

Dear Mr. Spink:

In reference to your "Open Letter" to me in the last issue of The Sporting News, I would like to make it clear that I do not, as you imply, "consider myself immune to all criticism as a player, simply because of my race."

I have not and never will object to thoughtful criticism based on facts. In my biography in the current Look Magazine - to which The Sporting News now seems to object - I admit that I've made lots of mistakes. But the mistakes were honestly made and I expect any criticism of them to be the same way - and directed at me as an individual.

In your open letter to me you state that you have been unable "to find any trace" in your files of a reference made by me in Look to The Sporting News. You challenged me to "Name the specific issue in which this alleged statement appeared, as well as exact and complete wordage".

I suggest that you look more closely into your files. In particular, please note the editorial on Page 12 of your November 1, 1945 Issue, which stated:

"Robinson' at 26, is reported to possess baseball abilities which, were he white, would make him eligible for a trial with, let us say, the Brooklyn Dodgers' Class B farm at Newport News, if he were six years younger....

"He is thrown into the postwar reconstruction of baseball, and placed in competition with a vast number of younger, more skilled and more experienced players...the first factor alone appears likely to beat him down."

XXXXXXXX SEE PAGE 4
You state in your open letter that my "coupling" in Look of the above quoted editorial with the fact that you presented me with the 1947 Sporting News rookie of the year award "is a graceless acknowledgment of an honest award, honestly given and a gratuitous slap at the award's doner."

XXXXX

I'm sorry that a misunderstanding should occur between us concerning the rookie of the year award. If you remember, I told you both in Brooklyn and in St. Louis how honored I felt upon receiving the award. No misunderstanding between us can lessen my appreciation of the honor and significance attached to it.

Frankly, I do not feel that I have taken a "gratuitous slap at the donor" nor do I feel that I have made any "graceless acknowledgment" at any time of the award.

Warmest regards. Sincerely.

Jackie Robinson

P.S. Needless to say, I'd appreciate it if you'd run the above letter with no deletitions or additions. It's not necessary, of course, to publish this.

The reference to which Jackie Robinson refers appeared in an editorial in the November 1, 1945 issue, announcing the signing of Robinson and editorial comment under the heading "Montreal Puts Negro Player On Spot" - "In signing John Roosevelt Robinson, 26-year-old Negro native of Georgia, and former all-round athletic star at UCLA, the Montreal club of the International League, through Branch Rickey, president of the parent organization in Brooklyn, touched off a powder keg in the South, unstinted praise in Negro circles, and a northern conviction that the racial problem in baseball is as far from a satisfactory solution as ever.

In New York, there is a feeling that the engagement of Robinson is, in the main, a legalistic move. Last July 1, there became effective in the state of New York what is known as the Anti-Discrimination Law. This has to do, in part, with the barring of Negroes from jobs and professions.

Rickey virtually admitted the legal facet of the Robinson signing when he said that, before long, every professional baseball club operating in the state of New York would be forced to engage Negroes.

But how? Col. Larry MacPhail of the Yankees, who some time ago wrote a long report on the Negro-in-baseball question to the Mayor's Committee in New York, and Rickey himself, admit there is not a single Negro player with major league possibilities for 1946. Satchel Paige, of course, is barred by his age. Nor could he afford to accept a major contract, even if he were ten years younger. Robinson, at 26, is reported to possess baseball abilities which, were he white, would make him eligible for a trial with, let us say, the Brooklyn Dodgers' Class B farm at Newport News, if he were six years younger.

Here, then, is the picture which confronts the first Negro signed in Organized Baseball as a Negro:

(1) He is thrown into the postwar reconstruction of baseball, and placed in competition with a vast number of younger, more skilled and more experienced players. (2) He is six years too old for a chance with a club two classifications below the Double A rating of Montreal. (3) He is confronted with the sweat and tears of toil, with the social rebuffs and the competitive heartaches which are inevitable for a Negro trail-blazer in Organized Baseball. (4) He is thrown into the spotlight, the one man of his race in any league under the jurisdiction of Commissioner Albert B. Chandler, and will be expected to demonstrate skills far beyond those he is reported to possess, or to be able to develop.

Granted that Robinson can "take it" insofar as points 2, 3 and 4 are concerned, the first factor alone appears likely to beat him down.

The war is over. Hundreds of fine players are rushing out of service and back into the roster of Organized Baseball. Robinson conceivably will discover that as a 26-year-old shortstop just off the sandlots, the waters of competition in the International League will flood far over his head. One year ago, with baseball suffering from manpower stringencies, Robinson would have faced a better chance on the technical side of the game.

The coupling of the two, without any acknowledgment of appreciation, when mentioning The Sporting News Rickey award, was taken as a gratuitous slap at the award's donor". In other words, after making the statement that The Sporting News predicted, and bear in mind that this wasn't The Sporting News prediction but that of Branch Rickey, that you indicated, that regardless of The Sporting News predicting, you nevertheless practically forced us to recognize you as the Rookie of the Year.

Your readiness to acknowledge the letter, your statement and your expression of warmest regards, is one that is recognized and in turn we wish you success in the coming season and those to follow.