

Hub pro sports crowds: Color them mostly white

★ FANS

Continued from Page 1

"You can't say that we're any different than a lot of cities," said Bill Crowley, Red Sox vice president in charge of public relations. "Except in a couple of cities, like Chicago and Detroit, you don't find many blacks going to baseball games. I see more of the Spanish population coming out to the park. I think that's because they're more baseball-oriented."

"But you take Baltimore. I've gone out to Laurel race track and it's been 50 percent black and then the same night at Memorial Stadium I've seen 10 percent black. Maybe they like the ponies, I don't know."

"In Boston I know that there is a problem insofar as blacks don't go where whites go, and whites don't go where blacks go, and this is all over the city. Sociologists would have to determine why this is, because I don't know."

Blacks surveyed randomly at Washington Park pointed out that for them Fenway is a tense and nervous place. Asked first if they attended Fenway, if not, why, and if so, to describe their experience there, they spoke of a fear of harassment.

"I used to go to every game," said William Hall of 1043 Tremont st. "Years ago it was safe. I just stopped going. It's always a hassle now. It started getting bad when they started the school busing."

"Last time I went, someone threw a cup of tonic at my head. That was in the bleachers. The boxes and the grandstand are all right. But there's a different class of people in the bleachers. It's a poorer class."

Warner B. Jackson, an ABCD employee, doesn't go "because I get thrown at me and then when I complain I get thrown out instead of Whitey. The people that do this stuff are doing it to each other now because the blacks aren't there."

A man identifying himself as J.P. said season tickets were available to him where he worked but that he rarely used them. "I know a brother who stopped going because some white boys jumped him," said J.P. "Last time I went I had tickets for a front row box. The ushers put us in the third row. We complained, but they didn't do anything."

Harvey Boger, who has a 15-year-old son and who attends Fenway occasionally, said, "I feel like a fly in a glass of buttermilk over there. It's eerie."

Security officials at Fenway claim racial incidents have been practically non-existent this season, and that rowdiness in general has decreased.

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, which feels that all-white security, concession and usher staffs contribute to black tensions, reports that Fenway is meeting affirmative action quotas in these areas, although the casual observer might be strained to see this.

Mark Shreiber, an MCAD attorney, said that the commission accepts hiring statistics filed by the Red Sox. "We don't actually monitor Fenway ourselves," said Shreiber.

The MCAD's 1974 complaint against the Red Sox brought about minority representation in the service ranks.

"Our feeling is that an all-white staff encourages an all-white audience," said Alex Rodriguez of the MCAD. "Emotions build during events, and when they boil over, minorities become the targets of violence. And minorities are singled out by the ushers and security people because they're easy to identify."

"Not all incidents are reported," said Rodriguez. "At baseball and football games we've had complaints of vendors not serving minorities, of minorities getting hit by missiles in the bleachers, and of minorities being dragged out when the troublemakers are confronted. We had a report of a gang of youths terrorizing a black family at a football game."

Apart from the issue of harassment are the promotional considerations affecting black attendance at Fenway.

In recent years attendance has been so good the Red Sox haven't worried about attracting additional fans. A promotion aimed at black fans, for example, might simply create demand for tickets already scarce.

"We try to encourage anyone to come any time," said Crowley. "But we don't make a special effort to get certain groups."

"I know the Rangers beamed special advertising at the Chicanos, and the Dodgers have done it, and I think the Yankees have done it. Part of the difference here is that we don't have that much capacity. We don't have any place to put more fans."

Another reason for black alienation stems from the lack of a charismatic black player. J.R. Rice has somehow



failed to excite black fans, allegedly because he stays aloof from the black community.

"Rice never shows his face in the black community," said Kenny Hudson, a black sports talk show host on WITS. "I asked him last year if we could arrange for some tickets for underprivileged kids the way (Greg) Luzinski does in Philadelphia and (Dave) Winfield does in San Diego, and I never heard from him. His problem is that his agent shields him."

"Rice was supposed to attend a banquet of ours last winter," said Roscoe Baker, director of the Roxbury Boys Club, "but he couldn't make it. A hundred kids left with a bad taste in their mouths. It was unfortunate. He just overscheduled himself. He's a busy man."

In contrast to Fenway Park, black attendance for the Patriots at Schaefer Stadium and for the Celtics at Boston Garden is decidedly higher.

Patriots assistant general manager Pat Sullivan puts black attendance at Schaefer "between five and 10 percent. 6,000 would be a lot" for a capacity of 61,000.

"And that's damn good," said Sullivan, "because in a 10-mile radius around Foxboro there's not many black or Spanish faces." Sullivan credits the involvement of several black Patriots in the black community for the black attendance. The Patriots have adopted Roxbury Boys Club as their team charity.

Schaefer personnel in security, concessions and ushering is sorely deficient in minority representation, the reason being that most of the workers are hired from surrounding white communities.

Schaefer security is made up of state police handling traffic, with 92 policemen from Foxboro and surrounding communities along with 25 county sheriffs inside the stadium.

"There are not an awful lot of blacks on the state police force," notes Sullivan, "and taking the Foxboro police force as an example, there are 12 cops and none are black. Check around here and you won't find many blacks on the police force."

The Patriots hired First Security Services last season for additional security personnel and ushers. Of the 37 security persons from First Security, six were black, and of the 135 ushers, six were black. Larry Durnan of First Security says that although 130 of the firm's 636 employees are black, most of those sent to Schaefer are part-time employees hired from surrounding communities, and therefore are white. Durnan said the Patriots have not requested increased minority representation.

"Their emphasis is on performance," he said. Schaefer concessions are handled by Canteen Corp., and according to Canteen spokesman Jim Fisher, less than one percent of its personnel at football games are minority. Again, this is because non-profit groups from surrounding communities are hired to work the stands in charitable causes.

The Patriots have achieved minority representation in the Schaefer cleanup, which was contracted out last season to Lenu Park Community Development, which has a 90 percent minority rate.

Traditionally the Celtics have attracted the most black fans because black players were instrumental in their dynasty years. Celtics vice president Jeff Cohen estimates their attendance is "between 10 and 20 percent, closer to 10% black, a figure that has held steady through the recent lean years."

"It reflects the number of blacks in the area," says Cohen, "but not the number of blacks who play basketball."

"As far as we're concerned the figure is too low. There are economic factors, but we feel there is a growing black middle class and with it our support will grow."

Boston Garden lacks minority representation in both its usher and concession crews. Of the 54-58 ushers working a Celtics or Bruins game, none are minority, according to John Boles, Garden director of security. Garden ushers are contracted through IBEW 1499.

Concessions are run by Sportservice Inc., the company which owns the Garden, and of 115 workers, eight are minority, according to Bob Palumbo, director of concessions for the Buffalo-based company, in an attempt to increase minority representation, seven of the 35 concession workers hired in the last year have been minority. "The results aren't spectacular," said Palumbo, "but it's a start."

Garden security is handled by Ogden Security, the same service used by the Red Sox. Ogden supplies 32 men for a normal Bruins-Celtics game, with a minority count of 25-30 percent, according to Ray Ball of Ogden. The Garden supplies eight of its own special police, none of whom is minority. It also provides a two-man canine corps, of which one is usually minority.

For the past several months, Globe reporters Steve Marantz, Larry Whiteside and Walter Haynes have talked to Boston's black athletes, both past and present, examining the early years and assessing their present situation and their role in the community. The reports will appear from time to time in The Globe.