

Democracy Smashes Jimcra Baseball

By RICK HURT
PV Sports Writer



October 23, 1945. Mark down the date, for on that day history was made. For the first time in modern organized baseball a Negro player was hired by a major league outfit. Branch Rickey, president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, put Jackie Robinson under contract and sent him to a Brooklyn farm club.

The news broke suddenly and dramatically. The press of the nation headlined the story, and reaction to this revolutionary step varied. The Negro people, together with progressive people and trade unionists, hailed the signing as an initial step in the long fight that has waged over the vicious jimcra hiring practices of the major league owners.

The nation learned that this was no impulsive act on the part of Rickey. The Dodger president announced that his organization had been scouting Robinson for over a year and that he had spent \$25,000 searching for a Negro player of major-league calibre.

Labeled immediately as a "carpetbagger and nigger lover," Rickey maintains that he has not hired Robinson out of the goodness of his heart. "I am a businessman," he states, "and after I made up my mind to hire Negro players, I told my scouts to find a Negro player who could make the big leagues. They found Robinson; I signed him up, and that's all there is to it."

FINE SHORTSTOP

Robinson, who hit .340 in over 100 games for the Kansas City Monarchs last season, is considered one of the finest shortstops in the game today.

For the most part player reaction to the signing of Jackie was favorable. No mass protest quitting of Southern ballplayers is expected, and Branch Rickey, jr. states that if any do quit "they'll soon be back after a year or two in a cotton mill."

The hopes of an entire race are marching with him—and he realizes it. The segregation in Southern towns—the bars and epithets that fans will hurl at him from the stands—the hostility of his fellow players—these he expects and will meet.

Some of the fervor with which the people hailed the signing of



And History Is Made. The scene is Montreal, and Jackie Robinson signs to play with the International League Montreal Royals, a Brooklyn farm club. Looking on are (l to r) Hector Racine, president of the Royals; Branch Rickey jr. Farm chief of the Dodgers; and J. Romeo Gauvreau, vice president of the Royals —(International News foto).

Robinson was dampened when it was announced that Tom Baird, owner of the Kansas City Monarchs had protested the Dodger "grab" and would attempt to prevent Robinson from going into the majors. The next day however, Baird, stating that the press had misquoted him, maintained that he "would not do anything in any way to keep any Negro ballplayer out of the major leagues."

RESULT OF PRESSURE

The signing of Robinson may be attributed to several reasons—the pressure resulting from the Ives-Quinn anti-discrimination law of the state of New York, the personal wish of Rickey to hire a Negro ballplayer, the recognition that a good player—regardless of his color—is an asset to a ballclub, and most of all, to the vigorous fight against baseball jimcra that different groups have waged for several years.

About ten years ago the Daily Worker initiated the campaign to get Negro ballplayers in the majors. Ben Davis was editor of the Worker at the time, and Lester Rodney was sports editor. The Negro press picked up the fight and, led by the People's Voice and the Pittsburgh Courier has consistently hammered at the major league moguls.

Nearest the Negro players could get to the majors was the tryout stage. Last spring, the Brooklyn Dodgers consented to give two Negro ballplayers a tryout at Bear Mountain. "Showboat" Thomas and Terence McDuffie were the two men who tried out. The consent for the tryout was obtained by Nat Low, present sports editor of the Daily Worker. Last July the Boston Red Sox tried out Jackie Robinson and Williams, second baseman of the Philly Stars; but nothing came out of the tryouts.

The "End Jimcra in Baseball Committee" can claim a major part of the victory. With Ben Goldstein as chairman and over a hundred outstanding organizations and individuals as spon-

sors, this committee has spearheaded the present drive to wipe out jimcra in baseball.

BEN DAVIS RESOLUTION

The furor that the memo aroused caused the people to redouble their efforts to wipe out the baseball jimcra. Ben Davis introduced a resolution in the N.Y. City Council that called upon the New York ballclubs to hire Negro qualified players. Progressive groups urged the FEPC to act. Organization after organization went on record decrying the un-American hiring practices of the major leagues.

It has been proven that Jackie Robinson will not be the first Negro to play in organized ball. In 1822 there were several Negro players on professional clubs. In 1877 Newark had a great Negro pitcher—George Stovey. Charley Grant, a Negro second baseman, played with the Baltimore Orioles when John McGraw was team manager. Grant played under the guise of being an "Indian."

Jackie and his fiancée, Rachel Isum of Los Angeles, plan to be married sometime in February. They met five years ago when they were both students at UCLA.

Thumbnail Sketch

Jack Roosevelt Robinson, 26 years old, stands six feet tall, weighs 190 lbs. He was born in Cairo, Georgia, on January 13, 1919. One year later his family moved to Pasadena, California. Jackie was a standout star in all sports at Pasadena's Muir Tech High School and starred in baseball, basketball, football, and track. After attending Pasadena Junior College he went on to UCLA where he made All-American on the football team. His gridiron exploits, along with those of his teammate, Kenny Washington, were splashed over the nation's sports pages in '40 and '41. He then went in to the army, became lieutenant, was released last spring. He played for the Kansas City Monarch nine last sum-

Comments



Horace Stoneham, president of the NY Giants: "It's a fine way to start a program and our scouts will be out next season."

Rudy York, first baseman of the World Champion Detroit Tigers—"I wish Robinson all the luck in the world—hope he makes good."

Al Stillman, owner of New York's famous Stillman's Gym—"I too come from a race that's been kicked around for a long time, and I bitterly oppose discrimination in any sport. It's about time Negroes got into the big leagues."

Nat Gold, Daily Worker staff—"... a bit of news that gladdens many hearts made sick and sad by the racial fascism that is growing rapidly today."

Adam C. Powell, Democratic Congressman from New York—"a step that will bring cheer to all real Americans, and a move toward the winning of the peace."

J. B. Martin, president of the Negro American League—"We're very happy to see him get a break. We're proud of it."



W. G. Branham, czar of minor league baseball—"Rickey is a carpetbagger."

Rogers Hornsby, ex-baseball great and a Texan—"It won't work out."

Dixie Walker, star Dodger outfielder—"As long as he isn't with the Dodgers I'm not worried."

Dan Daniel, New York World-Telegram columnist—"A year ago Robinson would have made the grade. With high grade players returning from the service the dope is out that Robinson won't make the grade."

Do You Want More Jackie Robinsons?

If the people will insist that the Ives-Quinn Bill be enforced then the day will not be far off when each of the three professional ball teams of New York will be a true example of "democracy in practice." Write to your State Representative and urge him to press for speedy and stringent enforcement of the State anti-Discrimination Law.

The People:

QUESTION

Edited by Llewellyn Ransom

What do you think the people can do to follow up our first gains in breaking down jimcra in big league baseball?



Robert J. Elzy, general secretary, Brooklyn Urban League, NYC: I think a great deal can be done to get other Negroes in professional baseball

by writing letters to Branch Rickey congratulating him on his democratic behavior in meeting a major American issue. We should show that we can appreciate as well as complain.

Lessie L. Alexander, secretary, Brooklyn: I think the next step to break jimcra in professional baseball would be for the baseball



officials and critics of the press and radio to exercise a little tolerance in their evaluations of the performances of our first Negro players who will be severely judged.



Arline Silver, student, Brooklyn: I think that a talent search should be carried out to get more Negro baseball talent. If this is done, people will get used to the idea of Negroes in baseball and therefore a great deal of prejudice will be eliminated.

Ethel T. Wynne, social worker, Brooklyn: I sympathize with the Negro baseball industry in its objection to losing players. However, it seems to me, out of 15 million Negro people we ought to be able to supply sufficient talent for both the Negro and the formerly lily-white major leagues.



JACKIE ROBINSON

mer, was in over 100 games and batted .340—(Acme News foto).

