

Sports Pace

We're still playing catch-up in sports

By Huel Washington
Sentinel-Voice

Ever since Jesse Owens startled the Aryan world and Jackie Robinson proved that baseball was really a part-time ghetto game. Africans and African-Americans have set out on a journey to prove that the best athletes in the world have a dark melanin complexion.

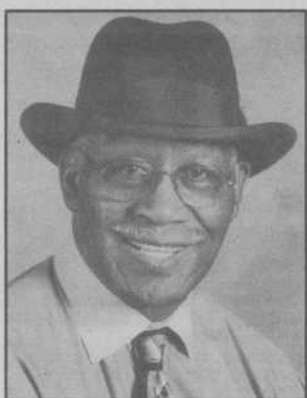
It's not that the other athletes who compete aren't good like Larry Bird, Sue Bird, Diana Taurasi, Jerry West, Greg Maddux, George Herman Ruth, or Tom Pappas but given a chance going head to head, the dark hued person comes out on the top.

In the beginning of sports activities in this nation, slavery was the reason darker athletes didn't compete on an equal level in this country. After slavery was abolished in 1865 and the Civil War ended, racism in various parts of the country kept sports segregated and the races were not allowed to compete against each other.

On several college campuses like Cornell where an athlete named Paul Robeson was a four sport competitor: football, basketball, lacrosse, and track, and Brown University with Fritz Pollard playing football, the athletic prowess of the African-Americans was duly noted and kept to a minimum.

In the science of self defense, Sam Langford, Joe Jeannette, Charley Burley, and Harry Wills, were the best fighters in the land but were never given a chance to win a championship. Jack Johnson had to go to Australia to take the heavyweight title from Tommy Burns and became the first African-American title holder.

Kept out of the baseball major league by the bigoted owners, Rube Foster and his Eastern friends founded the Negro Baseball League and formed the Homestead Grays, Atlanta Black Crackers, Birmingham Black Barons, the Kansas City Monarchs, Baltimore Elite Giants, and New Jersey Giants, and a few other traveling squads who entertained the African-American fans all over the country. The Negro League even had an All-Star game which was played at Chicago's



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Comiskey Park each year.

In 1946 baseball commissioner Happy Chandler, a former U.S. Senator from Kentucky and Branch Rickey, the owner of the then Brooklyn Dodgers, defied the major league baseball owners and signed a Kansas City Monarch player, Jackie Robinson. Robinson had been a four sport athlete at Pasadena High School and the University of California at Los Angeles playing football, basketball, baseball and track.

At the same time, the All American Football League was formed and Paul Brown, a former Ohio State University and Great Lakes football coach became the head coach of the Cleveland Browns and he signed up Bill Willis, Marion Motley, and Horace Gilliam.

The San Francisco 49ers in the All American League picked up Joe Perry from Compton Junior College. Both clubs played for the league championship each of the three years it existed and the Browns won each title.

Cleveland, San Francisco, and the Baltimore Colts merged with the National Football League. The Detroit Lions quietly picked up an African-American from Penn State named Wally Triplett.

Over the years, more and more African-Americans with outstanding athletic talent have been making a name and huge salaries in their various sports but it is still a game of catch up.

For instance in baseball recently, Greg Maddux became the 22nd pitcher to win 300 games.

None of the other 21 starting with Cy Young who won 511 were African-Americans. Roger Clemens, Steve Carlton, Tom Seaver, Gaylord Perry, Warren (See Sports Pace, Page 15)

Rison to be jailed over child support

DECATUR, Ga. (AP) - A judge ordered the arrest of former star receiver Andre Rison on Monday for failing to pay \$107,350 in child support.

Superior Court Judge Cynthia Becker ruled that Rison is in contempt of court and should be jailed for 20 days. She asked that other jurisdictions outside the state assist in the arrest. Rison was not at court Monday.

Rison hasn't paid his \$3,500-a-month child-support payment for his 16- and 18-year-old children since August 2002, the order said. The child-support total is \$87,500, with the additional amount coming from interest and attorney's fees.

Randall Kessler, an attorney for Raycoa Handley, the mother of two of Rison's children, said he thinks Rison is

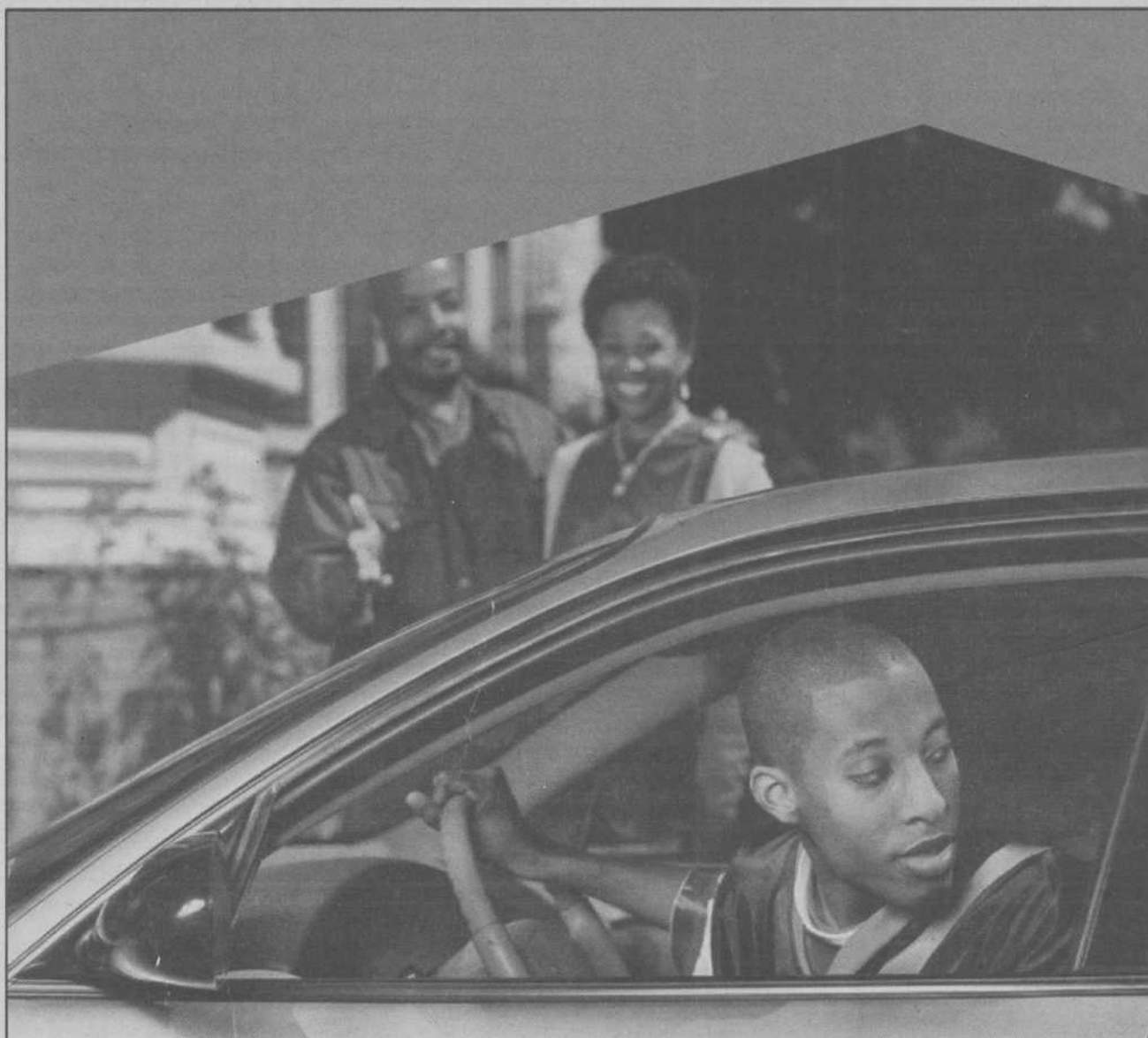
in Michigan or Florida.

"I just want him to come forward and pay his child support. I didn't want him to go to jail," Handley said.

She said Rison hasn't seen or talked to his children in 2 1/2 years. Kessler said asking for Rison's arrest and extradition is the only way to get his attention.

Rison's attorney, Max Richardson, said he is going to "try and see Mr. Rison does what he's supposed to do." He declined further comment.

Last month, a district judge in Michigan dismissed a felony charge against Rison for failing to pay child support to his ex-wife for their 16-year-old son. Rison owed more than \$90,000 to Tonja Rison and had been charged with felony nonsupport in December 2002.



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