson By The Sporting News," St. Louis Post Dispatch, Sept. 12, 1947, p. 9C.

⁵¹ "Jackie Robinson Planning 3 More Years on Diamond," New York Times, Oct. 26, 1947, V, p. 5; "Robinson to Quit Game in 3 Years," San Francisco Examiner,

"I've been in sports for a long time and I'm getting a little tired of it," the 28-year-old Robinson told reporters. "The sooner I can get settled in a job in which I can help underprivileged children, the better I'll like it."⁵²

Needless to say, he did not leave after three years. In fact, the next month, Rickey was quoted in a brief AP news story in the Times on November 16, as saying, "I want Jackie Robinson with us again next year because he's a great ball player and a gentleman."⁵³

Periodicals

The periodicals reported comprehensively on Robinson's first year in the majors. On April 14, 1947, when he still had not been called up, Newsweek printed a story called, "Baseball: Time to Decide," in which it said, "To numerous interviewers, Robinson refused to admit disappointment."⁵⁴ It began, "The Color Question: The year's most revolutionary decision. . ." and added that "In 1946, [Rickey] drew a handsome press by giving Negroes

Oct. 25, 1947, p. 25; "Jackie Robinson Plans to Quit After 3 Years," Chicago Tribune, Oct. 26, 1947, part 2, p. 2; "Jackie Robinson To Quit Diamond In Three Years," Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 27, 1947, p. 9.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³"Durocher Decision Due Within 3 Weeks," New York Times, Nov. 16, 1947, V, p. 1.

⁵⁴"Baseball: Time To Decide," Newsweek, April 14 1947, p. 84.

their first chance in organized baseball."⁵⁵ The next week, on April 21, it again reminded Brooklyn about "Jackie Robinson, young Negro infielder still waiting for the Brooklyn chance he earned last season."⁵⁶ That same week, Time, which appeared to have more recent information, reported,

. . . Jackie Robinson found the Dodgers' door quietly opened to him. He became the first Negro in big-league baseball. . . . He asked to be judged not as a Negro but as a ballplayer--and in his first appearance last week the crowd so judged him.⁵⁷

Even Life reported, ". . . a new Dodger, Jackie Robinson, entered the Brooklyn club house. He was the first Negro player ever signed by a major-league club."⁵⁸ The next week, in the April 28 issue of Life, the caption under a full-page picture of Robinson said, "After one week's play the lithe Negro looked less like an issue and more like the regular Brooklyn first baseman."⁵⁹ The accompanying story said, ". . . the big attraction was former UCLA athlete Jackie Robinson, the first player to overcome the unwritten rule that no Negro may play major-league baseball."⁶⁰

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 83.

⁵⁶"Baseball: Buttoned Lip," Newsweek, April 21, 1947, p. 88.

⁵⁷"Safe At First?", Time, April 21, 1947, p. 55.

⁵⁸"Durocher Is Out," Life, April 21, 1947, p. 100.

⁵⁹"Opening Day," ibid., April 28, 1947, p. 37.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 36.

The May issue of Crisis, official publication of the NAACP, included an editorial called "Rickey and Robinson," which said, "The sports writers and the fans have been won over to a fair shake for Robinson," and advised

White and Negro fans ought to try and judge Robinson as a ball player, not a miracle man. . . He is not hired to solve the race problem, but to play baseball. . . Robinson can be an ambassador of racial good will to millions of Americans if he is given a chance.⁶¹

The New Republic discussed Robinson on May 19.

It said:

'Baseball's color line has been dented and we hope, heartily,' ventured the Herald Tribune, 'that Robinson can hit major-league pitching. . .' The quiet, gentlemanly Brooklyn first sacker could appreciate the boost. He was batting against a tradition that had barred many first-rate players from the majors--⁶²

The story then explained, "As the season started, some players treated Robinson differently from the way they treated each other . . . Even in the clubhouse with his own teammates, Robinson was on the outside. . . The pressure was tough."⁶³ On the same day, Newsweek mentioned that "The Negro rookie said he hoped people would regard him as just another rookie, . . ."⁶⁴ It said,

⁶¹Editorial, "Rickey and Robinson," Crisis, May, 1947, p. 137.

⁶²"Rookie," New Republic, May 19, 1947, p. 10.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴"Baseball: Batting at Robinson," Newsweek, May 19, 1947, p. 88.

". . . Robinson had never experienced anything like this. For that matter, no rookie ever had. Sensibly, he kept his mouth shut and did his best to play acceptably."⁶⁵*

Then, on September 22, Newsweek carried a story full of lavish praise called, "Robinson for Merit," which began, "Last week Sporting News gave him its annual Rookie of the Year award. Nobody was surprised" and continued with such references to his talents as "exceptional adaptability," "sure-handed quickness" and "trigger-quick reflexes."⁶⁶ Time printed a six-page story on that day, calling Robinson ". . . the first avowed Negro in the history of big-league baseball,. . ."⁶⁷ It included a melodramatic summary of the situation,

(. . . Jackie had established himself as a big leaguer. He had earned what comes free to every other player, the right to squawk. That change of attitude showed, as nothing else could, the progress of Jackie Roosevelt Robinson in the toughest first season any ballplayer has ever faced. He had made good as a major leaguer, and proved himself as a man.⁶⁸

In a strange combination of compliments and condescension, Time called him ". . . a well-muscled, pigeon-toed . . . rookie . . . one of the great all-round athletes of his day. . . He looks awkward, but isn't . . . He is not only

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁶"Robinson for Merit," Newsweek, Sept. 22, 1947, p. 80.

⁶⁷"Rookie of the Year," Time, Sept. 22, 1947, p. 70.

⁶⁸Ibid.

jack-rabbit fast, . . ."⁶⁹ The story continued, "Jackie's daring on the baselines has been matched by shrewd Branch Rickey's daring on the color line. Rickey gave Robinson his chance" and described Robinson as ". . . a Negro who would be his race's best foot forward, as well as a stout prop for a winning ball team."⁷⁰ The superlatives describing Robinson's perfection went on

He did not smoke. . . ; he drank a quart of milk a day and didn't touch liquor; he rarely swore; . . . He had intelligence, patience and willingness. He was aware of the handicaps his race encounters, but he showed it not by truculence or bitterness, and not by servility, but by a reserve that no white man really ever penetrated.⁷¹

Finally getting to what happened, the story said

Rickey, ignoring the uproar, treated Jackie "white," giving him a year's seasoning in the minors. . . Jackie faced hostility, suspicion, curiosity . . . Jackie had no desire to be a martyr for his race; he was just a young fellow anxious to make a living as a ballplayer.⁷²

Robinson himself was quoted twice, once when he said, "you know, colored people do not like music and dancing any better than white people . . . the white people just think they do" and the second time, "Some reporters write nice things about me and mean them, and others write nice things

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 70-71.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 71.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 72-73.

and don't mean them. I can always tell."⁷³ Concluding,
Time said,

It is impossible to measure how much better, or how much worse, Jackie's first season might have been had his handicaps been fewer. . . He also had to turn the other cheek to abuses and insults. First he had to overcome the attitude of his fellow Dodgers, which ranged from mere wait-&-see stand-offishness to (Southern-bred hostility and the rough stuff from rival teams) began early and has never stopped.⁷⁴

This last sentence was, of course, a direct contradiction to the newspaper reports. The final sentence said: "As Branch Rickey had foreseen, if Jackie played good baseball, the rest took care of itself."⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., p. 73.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The role of the press as a mirror of society is clearly reflected in the press coverage of Jackie Robinson. As white Americans were just beginning to see black Americans as people, so the press was beginning to open its eyes. The hiring of Robinson was seen as such a sudden change, however, that it created animosity where there might not have been any had there been a way to make such a change gradually. The press and the American people had images of black people which did not include a professional baseball player, let alone an intelligent, superb professional baseball player. Having those images shattered was hard to accept, and, in the case of the press, reflecting the new images was hard to do in writing. Thus, the coverage at first reflected the stereotypes of white Americans and the press about blacks; only at the end, in 1947, was the press able to drop those stereotypes and see Robinson as an individual rather than the "typical" black American.

Throughout the press coverage of Robinson, however, it is clear that most of those stereotypes and derogatory

references were not considered as such at that time. This applied as well to the mention of race and singling out of Robinson and/or blacks in general for being black, when such a distinction was irrelevant to the subject. (Only through the perspective gained by the passage of thirty years and the corresponding progress in journalism and in race relations is it possible to view that coverage, biased, derogatory and condescending as it was, as a product of its time.

Some reporting, however, was racist, even by the standards of the day. The use of "colored" and "boy" to refer to blacks was out of style by then and thus condescending. Some reporting was sloppy, such as the story in the News by H. S. Salsinger, quoting John R. Williams as saying that black ball players earned as much as white minor leaguers. This was not true, and Salsinger should have investigated it before printing it. The same was true of Williams' statement that blacks did not want to play in the white leagues.

Another example of sloppy reporting was the acceptance as fact of opinions that blacks were not or could never be competent enough ball players to play in the white leagues. Reporters should have investigated these allegations for themselves, for they would have found them to be false. Particularly in the case of Robinson, reporters stated that the only question at issue was whether he was a good enough ball player, when that was the only question

not at issue.

In later years, however, when writers remembered Robinson's breakthrough, their vision of Robinson's role and of the press coverage was somewhat distorted.) For example, in the summer, 1954, issue of Journal of Negro Education, Rufus Clement, then president of Atlanta University, wrote an article called, "Racial Integration in the Field of Sports." He said, "The last great citadel of lily-white-ism in American sports was organized baseball. This was also probably the hardest to conquer."¹ He remembered idealistically that Robinson's "bearing, culture, intelligence, deportment and demeanor, and his pleasant personality buttressed his great athletic ability and made of him an individual who could be accepted by people of all racial groups."²

The October, 1954, issue of Journal of Educational Sociology was devoted entirely to integration and included an article by Dan Dodson on "The Integration of Negroes in Baseball." Recalling the problems Rickey anticipated about hiring Robinson, Dodson said,

The thing [Rickey] feared most was the venom of some of the sports writers. He said many of them were from the South. They were always ready to criticize breaks with tradition. They, too, could never attack

¹Rufus E. Clement, "Racial Integration in the Field of Sports," Journal of Negro Education, Summer, 1954, p. 226.

²Ibid., p. 227.

him openly, but obliquely they would make it as hard for him as possible.³

Dodson remembered that Rickey was right,

The first barrage of the newspaper men was to the effect that he had robbed the Negro league. Robinson swore he was not under contract, but this seemed to make no difference. A large section of the sports press was favorable to the action. Many were not convinced, however, that Rickey meant business. Others took up the chant that he was merely exploiting the Negroes for publicity, and had no intention of carrying through. After this first barrage, the opposition of the fourth estate attacked him for his miserliness.⁴

An article in the May, 1957, issue of Ebony called "Branch Rickey Discusses The Negro in Baseball Today" included a picture captioned, "A colorful showman, Branch Rickey, Sr., then president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, signed Jackie Robinson to his 1948 contract on Lincoln's birthday with a picture of the Great Emancipator looking down from the wall."⁵

On April 15, 1962, the New York Times Magazine included an article by Philip Benjamin called "Then and Now," comparing Robinson, the young ball player, to Robinson, the mature businessman. Of the early Robinson, Benjamin said, "Fifteen years ago Robinson's life was simpler. All he had to do . . . was break the tradition

³Dan W. Dodson, "The Integration of Negroes in Baseball," Journal of Educational Sociology, Oct. 1954, p. 75.

⁴Ibid., p. 227.

⁵"Branch Rickey Discusses The Negro in Baseball Today," Ebony, May, 1957, p. 38.

that big-league baseball was for whites."⁶ He quoted Robinson as saying, "I let the newspapers influence me. I was led to believe that everyone on the club was against my playing."⁷

Negro Digest, in June, 1964, printed an article by Les Rodney, a free-lance writer, called "The Long, Hard Road to Mediocrity," in which Rodney remembered the change in Robinson during his career,

Robinson . . . bore much of the initial brunt of baseball's social progress. . . (A tight-lipped performer out of agreed necessity at the start, by the time he finished he might also have been voted "Most Voluble." The real Jackie Robinson had stood up--outgoing, aggressive, proud, sometimes irritating, but rarely dull.⁸

In his own book, Baseball Has Done It, Robinson published, in 1964, a collection of interviews with black players, in which they each discussed integration in baseball. He remembered when he was first playing,

Dodger writers gave generous space to my play, and were scrupulously fair. However, they fell into the habit of calling me "The Dodgers' Negro star" in their accounts of games. Several years were to pass before copy editors blue-penciled Negro into limbo. . . . As time went on I became personally acquainted with writers throughout the circuit in interviews

⁶Philip Benjamin, "Then and Now," New York Times Magazine, April 15, 1962, p. 84.

⁷Ibid., p. 86.

⁸Les Rodney, "The Long, Hard Road to Mediocrity," Negro Digest, June, 1964, pp. 11-12.

before and after each game. On road trips I had private talks with several whom I trusted. I made mistakes.⁹

In Race and Sport, also published in 1964, Richard Thompson remembered,

When Jackie Robinson was brought in to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 it marked the official entry of the Negro into professional baseball. The success of this experiment led other clubs to search the Negro leagues for talent, and in fact the introduction of Negro ball players led to an increase in attendance at games, not only by Negroes, but by other Americans as well.¹⁰

Richard Tobin, then managing editor of Saturday Review, wrote an article in the January 21, 1967 issue called "Sports as an Integrator." He said, perhaps underestimating people, "That Jackie Robinson made full use of the opportunity to break through the big league color line is now so deep in history that many forget how important he and Branch Rickey were to the cause."¹¹

In November, 1968, A. S. (Doc) Young began a two-year series in Ebony called "The Black Athlete In The Golden Age of Sports." In Part I, titled "Branch Rickey Launches Negroes to Stardom With Signing of Jackie Robinson," Young remembered baseball right before Robinson,

⁹ Jackie Robinson, Baseball Has Done It (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1964), pp. 53-54.

¹⁰ Richard Thompson, Race and Sport (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 4.

¹¹ Richard L. Tobin, "Sports as an Integrator," Saturday Review, Jan. 21, 1967, p. 32.

In the summer of 1945, organized baseball in America was a white man's game, his private club, a closed corporation. It was, in fact, as lily-white as the Ku Klux Klan; and, in a sense, its operators were more bold in their practice of bigotry than the most notorious of kleagles. Organized baseball, scorning the hooded uniform, was unafraid of daylight, and practiced its bigotry in full view of millions of fans the nation over . . . boasting all the while that it was "The National Pastime" and "a grand old game," describing the unwritten law which barred American Negroes from its hallowed diamonds as "a gentleman's agreement."¹²

Robert Peterson remembered a different reaction by the baseball world to Robinson's signing than Doc Young did. In his 1970 book, Only the Ball Was White, Peterson wrote,

In the little world of baseball, another evil was making its final stand that spring of 1945. The color line was being buffeted at every hand, but it appeared to be solid enough to stand another year or two . . . On October 23, 1945, Jackie Robinson signed his contract to play the 1946 season with the Montreal Royals. The announcement was easily the top sports story of the year, and the newspapers worked it over thoroughly, getting comments from almost everyone who conceivably could have an opinion about Negroes in general or Robinson in particular. (On their editorial pages, the papers were in the main favorably inclined, even in the South . . . The year 1945 ended with organized baseball resigned to at least token integration, the Negro press jubilant, and Negro baseball's controlling interests annoyed by what they considered Rickey's piracy, but optimistic that in the long run it might prove beneficial to their leagues . . . The biggest sports story of 1947 was a two-sentence announcement by the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 10. The Dodgers, who trained in Cuba that spring in an obvious move to ease the path for Jackie Robinson, were playing the Montreal Royals in Panama. The announcement read: "Brooklyn announces the purchase of the contract of

¹²A. S. (Doc) Young, "The Black Athlete In The Golden Age of Sports," Part I: "Branch Rickey Launches Negroes to Stardom With Signing of Jackie Robinson," Ebony, Nov., 1968, p. 152.

Jack Roosevelt Robinson from Montreal. He will report immediately."¹³

These stereotyped memories and the equally stereotyped reporting at the time were not recognized as such, although the first of two important pieces on stereotyping had already been published by 1940. Stereotypes were first discussed by Walter Lippman in 1922, in Public Opinion. "In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture had already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture."¹⁴ In discussing the reasons why people hold to stereotypes, he said,

The systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society. They are an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves. . . The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy.¹⁵

This attitude was clearly shared by the press in reporting about Robinson. A black in baseball was an obvious threat, from which whites had to protect themselves,

¹³Robert Peterson, Only The Ball Was White (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 183, 193, 198.

¹⁴Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: Free Press, 1922), p. 55.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 63-64.

if only because they had become so comfortable without him and his presence might disrupt that comfort.

In The Nature of Prejudice, Gordon Allport also discussed stereotyping, with a tribute to Lippman "for establishing the conception in modern social psychology."¹⁶ Allport said, ". . . a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category."¹⁷ He added a particularly relevant comment about stereotypes, "They are socially supported, continually revived and hammered in, by our media of mass communication--. . ."¹⁸ This point is well-documented in this study and supports the idea of the press as a mirror of society.

¹⁶Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1954), p. 187.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 195.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Newspapers

Atlanta Constitution, Jan. 1945-Dec. 1947.
Chicago Tribune, Jan. 1945-Dec. 1947.
Detroit News, Jan. 1945-Dec. 1947.
New York Times, Jan. 1945-Dec. 1947.
San Francisco Examiner, Jan. 1945-Dec. 1947.
St. Louis Post Dispatch, Jan. 1945-Dec. 1947.
Washington Post, Jan. 1945-Dec. 1947.

Periodicals

American Heritage, Aug., 1970.
Business Week, Feb. 28, 1970.
Collier's, March 2, 1946.
Crisis, May, 1947; Feb., 1970.
Ebony, May, 1957; April, 1964; Nov., 1968-April, 1971.
Harper, Sept., 1970.
Journal of Educational Sociology, Oct., 1954.
Journal of Negro Education, Summer, 1954.
Life, Nov. 26, 1945; April 21-28, 1947.
Negro Digest, June, 1964.
Negro History Bulletin, Dec., 1951; Nov., 1960.

New Republic, May 19, 1947.

New York Times Magazine, April 15, 1962.

Newsweek, Nov. 5, 1945; Aug. 26, 1946; April 21, May 19, Sept. 22, 1947; April 19, 1948; Jan. 12, June 1, Aug. 24, Nov. 16, 1970.

Opportunity, June, 1942; Jan., April-June, 1946.

Readers Digest, Feb., 1948.

Saturday Evening Post, May 11, 1963.

Saturday Review of Literature, Nov. 24, 1945; Jan. 21, 1967.

Sports Illustrated, March 21, 1960; July 1-Aug. 5, 1968.

Books

Edwards, Harry. The Revolt of the Black Athlete. New York: Free Press, 1969.

Flood, Curt. The Way It Is. New York: Trident Press, 1971.

Henderson, E. B. and Sport Magazine Editors. Black Athlete. United Pub., 1970.

Olsen, Jack. The Black Athlete: A Shameful Story. New York: Time-Life Books, 1968.

Peterson, Robert. Only The Ball Was White. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Robinson, John Roosevelt. Baseball Has Done It. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1964.

Thompson, Richard. Race and Sport. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES



31293102842709