



INDUCTEE BIOGRAPHY: JACKIE ROBINSON

Superman Hall of Heroes inductee Jackie Robinson spent the better part of his life achieving athletic success, while at the same time breaking down racial barriers. As the first African-American athlete playing in the Major Leagues, Robinson was a true leader during the Civil Rights Movement and his legacy and life work continues to be carried out today through the Jackie Robinson Foundation, a national not-for-profit organization founded to perpetuate the memory of Jackie Robinson through the advancement of higher education among underserved populations.

Baseball player and civil rights activist, Jack Roosevelt Robinson, was born on January 31, 1919, in Cairo, Georgia. The youngest of five children, Robinson was raised by his single mother, Mallie Robinson. From this humble beginning, Robinson would go on to be the first baseball player to break the Major League Baseball's color barrier that segregated the sport for more than 50 years.

Robinson attended University of California, Los Angeles, where he became the first student to win varsity letters in four sports: football, basketball, track and baseball. In 1941, despite achieving athletic success, Robinson was forced to leave school due to financial hardships. From there, Robinson moved to Honolulu, Hawaii to pursue a career in semi-professional football with the Honolulu Bears. He was unable to finish the season due to the United States entering World War II.

After the United States entered the war, Robinson was enlisted to serve in the United States Army from 1942 to 1944 where he achieved the rank of second lieutenant. Although he never saw combat, Robinson was arrested and court-martialed for refusing to move to the back of a racially segregated bus. He was later acquitted of these charges and received an honorable discharge from the army.

In 1945, Robinson began playing professional baseball in the Negro Baseball League with the Kansas City Monarchs. After one season in the Negro Leagues, he was chosen by Branch Rickey, a vice president with the Brooklyn Dodgers, to help integrate Major League Baseball. He joined the Montreal Royals, a farm team for the Brooklyn Dodgers, in 1945. He moved to Florida in 1946 to begin spring training with the team and appeared in his first game on March 17, 1946.

Despite the racial abuse, Robinson had an outstanding season with the Royals, leading the International League with a .349 batting average and .985 fielding percentage. His outstanding year in 1946 led to being promoted to the Major League team, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the following season. His debut game on April 15, 1947, marked the first time an African-American athlete played in the Major Leagues.

Robinson succeeded in putting aside the racial prejudice that he faced, and proved that he belonged on the same ball field. In his first year, he helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant. Robinson hit 12 home runs, led the National League in stolen bases and was selected as Rookie of the Year. He continued to overcome the adversity that he faced and in the 1949 season had an outstanding .342

batting average, led in stolen bases that year and earned the National League's Most Valuable Player Award.

Through his 10-year career with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Robinson helped the team win six National league pennants and their only World Series Championship. He ended his career with a batting average of .331, 1,518 hits, 137 home runs, 734 runs batted in and 197 stolen bases, stealing home 19 times. Due to his excellence on and off the field, Robinson was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1997, Major League Baseball "universally" retired his number, number 42, across all Major League teams; he was the first professional athlete in any sport to receive such an honor.

Although Robinson passed away on October 24, 1972, his legacy and life works continue to be carried out through the Jackie Robinson Foundation founded by his wife, Rachel Robinson.

The Jackie Robinson Foundation (JRF) is a national, not-for-profit, organization founded in 1973 as a vehicle to perpetuate the memory of Jackie Robinson through the advancement of higher education among underserved populations. Uniquely, JRF provides generous four-year college scholarships in conjunction with a comprehensive set of skills and opportunities to disadvantaged students of color to ensure their success in college and to develop their leadership potential. JRF's hands-on, four-year program includes peer and professional mentoring, internship placement, extensive leadership training, international travel and community service options, the conveyance of practical life skills, and a myriad of networking opportunities. JRF's strategic combination of financial assistance and support services results consistently in a nearly 100% college graduation rate.

The Jackie Robinson Foundation provides a multi-faceted experience designed to not only address the financial needs of minority students who aspire to attend college but also to guide them through the process of higher education, molding them into dynamic leaders with a commitment to public service and Jackie Robinson's humanitarian ideals. The award is given to outstanding high school graduates who plan to earn a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution of higher education.