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Student Name

Jackie Robinson

The impact that Jackie Robinson had on the world of baseball was unfathomable. As the first African-American to play for a Major League Baseball team, he changed the game of baseball forever, as well as helped accelerate the civil rights movement. Jackie Robinson has a long list of very prestigious accomplishments, but some of his most important work was not recognized by a trophy or an award.

Jackie Robinson started his athletic career at the University of California Los Angeles, where he competed in baseball, football, basketball, and track. He was the first in the history of the school to win varsity letters in all four sports during the 1939 school year. Back in 1939, there were not very many African-Americans that attended college, so it is not surprising that he was only one of four black athletes to play on the UCLA football team, which was the largest number of blacks on a men's college football team during the time. Shockingly, Jackie Robinson's career as a baseball player at UCLA was not very good. In his first season, he only batted .097, even though in his debut game he went 4-4, with 2 stolen bases. (UCLA Bruins) He excelled in fielding and base running,

which are just as important as hitting the ball. Of all the sports Robinson played in college, baseball was his “worst,” which is why he decided to pursue a career in football out of college.

Robinson’s athletic career was paused when he was drafted into the military where he served from 1941-1944 and he finished when he was offered an honorable discharge, which he accepted.. After serving in the military for three years, he decided he would give baseball another try. He played in the Negro Leagues for the Kansas City Monarchs which was a less prestigious league than the MLB was. In 1945, Jackie signed with the Dodgers organization and in 1946, they moved him up to the big leagues (Official Site of the LA Dodgers). The historic day was April 15th, 1946, when Jackie Robinson became the first African-American to play in the MLB. His debut was something to forget in terms of stats, as he went 0-3. As one could imagine, there were many people that did not agree with having an African-American playing baseball with the white men, but that didn’t stop Jackie from following his dreams. Other conflicts Jackie faced included many teammates that threatened to leave the team because of Jackie’s participation. As the years passed however people warmed up to the idea of baseball becoming an interracial sport. Robinson won the NL Rookie of the Year in 1947, which was the first year he participated in the Major Leagues. Another worthy accomplishment Robinson holds was leading the NL in stolen bases in

two different years, 1947 and 1949. However, the most prestigious award that Robinson won was the National League MVP in 1949. This one is more significant than the others, because every player is eligible for the award and the winner is usually the best all-around player. Without being able to perform at such a high level, I don't think that the MLB would have been so lenient with letting colored men play.

Jackie Robinson's accomplishments aren't just limited to athletic awards and trophies; he was also very successful in the campaign for the civil rights movement. Jackie wrote President Lyndon B. Johnson a letter encouraging him to continue his pursuit of the civil rights movement. Jackie also let President Johnson know that he felt the action of violent individuals shouldn't make him feel negative towards the civil rights movement; because he felt it wasn't fair to the thousands of non-violent African-American protesters. This letter was written in 1967, which was when Jackie Robinson was still a relevant figure to the public (Robinson). Robinson also helped the civil rights movement indirectly when he broke the color barrier in the MLB. The public saw this as inspiration to fight for equality making the civil rights movement as strong as ever.

There is no doubt in my mind that Jackie Robinson's biggest impact was breaking the color barrier and changing the game of baseball forever. However, I think that by doing this he created a wave of inspiration to the African-Americans that were sick and tired of being treated like lesser people. Obviously, there is

still racism and discrimination in today's culture but it is significantly less prevalent and much less severe. We went from not letting blacks to sit in the front of the bus, or attend schools that whites did, to electing a black president into office, and I don't think it could have happened without Jackie Robinson. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was also undoubtedly one of the strongest figures in the civil rights movement, but who's to say that he would have had the motivation and inspiration to organize the demonstrations and have the bravery to rebel against the police. Not to mention, the bravery that Jackie Robinson displayed when playing in the MLB, showed everybody to not be afraid. Jackie Robinson received various death threats, taunting, and he was wrongfully arrested on a few occasions. However this didn't thwart his ambitious attitude to succeed.

Jackie Robinson's career as a baseball player was phenomenal and will be remembered for as long as the MLB is still being played. The impact Jackie Robinson had on the civil rights movement was just as phenomenal, but it won't be remembered as much as his baseball career. Regardless of if people remember his impact on civil rights or not, he played a huge part in the civil rights movement.. His bravery and success earned him a great amount of respect as well as made him a role model to millions of people around the world. Baseball has changed tremendously since Jackie entered the league as baseball has become the most interracial sport in the modern day, due to the amount of whites, blacks, Asians, and Latinos that participate at the professional level.

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