

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE July 15, 1979 57

Sports

Commentary 70
Scoreboard 72
Recreation 74, 75

Settling in Boston: the pros and cons

By Steve Marantz
Globe Staff

"Boston is the most rigidly segregated city in the country."
—Bill Russell, 1973.

This, he said, before busing. And because Bill Russell was the best basketball player Boston has known, and because Boston accords the words of its athletes almost religious reverence, this branding could not be ignored.

In making his statement Russell wasn't saying anything that hadn't been said, nor was he offering anything more conclusive than another opinion. What Russell did was to link the racial reality outside the clubhouse door to the black man inside of it. Russell was strong, secure and angry enough to make his experience public, and though some comfortably wrote him off as a malcontent, he struck a responsive chord in many others. The question then was, and still is: How does the black athlete fit into the



Boston area? Its complexity precludes easy generalities, but its examination is easily justified.

The black athlete "is disproportionately influential in black society relative to other (professionals)," according to Dr. Harry Edwards, a black associate professor of sociology at the University of California-Berkeley, author of three books dealing with the sociology of sport. Given this premise, it follows that the way a black athlete feels about Boston can indi-

cate much about what the average black person feels.

Conversely, because professional sports teams are fundamental to a city's identity, black athletes are part of that identity, according to Dr. Alvin Pous-saint, a black associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard. "How a city treats its black athletes could be taken as an index of how it feels about blacks in general."

Whether Russell was right or wrong in labeling Boston as he did is not the point of this article. The attitudes of black athletes who perform and live here are.

There are approximately 30 black athletes playing for the Patriots, Red Sox and Celtics, and nine of them make their homes here year-round; a ratio approximately equal to that of their white teammates. The statistic is significant, because while it has been suggested that black athletes prefer not to stay here in their off-seasons because of the "racial

The black athlete made his impact early on the professional sports scene in Boston. In the 1950s, Chuck Cooper joined the Celtics and became the first black player in the NBA; Sam Jethroe, the first black to play for the Boston Braves, was the National League's rookie of the year in 1950; and Bill Russell turned a good Celtics team into a dynasty. But the black athlete has not always been happy in Boston. Russell castigated the city for what he interpreted as racial slights. As recently as two years ago, Jim Rice, in a national magazine, accused the Red Sox of racism in the handling of his career. 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, which begin today, will appear from time to time in The Globe.

climate," the same ratio of whites leaving indicates other factors may influence that particular decision.

Red Sox pitcher Bill Campbell used the phrase "racial climate" last January when he told a group of Hartford businessmen that he would not recommend Boston to his friend Rod Carew. As a white, who makes his off-season home in California, Campbell's opinion was mainly that of an outsider.

"The racial problems in Boston are a

well-known fact," explained Campbell later. "Rod's wife is white and Jewish. That's a volatile combination and with the potential for problems here I figured he might want to stay away from it." Amid the resultant publicity furor, Campbell was told by the Red Sox he should keep free advice to himself.

Among the year-round black residents are nine Patriots — Leon Gray, Ray Hamilton, Tony McGee, Richard Bishop, Mike

Haynes, Rod Shoate, Don Westbrook, Shelby Jordan (Providence) and Stanley Morgan (Providence). Jim Rice, one of the few black Red Sox, owns a home in Peabody, but returns to South Carolina in the winter. None of the current black Celtics — Cedric Maxwell, Don Chaney, Curtis Rowe or Bob McAdoo — lives in the Boston area year-round in contrast to the old guard nucleus of Russell, Satch Sanders, KC and Sam Jones, all of whom were residents.

Perhaps no black athlete knows Boston as well as Tom (Satch) Sanders, 40, a former player, assistant coach and coach of the Celtics, and a former coach of Harvard. Sanders grew up in Harlem, came to the Celtics in 1960, was a home owner in Roxbury for 12 years, and presently owns a home in Newton.

BLACKS, Page 67