

SPORTS BOARD

SPORTS, GAMING, HORSERACING

October 13, 1988



SPORTLIGHT

By R.L. Greene

BALTIMORE — It would make a good beginning for a movie.

With the baseball team in the throes of a losing streak and the fans beginning to drive right past the old ballpark rather than watch their inept team bumble to yet another loss, out from the dugout, much the same was Gary Cooper sauntered from the sheriff's office, comes the new manager to the rescue. The camera pulls back for an overall scene shot and the music sounds vaguely like "Shaft."

It's Frank Robinson to the dugout once again.

Baseball, so often criticized for its failure to hire minorities in front office and field positions, has a Black manager for the fifth time. Robinson was also the first and fourth on that list.

Robinson, the only player in history to win the Most Valuable Player award in both the American and National Leagues, is now part of the "old boy" network. When there's a problem and you need a manager, call on Frank. Not only will he provide a new face, he's a competent manager, learning from his past mistakes. And he's Black.

Commissioner Peter Ueberroth, quite sensitive to the criticism of baseball's hiring policies, was quick to applaud Robinson's latest major league managerial appointment.

"I was pleased in (Baltimore owner) Ed Williams, that he believes in the man," Ueberroth said. "I've told people, 'Don't bring in anyone you don't believe in, because then you have tokenism.'"

"I think it's the appropri-

ate appointment. It's the kind of baseball is very pleased with. It's not tokenism. It's a quality guy the Baltimore franchise believes in. He has a tough road ahead. I think he'll do well."

Doing well hasn't meant a long-lasting job for Robinson in the past. But every manager knows he's going to eventually be fired. It comes with the territory. You're the chief cook, so you have to deal with the heat.

For the Orioles, Robinson was the logical and perfect replacement. He is popular in Baltimore, a link to the champion Orioles' teams of 1966, 1969, 1970 and 1971. He knows the organization's personnel. And he's Black.

Williams committed the Orioles to an aggressive affirmative action campaign a year ago after baseball was embarrassed by former Los Angeles Dodger General Man-

ager Al Campanis' comments that Blacks "may lack the necessities," to be managers or front office executives.

"I will take second place to no one in the United States on my sensitivity to racial justice," Williams said. "I was embarrassed — really embarrassed — that our front office has such a horrible ratio of minority workers. I can guarantee you it did not come about because of any form of bigotry. I think . . . we have gone along with a colorblind hiring policy."

"I don't profess to be a superman," Robinson said before his first game. "I'm realistic enough to know I'm not going to wave a wand and change everything. But I do have some ideas."

This is Robinson's third tour of duty as a dugout boss. He was hired by the Cleveland Indians in 1974 as a player-manager, becoming the first Black manager in the major leagues. He made a dramatic debut, homering in his first at-bat before a sell-out home crowd of 55,000 as the team won its opener. The Indians finished fourth that year, one game under .500, and were fourth again the next season, three games above .500. When they got off to a slow start in 1977, Robinson was fired, finishing his Indian run with a 186-189 record.

In 1978, Larry Doby, who was the second Black player in the majors following Jackie Robinson, became the second Black manager. He was hired in mid-season after the Chicago White Sox fired Bob Lemon, and compiled a 37-50 record. Doby was fired in October 1978 and never got another chance.

Baseball was without another Black manager until Maury Wills was hired by Seattle Aug. 4, 1980. Wills had a 26-56 record when he was fired May 6, 1981.

By then, Robinson was back, hired by the San Francisco in 1981. He lasted until 1984, compiling a 264-277 record before being dismissed again.

It's nice to see Robinson back. But what about other Blacks who are qualified to

LAKERS VS. SUNS AT TMC ON OCTOBER 18

NBA action returns to the Thomas & Mack Center on Oct. 18 at 8 p.m. when the Phoenix Suns face the World Champion Los Angeles Lakers.

Tickets are \$50, \$25, \$17.50, \$12.50 and \$7.50 on sale at the Thomas & Mack Center Box Office, all Ticketron outlets and Sun Teleguide terminals.

This exhibition marks one of the first pre-season games of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's last season in the NBA, and the final time local fans will see this basketball legend's famous "sky-hook" sailing through the hoops of the Thomas & Mack Center.

The Thomas & Mack Center is a special place for Kareem. It was here, on April 5, 1984, he tossed in a hook shot against the Utah Jazz to become the NBA's all-time scoring leader, passing Wilt Chamberlain.

The Thomas & Mack Center also brings fond memor-

ies to another player, former UNLV Runnin' Rebel Armon Gilliam — now with the Suns — who was the second overall pick in the 1987 NBA college draft behind David Robinson.

Gilliam's rookie season got off to a slow start last year when he broke his toe during the Suns' opening game against the Portland Trail Blazers. He was an injured reserve for the next 27 games, but came back with a vengeance, averaging 14.8 points and 7.9 rebounds for the season. During the 1987-88 season, Gilliam wound up being named Rookie of the Month and made it to the first NBA All-Rookie Team.

Call 739-3900 for more information on this exciting matchup, featuring Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, James Worthy and the rest of the World Champion Los Angeles Lakers against Armon Gilliam, Dan Majerle and the Phoenix Suns.

Youth Game Room Program At Doolittle

The City of Las Vegas Doolittle Community Center, 1901 North "J" Street, offers a daily game room for youth this fall. The free program runs weekdays 3:00-4:45 p.m. and will include video games, basketball, ping pong, pool, bumper pool, and board games. Call the Doolittle Center at 386-6374 for more information.

be manager, people like Joe Morgan.

"I don't think it's time for Blacks," Detroit Manager Sparky Anderson says. "I think it's time for Joe Morgan . . . (he) deserves it, (he) can handle all situations. It don't have anything to do with what color they are."

"Joe Morgan . . . has tremendous dimensions. You could go see him and spend an hour with him and write columns the rest of the year. You ask him a question and he can run in five different directions with it."

Easter Seals Programs Announced

The Motorcycling Community of Las Vegas presents a "Bikers Care" breakfast, Sunday, Oct. 16, 9:00 a.m. at Sunset Park. The goal of this event is to raise \$1000 for the patient services of Easter Seals of Nevada and 100 pints of blood for the United Blood Services of Nevada.

Come out and help this community minded group reach its goal and enjoy a fun filled day of food, activities, raffles, and games.

TEENS' WEIGHT TRAINING AT DOOLITTLE

The City of Las Vegas Doolittle Community Center, 1901 North "J" Street, will begin an ongoing weight-training class for teenagers, beginning Oct. 3. The class, designed for 13-15 year olds, will have a monthly fee of \$5 per person. Call 386-6374 for more information.

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