

African-American athletes continuing to trailblaze

When the average sports follower surveys the progress of African-Americans in athletics in this country over the past four decades, a fan will probably conclude that after Jackie Roosevelt Robinson's entry into baseball, the ascent into the top has been tremendous. The truth is, we still have a lot of ground to cover.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHANI DAVIS WINNING ON ICE

Only recently, with leading champion speedskater Shani Davis of Chicago setting a world's record on ice skates in the 1,500 meters, as the first African-American to win the all-around in long track, have fans learned that Blacks compete outdoors in winter sports other than basketball.

A 22-year-old who not only excels in ice skating's long track, Davis was also a short track 2002 Olympian for the United States in the Salt Lake City Winter Games and is looking forward to bringing back gold medals in the 2006 Winter Games in Torino, Italy.

In winning the 1,500 meters in Moscow in one minute and 46.6 seconds, the youngster, whose mother encouraged him to take up ice skating, became only the fourth American to win the all-around title, joining Olympic champion Eric Heiden (1977-1979), Eric Flame (1988) and Chad Hedrick (2004). Hedrick finished second to Davis in this race.

BERNARD HOPKINS GOES FOR NUMBER 20

This weekend, on February 19, undisputed middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins, the pride of Philadelphia, hopes to join Joe Louis and Larry Holmes as African-American prize fighters who defended their titles at least 20 times. The other two were heavyweights, but Hopkins makes history for African-Americans in the lower weights if he defeats England's Howard Eastman at the Los Angeles Staples Center.

Hopkins, who turned 40-years-old in January, has risen to the heights in boxing after returning to civilian life — after paying the penalty for a mistake that forced him into detention for several years.

He lost his first bout back on October 11, 1988, a four rounder to Clinton Mitchell and then won 22 straight bouts before losing to Roy Jones, Jr. on May 22, 1993,



SPORTS PACE

By Huel Washington

in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Hopkins' most recent win was a ninth round knockout of Golden Boy Oscar De La Hoya at the Mandalay Bay Resort in November, 2004.

Since that time, the Philadelphian who follows a legendary tradition of outstanding middleweights, like Benny Briscoe and Gil Turner, wants to take his place in history with a win over the Guyanese turned Englishman. A common opponent of both fighters was William Joppy, a former World Boxing Association Middleweight Champion.

Eastman lost a controversial decision to Joppy in 2001, and Hopkins gave Joppy a terrible beating in 2003, winning a 12 round unanimous decision. Eastman has a 40-1 record with 34 knockouts and is considered a power puncher and should give Hopkins a pretty good battle. The champion's determination, however, could make this fight one for the history books as the fans' favorite, based on the outcome of the De La Hoya bout.

De La Hoya has since become a partner with Hopkins and is co-promoter of this bout which can also be seen on Home Box Office. Eastman, six years younger than Hopkins, has predicted a knockout of the undisputed champion.

NEGRO LEAGUE MUSEUM BEING RENOVATED

Rube Foster organized the first Negro baseball league and demonstrated the prowess of African-American athletes in this country. Now, the Negro League Baseball Museum, which was opened in 1990 on 18th Street in Kansas City, Missouri, is being renovated from funds and donations by baseball fans from all over the nation.

According to historians, the old building was a YMCA, a three story structure where Foster, a Chicago businessman, convinced seven other baseball team owners to form the Negro League.

The Negro League produced outstanding players, such as Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Oscar Charleston and Judy Johnson. Others who joined the league and went

on to the major baseball league were Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Willie McCovey, Joe Black, Don Newcome and Roy Campanella.

This building has already been declared a national his-

torical landmark, and the city has promised to approach the renovation strictly as a preservation project. A leader in the renovation and collection of artifacts about the existence of the Negro League is San Diego Padres owner John Moores.

Moores has been instrumental in initiating a television miniseries about the Negro League that describes to the fans events which occurred during the league's more than 30 years of exist-

ence. The miniseries will probably air in 2006 and has been purchased by Warner Brothers.

In recent years, former Kansas City Monarchs player and manager Buck O'Neil, currently employed by the Kansas City Royals, has been the museum's advisor and the goodwill ambassador.

The target for the renovation of the building housing the various artifacts that have been collected for the museum is \$14 million. Moores

has counted on help from other owners of major league teams and even ex-players like Mays, Aaron and McCovey, who were former players with the Indianapolis Clowns (Aaron), and the Birmingham Black Barons (Mays and McCovey).

Only a few major league players have taken interest, according to Moores. "You think these guys would be all over the history of their game," he said. "But they (See Sports Pace, Page 20)

Sharing stories and experiences with your family helps to bring the meaning of Black History home. Pass it on every day.

Take some time to delve into the treasures in your midst.

Get leave to sit with your family.

AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE

American Family Mutual Insurance Company and its Subsidiaries
Home Office - Madison, WI 53783
www.amfam.com

© 2005 001588-11/04

All your protection under one roof.