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## ***The Press and the Racial Integration of Baseball: Comparative Coverage in Northern and Southern Minor League Cities, 1945-1947***

The shattering of twentieth-century organized baseball's "color line" occurred with the signing of Jackie Robinson in October 1945. Following a highly successful season in the minor leagues with the Montreal Royals, in 1947 Robinson joined the parent club and as Rookie-of-the-Year went on to lead the Brooklyn Dodgers to the National League Pennant. By the end of the 1947 season, Robinson was a star and other clubs had begun to sign African-American players.

This paper explores the little studied world of the small to mid-size cities of the south and their newspaper coverage of the events of 1945, 1946, and 1947. It compares press coverage in four selected minor league southern cities with four similar minor league cities in the north. News stories, columnists' articles, editorials, and letters to the editor were examined for both size and content. The study focuses on four major questions: How did selected newspapers cover Robinson's initial signing, his 1946 spring training and minor league play, and the 1947 spring season and signing by the Dodgers? How were these events treated editorially, both on the editorial pages and in the writings of sports columnists? How were they received locally as determined by citizen reaction (reflected in letters to the editor)? To what extent, if any, did northern and southern newspapers differ in their reactions to the integration of organized baseball?

Analysis indicates that there was little difference in either the quantity or content of northern and southern newspapers. In both north and south, the events of 1945 and 1946 attracted little attention, but there was an increase in interest in 1947. From this limited sampling, one might conclude that the newspaper fraternity in both north and south largely accepted Robinson's breaking of the color line. The only difference was that northern newspapers gave slightly more editorial support to the event.

Given the hard lines of racial segregation in the south during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, the absence of any great antagonism to Robinson in southern newspapers seems surprising. One possible explanation for this might be that the major leagues were a distant attraction to most southerners during this period and consequently so too was the threat of integration. Furthermore, racism was not a uniquely southern thing and although racial incidents did occur as southern minor league teams integrated between 1947 and 1960, Robinson faced horrendous racial antagonism in some northern major league ballparks. Further study including a much larger number of newspapers from other sections of the south is needed before firmer conclusions are made on this issue.