

Robinson broke racial barrier in Big 12

MANHATTAN, Kan. (AP) - Harold Robinson, the first Black scholarship athlete in what would become the Big 12 Conference, died at 76.

joined the Kansas State football team in 1949, died Tuesday at his home in Wharton, N.J., the school said. A cause of death was not given.

"His story was so compelling and the challenges he

faced were so great that we cannot comprehend them," said Ron Prince, the first Black head football coach at Kansas State.

Robinson was born and raised in Manhattan, where he made the varsity football team in high school. After graduation, he tried out for Kansas State's team. In 1949, there were no Blacks on the Wildcats or any of the teams in what was then the Big Seven Conference.

"When I walked on the practice field I was waiting

for someone to say, 'Hey, you're not supposed to be here.' But nobody ever said anything," he told the campus newspaper, the *Kansas State Collegian*, in 2003.

Robinson recalled that then-coach Ralph M. Graham welcomed him. Graham, who died in October, had coached Black players at Wichita State.

"People have to give him credit for letting Black players on the team," Robinson told the student newspaper. "Jackie Robinson had

Branch Rickey who brought him into Major League Baseball. If it wasn't for Ralph Graham, I wouldn't have been playing at K-State."

After Harold Robinson made the football team, Jackie Robinson — who was not related — wrote Harold Robinson a letter of congratulations.

"He didn't know my address, so he just sent it to K-State Athletics," Robinson said, referring to the player who broke baseball's racial barrier two years earlier in

1947. "I still have the envelope."

When Robinson began playing, the U.S. Supreme Court was still five years away from issuing the landmark *Brown v. Topeka* Board of Education decision that ended segregated education. Jim Crow laws were commonplace.

While his teammates stayed in hotels during away games, Robinson often was forced to stay in private homes. He told the student (See Robinson, Page 14)

Golfer

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naments]," Mack explained. Competing in countless tournaments across the country and winning around 10 during her (short) career, Mack said her struggles have reached beyond the twists and turns of the golf course. Being one of the only African-American amateur women golfers on the west coast, and usually the only one competing in tournaments, she was forced to prove herself to have people recognize her talent.

"At first it was uncomfortable because people would treat me differently... [After] I established that I can play just as good as [other golfers], they started treating me like a golfer instead of just a 'Black girl.' Now they're just worried about beating me," Mack said.

Mack hopes to change the face of golf and help more Black children gain the opportunity to play golf.

"I would like to give money [so] black kids can play golf. I would love to give them the opportunity to show everybody what they can do," Mack said.

Mack has set high goals for her career on the college level.

"My goal is to win the national championship. We have three golf courses [at Indiana State] for the team, and I look forward to getting my game together," Mack said.

Her major at Indiana State will be business, although being a professional golfer is the only career she desires in the near future.

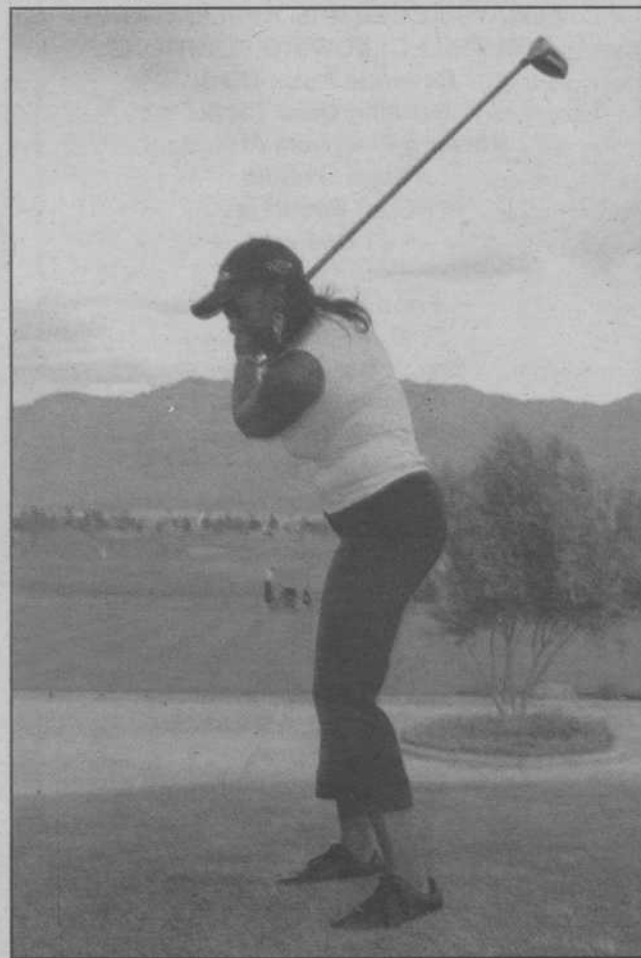
"I don't know anything else I'd like to do. If I do anything it would be with golf. I'd be a college golf coach. Whatever I do, it will be with golf," Mack declared.

Mack unquestionably wants to play professional golf and strives to be like some of the top players in game today.

"My favorite players are Tiger [Woods] and Annika Sorenstam," Mack said.

At the end of the day, Mack just has a strong love for the game and she wants to show other people the beauty of just playing the game.

"I just want to play and have a good time. I want to show people that golf is fun," Mack emphasized.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Sweet swing: Mackenzie Mack turned her love for golf, which she's played since age 6, into a college scholarship.

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