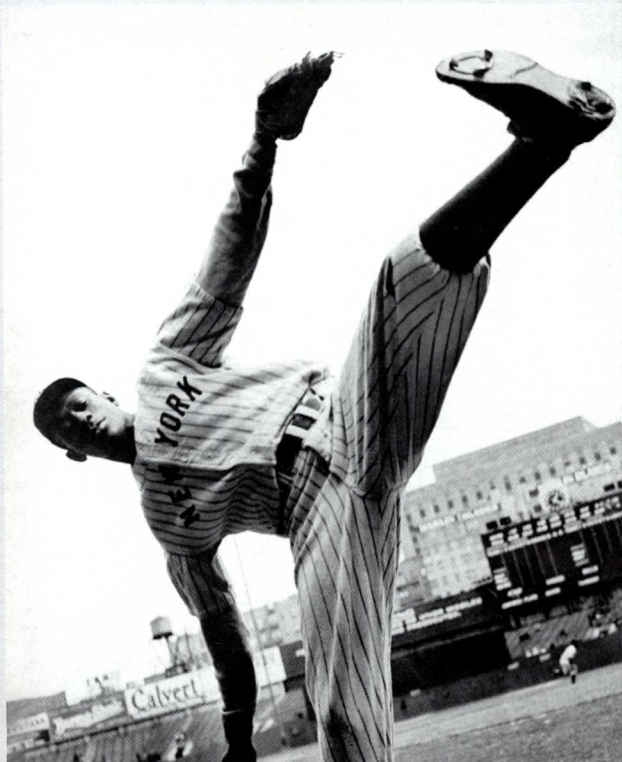


BLACK STARS BEGIN TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD IN AMERICAN SPORTS

While black U.S. soldiers were winning respect for their service in World War II, African-American athletes in the U.S. were staking their claim to stardom, helping lead the way toward the end of segregation in America



Joe Louis

Americans of all races, who loved his class and clout, called Detroit's Louis "the Brown Bomber." The heavyweight, here seen knocking out Willy Conn in 1946, thrilled the world when he defeated German Max Schmeling (unfairly portrayed as a Nazi sympathizer) in 1938.

Satchel Paige

The ageless pitcher, at left playing in the Negro Leagues in 1941, is considered one of the greatest hurlers of all time, but segregation kept him out of the big leagues until 1948, when he was past his prime. An engaging showoff and champion boaster, Paige bragged that his rules for staying young included "Avoid running at all times" and "Don't look back—something might be gaining on you."

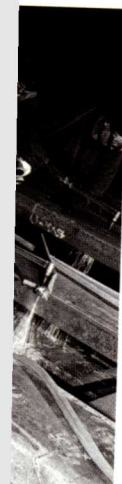
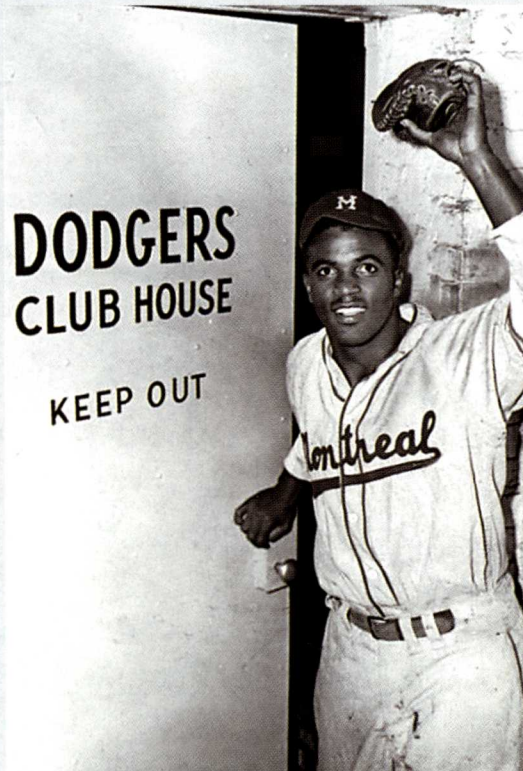


Sugar Ray Robinson

The thoughtful middleweight with the fleet feet and potent punch was a popular figure, especially in Harlem, where he showed off his restaurant and his Cadillac in 1950.

Jackie Robinson

Brooklyn Dodgers owner Branch Rickey integrated baseball in 1947, after Robinson played in Montreal. The two men were reviled by some, but their courage is now acclaimed.



FROM LEFT: NATIONAL ARCHIVES (2); KARI HAAVISTO, MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY—CORBIS
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALFRED EISENSTAEDT—PIX INC.—TIME LIFE PICTURES; MARGARET BURKE-WHITE—TIME LIFE PICTURES; NATIONAL ARCHIVES
 CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GEORGE STROCK—TIME LIFE PICTURES; NEW YORK DAILY NEWS; W.C. GREENE—APF—GETTY IMAGES; GEORGE KARGER—TIME LIFE PICTURES