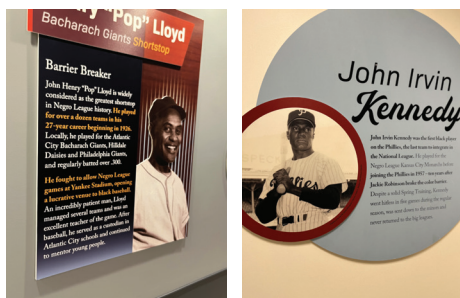


A LEAGUE APART IN CHERRY HILL

By Alice Riehl



If you are a baseball fan you will want to get down to Camden County College in Cherry Hill right away to see a wonderful exhibit called A League Apart, celebrating the Negro League teams and players from the Philadelphia and South Jersey areas. The show, available until at least May 20, is a visually exciting, fact-filled look at baseball for those Black superstars and innovators who were kept out of the Major Leagues until 1947, and in many cases beyond.

Using photos, artifacts, and stories from the past, the exhibit illuminates the histories of not only the Leagues but also African American “barrier breakers” like Octavius V. Cato, a teacher, civil rights activist, and organizer of one of America's first baseball leagues; Henry “Pop” Lloyd, one of the top shortstops in baseball history; Ed Bolden, owner of the two best-known Negro League teams, the Hilldale Daisies and the Philadelphia Stars; Richard “Dick” Allen, who became the Phillies’ first Black superstar in 1964; and Mo’ne Davis, the young girl who was the first female to pitch a winning Little League World Series Game, a shutout, in 2014.

While the major leagues were integrated in 1947 with the hiring of Jackie Robinson by the Brooklyn Dodgers, the Phillies did not hire their first Black player until 1957, when John Kennedy joined the roster and made his debut as a pinch runner.

The exhibit was originally conceived by Carolyn Quick as part of her graduate work in design at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. She says, “Growing up attending minor league games in Indiana, I had a basic understanding of baseball, but this project deepened my appreciation. At first, I was nervous about creating an exhibit that heavily focused on the Negro Leagues. I wanted to do the story justice by collaborating with baseball specialists like Brian.” She is referring to Brian Michael, CEO and founder of PhilliesNation, (philliesnation.com) a multimedia cornucopia of everything Phillies, and owner of Shibe Vintage Sports, an apparel store with locations in Center City Philadel-



Mr. Brian Michael at the A League Apart Exhibit.

phia, Wayne, and West Chester. (The stores are named after Shibe Park, which eventually was renamed Connie Mack Stadium and hosted Negro League games on Mondays when the Philadelphia Athletics were away.) When Ms. Quick showed Mr. Michael the final virtual project, he thought it could become a real exhibit. Soon the idea was taken up by a coalition of persons and organizations like the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR), (Baseball-Reference.com).

Mr. Michael has helped fundraise for the exhibit and negotiated the rights to the many wonderful photos in the show.

Originally, the exhibit was limited to Philadelphia players and leagues, but when it moved from the Cherry Street Pier in Philadelphia to Camden County College in Cherry Hill, it expanded to include a lot of South Jersey players and memorabilia, thanks to the help of another baseball fan, Dr. Kelly Jackson, a math teacher at the school. One of her contributions to the exhibit is a baseball bat signed by over 50 Negro League players.

The exhibit is in the perfect place, right next to the South Jersey Baseball Hall of Fame Exhibit, honoring outstanding performances by players, teams, and coaches in South Jersey.

A League Apart will continue to grow and travel and eventually be part of the celebration of Philadelphia area baseball when the All-Star Game - and the World Cup - are played there in 2026.

The exhibit is located at Camden County College, William G. Rohrer Center, 1889 Marlton Pike East, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003, and is open from 8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday. More information and group tour scheduling can be found at aleagueapart.org.