Jackie Robinson Breaking The Color Barrier Essay, Research Paper

Jackie Robinson: Breaking the Color Barrier

It s April 15, 1947 opening day at Ebbets Field, Brooklyn. Many people

have turned out to see one man, the first black person to ever play in major

league baseball. He is setting new standards for all blacks now and those to

come. His name is Jack Roosevelt Robinson. We all wish him well and hope he

can surmount the racial differences.

At this time it was unheard of to have a black person treated equally to a

white person, more the less it was highly unlikely to have a black person play on the same field as a white person. But for one man who stands alone Jackie Robinson s conquest to break through the color barrier with the help of Branch Rickey has set new standards for all black athlete s to come.

Jackie Robinson grew up in Cairo, Georgia. Jackie attended UCLA where he played baseball, basketball, football, and track. After collage Jackie enrolled in world war two. After the war Jackie got an honorable discharge. After the end of the war Jackie didn t know what he wanted to do and he was very short on money. Finally Jackie decided he wanted to join the Negro Leagues. In 1944 Jackie officially was on a Negro baseball team.(Shorto,Russell p. 5-10)

In 1945 Branch Rickey the owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers was looking for a black player to break the serration barrier and rise above it all and join the

Major League Baseball Association. Rickey said that whoever the person was to

be would have to cope with taunts and insult, with name calling and abuse. Rickey heard of the success of Jackie on the Negro League and sent his

scouts to see Jackie. (Ritter, S. Lawrence p. 43-51).

After a long meeting with Rickey, Jackie agreed to join the Brooklyn

organization. Rickey singed Robinson to a Minor League deal in 1945. Jackie s

biggest challenge would be to overcome racial issues sought toward him without

acting out with everybody looking at him. Jackie had death threats, racial slur s, and people wanting to seriously take him out of the game of baseball.

(Rampersad Arnold p. 176)

In 1947 Rickey called up Jackie to compete on a Major League level and

take his career to a much higher level. When people heard of this, that Jackie

was going to play on a Major League level players said that if Jackie was going to play they would strike, even some of Jackie s teammates demanded to be traded

and during one of Jackie s games a barrage of racial insults were directed toward him from the fans in the grandstand. (Ritter, S. Lawrence p. 46)

The discrimination continued off the field. When the dodgers played on the

road Jackie wasn t allowed to stay in the same hotels has his teammates. He

would have to stay in a hotel just for blacks or he had to stay in private homes by himself. In one case Jackie was allowed to stay in the same hotel has his team but he wasn t allowed beyond the pool room and he had to eat his food in his room. (Flanker David p.167-168)

Toward the end of the season things were finally starting to look up.

Jackie s wife was making friends with the other player s wives, and Jackie finally got the respect from everyone now and many people were beginning to feel what it was like to be Jackie Robinson.

Robinson won fans over because he could rouse them, but he also won

over his team, his league, and the nation, not only by being a lion but by having to be a lamp . (Flanker, David p. 173)

Although having many friends now, Jackie will never forget his long time

friends Pee Wee Reese and Ralph Branca who stood by him when nobody else

was. Things kept getting better and better for Jackie the pitches at his head

when he was up stopped, most of the racial slurs have stopped, and Jackie was

finally being treated like a real baseball player not like a black person. Jackie lead the league in steels, ranked second in runs scored, and he won the Rookie of the Year Award which was later renamed the Jackie Robinson Award. That year Jackie also lead his team to a World Series appearance. Nearly a year after Jackie had first broke the serration barrier many other teams were catching on. Rickey signed Roy Campanella a star from the Negro Leagues. By this time almost every team had at least one black player on it. At this time most fans had come to judge a player by its ability not the color the color of there skin. (Shorto, Russell p. 22-24)

Jackie was still fighting on and he continued to still be a great player but

now he was able to voice his opinion and act just like every other baseball player should without having such sever consequitions as was year before. In 1949 Jackie won the National League batting championship and was voted the

league s Most Valuable Player the same year. During Jackie s 10 years with the

Dodgers he led them to 6 World Series and was a supported base runner leading

the National League twice in stolen bases and still having the respect of everyone. (Shorto, Russell p. 24-25)

Jackie had everything he ever wanted but he still felt unfulfilled. He decide

to spend some of his time helping blacks in as many ways has he can. He turned

his attention to Harlem and to donate money where ever he could. He got

together with the director of the YMCA of Harlem and suggested things that he

could do and other people could do to better the YMCA program. During the

1948 season Rudolph Thomas the director of the Y asked Jackie to sign on as a

coach for the YMCA. Jackie accepted immediately and Roy Campanella signed

on to, to offer his support any way he could. (Flanker, David p. 183-190)

In 1956 Jackie knew his time was coming to a end he decided he would retire at the end of the year. His legs weren t has great has they used to be and the weight of the bat felt so heavy in Jackies hands. That year Walter O Malley surprised Jackie saying he was traded to the New York Giants but Jackie came back saying he was retiring. Robinsons retirement was controversial because it was shrouded in secrecy and politics-just like his signing in 1945. After that year the Brooklyn Dodgers moved to L.A. and for many people when Jackie retired they said that it was and of a great era of baseball that will never be forgotten. (David Flanker p. 249, Shorto, Russell p. 24-25)

Jackie Robinson was a great man who rose above the segragation barrier

and all the problems he indered and set great new standards for all blacks

everywhere to come by gaining the respect of everyone. It was a great time

period and it will never be forgotten.