



Mannie Jackson - Why Leave Honeywell to Buy a Bankrupt Company (continued)

by Mannie Jackson

December 16 2020 1:13 PM



The plan was to create a contemporary awareness of the team's legacy and remind current generations of the stupidity of discrimination. It's hard to imagine there was a time when Black players were barred from the NBA; until the late fifties and early sixties an unspoken quota system allowed a few African-Americans in the Association. When allowed to play, Black players raised the game to new levels of competitiveness and entertainment. In those days watching Russell, Oscar, Elgin, Sweetwater, Lloyd, Wilkens, Guy Rodgers and Wilt (they actually changed the rules of the game so he wouldn't dominate) was something to behold and great theater. For several years the dunk was outlawed.

As late as 1980 no one talked much about the days of discrimination, and those who did frequently denied quotas even happened. More so, even the Basketball Hall of Fame and the Commissioner ignored the contributions African-Americans made to the success of the professional game world-wide and would frequently treat the early Black contributions as a footnote. When the Globetrotters beat the World Champion Lakers, everyone except the players seemed shocked. Prior to 1955, the media frequently described Black players as undisciplined, un-coachable, and clowns. After the Laker game, most ominously, in June 1950 the NBA draft broke the color line by drafting the first Blacks in its history. Three of the signers "Sweetwater" Clifton, Chuck Cooper, and Earl Lloyd all had been in Globetrotter uniforms before the draft. The Laker victory played in Chicago, Illinois before 18-20 thousand fans may have been the final straw to break the barrier of inequality in professional basketball. It was the start of Abe Saperstein losing many of his greatest players and the Globetrotter and the New York Rens dominance of excellence in the game of basketball. It was likely the start of the Globetrotters being pulled into that swirling vortex of shame and under attacks from Blacks and Whites, as being Sambos, Stepin Fetchits, class clowns, etc.

In purchasing the Harlem Globetrotters, my goal was to assure that the role of Black players and their contributions were recognized and the Globetrotters not thought of as just cartoon characters. The goal was to get the real story told in a documentary, a book, and a full-length feature film from the perspective of a Black player and team owner. My business passion for the team's financial potential grew exponentially every year during my ownership. The social and economic platform that was created resulted in the Globetrotters 2002 enshrinement in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame (not as a gratuitous social expression) as it recovered from the disgrace of bankruptcy to achieved record-breaking merchandise sales and media recognition worldwide. In 2004, when the US Olympic team was beaten by the Argentinian National team at the Olympics, I had a world barnstorming vision and immediately contacted Chris Clouser, Ray Garman for help in devising a plan to challenge the Olympic champion Argentina National team to a "mythical" World Championship. We quickly started scheduling the three game series to be played in Miami, NYC, and Las Vegas. Both organizations agreed to a million-dollar winners fee. The Globetrotters proposed to cover operating expenses and a 30,000 dollar per game fee paid to the Argentine Olympic fund. The deal was signed in New Jersey in a friendly meeting attended by myself, Lawyer Ed Garvey, and Brett Meister, the team's publicist.

The gross payout from TV, gate receipts, sponsors, pay-per-view and streaming was conservatively estimated to net 100,000,000!!!

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