



Washington wins at Speedrome

Vroom, vroom, was heard as the 1971 Vega, peeled to the starting line of the quarter-mile track at the Las Vegas Speedrome; then with a thunderous roar and smoking tires it was off, hitting the finish line at 130 mph.

The announcer: "There you have it ladies and gentlemen. Garland Washington, the only Black driver in Las Vegas, wins this event."

Along with Washington, the car is owned by two other Black Vegans: James Shelby and John Millerdon.

Washington, won the "Bracket One" competition this past weekend at the Speedrome. This event is described as the "cream of the crop" in the Las Vegas area.

Washington has been racing for the past three years. His car, "The Godfather," was built locally six months ago at the Chevy Shop, 2960 Westwood Dr.

It is propelled by a "427" engine. It is a stock bodied sedan, modified for racing.

The Godfather runs every second Saturday night. Washington said he and his partners got into the racing business because it is "something we like to do."

Harris rates high as first Black QB

It's been a big year for the status of the black athlete in this country. Lee Elder became the first golfer of his race to play in the Masters. Frank Robinson is fully engrossed as major league baseball's first black manager.

And, in Los Angeles, James Harris has crushed the myth that black men are not capable of playing quarterback in the National Football League.

Harris took over as the Ram's quarterback when John Hadl was unceremoniously traded to Green Bay early in the season.

Young James proceeded to win seven of nine regular season games and take his team to the National Conference championship game before he and the club both slipped in the Minnesota snow on the way to the Super Bowl.

Then, coming off the bench for the injured Fran Tarkenton, Harris propelled the NFC to victory in the postseason Pro Bowl and was named the game's most valuable player.

No black quarterback had ever before achieved such prominence.

But then, it may have been more a matter of circumstance than anything else, Harris, himself, is the first to tell you. There have been plenty of blacks with enough talent to play quarterback in the NFL. He just happened to be the right guy at the right time.

"I was lucky to be in that situation," he said.

"As far as the myth about black quarterbacks is concerned, I felt it was mainly racism involved. If the right opportunity came along, I felt I could play regularly in this league. And I think there are quite a few others who could if given a realistic opportunity."

Never having played a full year in the league, Harris understandably made some mistakes along the way last season. He is not yet an expert at reading defenses and he was prone to throwing footballs into forbidden areas.

But his arm is strong and true and he is fortunate enough to be playing with a superb all-around football team.

They might not have been as patient with him in Baltimore or Cleveland. But in Los Angeles, they were able to bring him along slowly, giving him room to breathe, easing both the load and the

pressure.

"I'm surrounded by a good offensive line, a fine team and a great organization," said Harris. "But I'm not that surprised by what I've done. When I went to the Pro Bowl, I felt I was capable of winning the MVP if I got the chance."

Now, of course, he is most concerned with winning something else. He wants to be the first black quarterback to win the Super Bowl.

"We think we can do it," said James. "We've got all the ingredients. The key is consistency. It's a long season and you've got to play on an even level and be lucky with injuries."

Robinson given award



Cleveland Indians' player-manager Frank Robinson was named first recipient of The Image Award, which is awarded by the Edwin Gould Services for Children to outstanding individuals who, through their public images, can motivate youngsters to positive achievement. Robinson (center) was greeted at the "Salute to Frank Robinson" by Robert Watkins (right), a former Ohio State All-American and Chicago Bears star, and Robert Saunders.

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