

Burns, senators seek pardon for Johnson

WASHINGTON (AP) - Researching a documentary on Jack Johnson, filmmaker Ken Burns decided that racism, not justice, sent the first Black heavyweight boxing champion to jail nearly a century ago.

Burns decided to seek a presidential pardon. On Tuesday, civil rights leaders and Sens. John McCain and Orrin Hatch joined him to announce the filing of legal papers with the Justice Department.

The petition argues that Johnson's 1913 conviction under the Mann Act, a law passed three years earlier that banned the interstate transport of women for immoral purposes, unfairly punished him for a consensual relationship with a White woman.

"A gross and grave injustice was done to Jack Johnson where a law was perverted to send this decent American to jail," said McCain, R-Ariz. "Pardoning Jack Johnson will serve as a historic testament of America's resolve to live up to its noble ideals of justice and equality."

Hatch, R-Utah, said: "This man was flamboyant. But there was a reason for the flamboyancy: he was taking on the world and fighting to give African-Americans a chance."

Johnson died in a traffic accident in 1946 at age 68. If granted, the pardon would be only the second awarded posthumously. The first was President Clinton's 1999 pardon of Henry O. Flipper, a former slave who became the first Black army officer.

Johnson became the first Black champion when he stopped Tommy Burns in Australia in 1908. Two years later, he defeated challenger Jim Jeffries, who had come out of retirement as the "Great White Hope" to try to beat the Black man.

Johnson's victory, in an era when Jim Crow laws and segregation ruled, sparked race riots in parts of the country.

In a 1983 biography of Johnson, Randy Roberts wrote that the boxer was proud of his conquests among White women. Prosecutors moved against him in 1912 by arresting Johnson on the charge of abducting Lucille Cameron.

Johnson was indicted, but the government lost Cameron as a witness when she became the second White woman to marry Johnson; a wife cannot be forced to testify against her husband. The prosecution came up with a witness, Belle Schreiber, also White and a former mistress. Her testimony led to Johnson's conviction, and he served a 10-month sentence.

The petition filed Tuesday contends the conviction was legally unfounded, invoking the Mann Act to invade the privacy of consenting adults.

McCain and Hatch said they plan to ask other senators to join in a resolution urging that Johnson be pardoned. Other supporters include Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.; Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill.; boxers Sugar Ray Leonard and Vernon Forrest and actor Samuel L. Jackson.

Burns' documentary on Johnson, titled "Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson," will air on PBS in January.

FAMU athletics' violations exceed 200

By Roosevelt Wilson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (NNPA) - Whether the term is "vacated," "no contest" or "forfeit," if the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference penalties stand as imposed, Florida A&M University will lose some 147 conference victories for men and women in six sports between 1998-99 and 2002-03. FAMU was not in the MEAC in 2003-04 because of its short-lived visit to Division I-A.

In addition, the Rattlers will have to return men's and women's trophies and reimburse the MEAC for seven All-Sports championships and lose 11 MEAC team championships, all won by the university between 1998-99 and 2002-2003.

The penalties were handed down to FAMU in a June 29 letter from MEAC Commissioner Dennis Thomas to FAMU special assistant to the president Joe Ramsey who is in charge of athletics. The sanctions were the result of 196 student-eligibility violations FAMU self-reported to the NCAA and MEAC.

The NCAA has not yet responded to the report, which covers infractions from the 1998-99 through 2002-2003 seasons.

The MEAC, according to the letter from Thomas, ruled

the contests in which ineligible student-athletes participated "no contest." The NCAA uses the term "vacated" for victories in such contests. The lay term is "forfeit," all of which mean that the win is no longer a win.

For FAMU's opponents in those MEAC games ruled "no contest," however, there is a technical difference between "no contest," a "vacated" victory and a forfeit" the MEAC will have to address.

"No contest" means the game never happened; therefore, not only wiping the win from FAMU's record but also wiping the loss from that of FAMU's opponent. To "vacate" the victory takes the win from FAMU but leaves the loss on the opponent's record. A "forfeit" simply reverses the original result, giving FAMU the loss and the opponent the victory.

As most of the nation's major athletic programs, FAMU employs the compliance officer to lift that burden from the coaches and athletic director. The major responsibility of the compliance officer is to certify that each student-athlete is fully eligible before the student-athlete is permitted to participate in each athletic contest.

FAMU President Fred

Gainous told the Outlook that he had no comment other than that it would be decided later if FAMU would appeal the MEAC action.

In his letter to Ramsey, Thomas wrote:

"Pursuant to the Florida A&M University (FAMU) self-report of NCAA violations and response to audit conducted by Collegiate Proactive Solutions Inc. dated May 14, 2004 submitted to the NCAA and the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and after reviewing all the information submitted, it has been determined that FAMU has committed substantial non-compliance as it pertains to student-athlete eligibility in the sports of baseball (2002 & 2003 seasons), football (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 & 2003 seasons), softball (2002 season), women's basketball (1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001 & 2001-2002 seasons), volleyball (1999-2000 seasons), men's swimming (2001 & 2002 seasons), women's swimming (2000 & 2001 seasons), men's tennis (1999, 2000 & 2001 seasons), men's indoor track (2002 & 2003 seasons), men's track (1998, 1999 & 2001) and women's

track (1998, 1999, 2000 & 2001)."

Thomas continued: "Based upon the preponderance of participation by ineligible student-athletes, the conference office has determined that FAMU will have to comply with conference By-Law 13.2.1.14 Section 14-a, b & c (participation of ineligible players). Therefore, all contests those ineligible student-athletes participated in will be rendered 'no contest.' Any revenue received from winning the All-Sports trophies (Mary McLeod Bethune Award and Talmadge Layman Hill Award) must be reimbursed to the conference office.

"Furthermore, any championship won during the period that ineligible student-athletes participated will be rescinded (football 2000 & 2001; men's tennis 2000; men's indoor track 2002; women's indoor 1998, 1999, 2000; women's outdoor 1998, 1999, 2000; volleyball 1999)." Thomas advised Ramsey of FAMU's right to appeal. He also asked Ramsey to advise the MEAC when FAMU has mechanisms in place to ensure such violations will not happen again.

Rapper Nelly Becomes Part-Owner of Bobcats

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) - Rapper Nelly is a part-owner of the NBA's expansion Charlotte Bobcats.

"This is a great opportunity for both the Bobcats and Nelly," Robert L. Johnson, the team's majority owner and the founder of Black Entertainment Television, said Monday in a news release. "Nelly is a great entertainer and a smart businessman and those two traits will serve us well as we prepare to tipoff our inaugural season this fall."

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Nelly, whose real name is Cornell Haynes Jr., joins an ownership group that includes former NBA player and executive M.L. Carr; Felix Sabates, owner of NASCAR racing teams, and Hugh McColl Jr., former CEO of Bank of America.

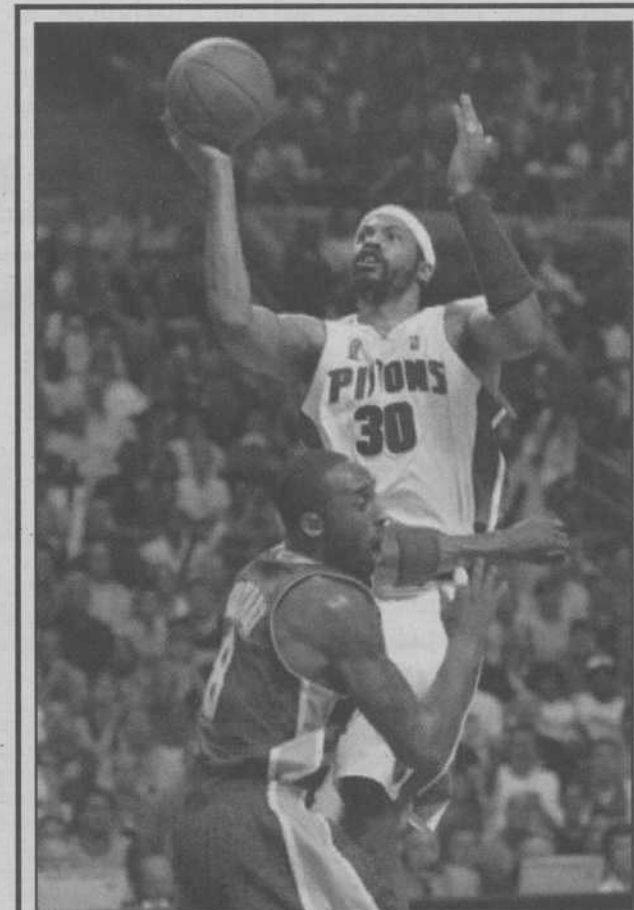
"Of the many dreams that I have fulfilled in life, being an NBA owner is certainly one of the biggest achievements," Nelly said in a release issued by the Bobcats. "To be able to make this move with Bob Johnson and to be a part of the first-ever minority owned professional sports franchise in history is a great opportunity."

"Bob and I share the same commitment to diversity and we are both self-made, having worked up from the very bottom to reach where we are today."

Nelly, a three-time Grammy winner, said he also looked forward to learning the business of professional sports and becoming active in the Charlotte community.

Recently, he has been a target of women's groups outraged by what they consider misogynistic images in his video.

This spring, Nelly canceled an appearance at Spelman College, a Black women's college in Atlanta, for a charity event after hearing of plans for a protest of his videos.



NEED FOR 'SHEED

Detroit Pistons Rasheed Wallace drives on Los Angeles Lakers Kobe Bryant in Game 4 of the NBA Finals in Auburn Hills, Mich., in this June 13, 2004 photo. Wallace will return to the Pistons next season, a source told The Associated Press Wednesday. The unrestricted free agent forward has agreed to a five-year, \$57 million contract with the defending NBA champions.