

Are African-Americans forsaking baseball?

By Huel Washington
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Even though the biggest name on today's Major League Baseball scene is Barry Bonds, an African-American, young people of color seemed to have forsaken the sport that is considered the national pastime.

Commissioner Bud Selig, a baseball enthusiast for years, is aware of the small number of African-American youths on the playground each year playing baseball. That was one of the reasons he decided to make April 15 the annual Jackie Robinson Day.

There weren't any Blacks on the team when Robinson took the field that day. However, 57 years later one couldn't imagine that there would be only 83 African-Americans on 30 team rosters among the 837 players on opening day.

Youngsters nowadays play football and basketball on playgrounds and seemed to have shied away from baseball as a sport for Whites and Hispanics.

On opening day, there were only four African-American starting pitchers on Major League teams' rosters. Jerome Williams, the only

right-hander, opened the San Francisco Giants season at SBC Park on April 12 against the Milwaukee Brewers.

While Blacks make up less than 10 percent of the current baseball rosters, Latin-Americans make up 24 percent. The consensus is that the Latino players will play in the majors for less than African-Americans. That theory is not factual. Truth is, there are not a large number of African-Americans playing baseball in colleges, where scouts would see them.

Unlike the old days, scouting is limited to institutions of higher learning instead of playgrounds. Playgrounds produced players like Frank Robinson, Joe Morgan, Curt Flood, Dusty Baker and Dave Stewart. Bonds and Reggie Jackson went to Arizona State and were about the only African-American players on their college teams.

African-Americans used to play American Legion ball, high school, and on AAU teams. Baseball, with fewer scouts, isn't using their people to go into the inner city and find the kind of players that went from the playground to the Hall of Fame.

On most of the Little League rosters that are seen

on television during the national Little League World Series, the players are typically White and from the suburbs.

The problem of the lack of African-American players is so acute that scout John Young has an organization called Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) that he founded in 1991. Young

hopes to convince Selig that finding an answer to the problem should be one of baseball's highest priorities. He has suggested forming a committee that would include Harry Edwards, sociologist at the University of California at Berkeley.

The RBI program is reportedly in 185 cities with 250,000 participants. Several

graduates are in the big leagues. However, the idea of going into the minor leagues and playing four or five years before getting a chance to play in the Major Leagues isn't as inviting to many young African-American athletes as jumping from high school into the NBA or the National Football League.

Upon leaving ASU, Bonds

spent two years in the minors, in Port William and Hawaii, before being brought up to the Pittsburgh Pirates.

In the effort to get more African-American players in baseball, Major League teams might start in front offices. There is only one general manager on any of the rosters, Kenny Williams, of the Chicago White Sox.

Urban Chamber hosting links tourney

By John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

Ann Moore-Gregory was a professional golfer born in Mississippi whose career spanned more than five decades in the sport. She won more than 300 tournaments.

She had championed competition in the National UGA Tournament, the U.S. Senior Olympics and was the first African-American to enter the U.S. Amateur Championship in Indianapolis.

"She was recognized as the best African-American female golfer of the 20th Century in Arthur Ash's book 'Hard Road to Glory,' said Louie Overstreet, executive di-

rector of the Urban Chamber of Commerce. "Upon her death in 1990, she was eulogized as a 'breath of fresh air and an inspiration to golfers and anyone else who might otherwise have been afraid to face new frontiers.'"

The Urban Chamber of Commerce (UCC) will play host to the Fifth Annual Ann Gregory Memorial Scholarship Golf Tournament and Community Enrichment Awards Banquet on Saturday, July 30 at Desert Pines Golf Course, 3415 E. Bonaza Rd. A continental breakfast will be served at 6, followed by a shotgun start at 7 a.m.

"This is a vehicle for raising scholarship dollars," Overstreet said. Gregory was his mother-in-law.

This year's tournament will offer an array of prizes including an awards banquet and silent auction.

Between 100 to 150 golf enthusiasts have participated in the past. This year, the tournament fee is \$125 per person and \$500 for a foursome. The event includes a chance to win a new car with a hole-in-one contest. Other contests will include a best-ball format, longest ball, luncheon, and fashion show.

The Scholarship and Community Enrichment Awards Banquet will start at 6 p.m. at the Venetian, Bellini Ballroom, 3900 Paradise Road, and will include live entertainment by Terrell Prude.

"The Awards Banquet honors people who have

made a difference," Overstreet said.

The honorees are Priority Staffing and Cox Communications, business; Director Dan Walters of the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District Board of Trustees and Sheriff Bill Young, civil rights; Larry Mosley, president of 100 Black Men and Dorothy Johnson, community service; the Pollard Foundation, education; Tavis Smiley, media; Rose McKinney-James, politics; and Nap McCallum and Regina Miller, sports.

Business attire or Blacktie are required for the banquet.

For more information, call (702) 648-6222.

Sports Pace

Boxing's heavyweight division maddening, muddled

By Huel Washington
Special to Sentinel-Voice

These are notes from Los Angeles. With Vitali Klitschko's ascension to the throne as the champion of the World Boxing Council, once considered the top boxing organization, the heavyweight division descended to a level that has boxing purists shaking their heads in dismay.

Although most of the 17,320 boxing fans roared their approval when referee Jon Schorle put his arms around South African Corrie Sanders, who was being pummeled by Klitschko, the victor's skills are still suspect.

His opponent had offered little defense after the first round. In the eighth and last round, Klitschko landed 40 of 59 punches.

Both of the fighters entered the ring with impressive knockout records, Klitschko 33 of 34 wins and Sanders 29 of 39 victories. Each, however, was still standing when the bout was

over either questioning their lack of power or demonstrating each fighter's ability take a blow.

As Sanders retreated around the ring most of the night, Klitschko threw 413 punches, connecting 230.

His pawing jab, which had all the force of Laila Ali's jab in the current boxing commercial, was thrown 128 times and landed 59 times.

Retreating and then lunging periodically hoping to land a haymaker left, Sanders, whose best attempts came with his back on the ropes, threw 229 punches, according to the punch stats.

He connected with 51 in the eight-round contest. Sanders threw 90 jabs and connected on nine, which, perhaps, is one of the most mediocre performances in heavyweight history.

Klitschko gave a much better performance against former champion Lennox Lewis.

The recently retired champion was at ringside and repeatedly jeered when his im-

age appeared on the Jumbotron.

According to judges of the Lewis-Klitschko match, the newly crowned Russian champion, who currently resides in Los Angeles, was actually ahead of Lewis when the bout was stopped due to the cuts on Klitschko's left eye. Well, so much for memories.

From all appearances in this bout with Sanders, Klitschko's skills were limited. If there had been any real opposition from Sanders and the outcome would have gone the other way.

In attendance at ringside were James "Lights Out" Toney, Evander "The Real Deal" Holyfield and Chris Byrd, the IBF heavyweight champion.

Toney, who sent Holyfield, a three-time heavyweight champion, into semi-retirement, was the most vocal, taking the microphone from Klitschko in the post-fight interview room and literally challenging the Russian to a fight. He called

Klitschko a coward and said all Russians are "cowards." Toney said Klitschko couldn't beat his way out of a paper bag.

There are currently four heavyweight champions in the various organizations. John Ruiz, in the WBA, is 34-4-1. Chris Byrd, the IBF champ, is 36-2-1. Lamont Brewster of the WBO is 30-2. Of course, Klitschko is the WBC champ with a 35-2 record.

Byrd won a technical knockout over Vitali Klitschko in Germany on April 1, 2000, when the Ukrainian boxer hurt his left shoulder and refused to finish the bout.

In another bout with Wladimir Klitschko, Byrd lost a unanimous decision.

Brewster KOed Wladimir on April 10, 2004 at the end of the fifth round in Las Vegas.

Big brother may want to get revenge for his younger brother's recent loss.

Also watching and waiting in the wings anxiously is

former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, who was not at ringside here. He was at Madison Garden on April 17 when Byrd and Ruiz defended their titles.

The heavyweight division is a grab bag with any number of titleholders whose boxing skills make the WBC champion look like an amateur trying out for the college boxing team.

Going back as far as Joe Louis, through such great

champions as Rocky Marciano, Jersey Joe Walcott, Floyd Patterson, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and Larry Holmes, these boxers knew what a left jab, left hook and right cross was all about.

Vitali Klitschko may not be the coward Toney said. One thing is certain, however, Toney, who took up boxing in Michigan, knows a real boxer when he sees one. Klitschko is not a real boxer.

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