

Remembering Jackie Robinson

It may seem hard to believe today, but there was a time when African Americans were not allowed to play on major league baseball teams. That all changed on April 15, 1947, when Jack (Jackie) Roosevelt Robinson ran on to the field to play first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers. He became the first African American to play on a major league team.



The year 2007 marks the 60th anniversary of that important day in history. Jackie Robinson's place in baseball and American history is being remembered this month, which is Black History Month. His memory will be celebrated throughout the 2007 baseball season too.

Back in 1947, Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Dodgers, wanted an African-American player on his team. He knew the person he chose must be a great player. More important, he knew the person would have to be strong because many people did not think African-American and white players should play on the same team.

Robinson was an outstanding player for the Dodgers, but he was not always well treated. When he first joined the team, fans and players from other teams would call him names. Some pitchers threw balls at his head. Robinson even received death threats. Instead of getting mad and fighting back, Robinson played harder and better. Soon, people began to see that he wasn't so different from other players. Thanks to his courage, major league baseball now has players from many different races.

NEWS WORD BOX

major league
general manager
anniversary separate
allowed threats courage

MORE FACTS ABOUT JACKIE ROBINSON

- When he was in college at the University of California (Los Angeles), Robinson starred in four sports -- baseball, football, basketball, and track.
- Before 1947, African Americans played in a separate baseball league.
- In 1997, to mark the 50th anniversary of Robinson's first game, his uniform number (42) was retired forever. No major league player will ever wear 42 again.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Tell or write about a time you were not included in an activity.
Be sure to include how being left out made you feel.