

Black History Sports Part 2

Written by Stacey Hough, Columnist
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The celebration of Black History in America is ripe with feat accomplishments, and the stories of those who authored the feats. Some names are mentioned more than others, and this column (like last week's) is an effort to bring to light a couple of names that perhaps should get more attention. Their inspiration is worthy of an entire calendar of acknowledgement.

Althea Gibson was a tennis star of global importance, and she blazed a trail many years ago, that Venus and Serena Williams, among others, have taken to new heights. But it began with Gibson, a native of Clarendon County, SC. She played tennis and pursued her education as a youngster. Gibson earned a scholarship to Florida A & M University in 1953, and she was ranked as high as #1 player in the nation. At the time, there was no prize money for tennis, so she retired as an amateur in 1958. She played in exhibitions and was allowed money for expenses. There were no million dollar purses nor endorsement deals in that era. However, Althea Gibson began to make her mark in Black History by becoming the first African-American, man or woman, to win the French Open, which is a grand slam event. She also won Wimbledon twice, and what is now known as the U.S. Open twice. Among other notable accomplishments for Gibson is the fact that she also won Wimbledon as part of a doubles team, becoming the first African-American woman to win that title. And to show the versatility that she was blessed with, Althea Gibson took up golf and became the first African-American woman to join the LPGA(Ladies Professional Golf Association). Ms. Gibson passed away in 2003, and is immortalized in many Halls of Fame.

The golfing world was taken by storm by young Tiger Woods in the mid-1990s. But it was a man named Lee Elder whom first help introduce the nation to the talent of a Black golfer. Elder worked his way up the hard way, caddying and working at golf clubs for the chance to play. He

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was 16 years old before he played his first full 18 hole round. Elder earned his tour card in 1968, and that year finished 40th on the money earned list. He made \$38,000, a far cry from the money that Woods and his peers make today. Mr. Elder and other minority golfers had to deal with segregation in the late 60s, having to endure such indignities as having to change clothes in the parking lot, because some country clubs had rules in place that barred his entry into the clubhouse with the other golfers. In 1974, Lee elder won his first tournament, the Monsanto Open, which qualified him to play in the 1975 Masters tournament. He became the first African-American golfer to play in the Masters Championship in 1975. He didnt win, but he definitely unlocked the door so that 21 years later, Tiger Woods could walk in and own the house. Elder later (1979) became the first African-American golfer to qualify for the Ryder Cup team, which is selected to represent America versus a European team every two years. He has been outspoken against racism and established, with his wife Rose, the Lee Elder Scholarship Fund, which helps young blacks whom come from low-income backgrounds and wish to attend college.

These are just two more trailblazers of many, whom young people of any color can appreciate. The courage to pursue the direction of their talent, is to be admired. In that vein, as a sports radio host, here's hoping that Bobby Gist and Ernest Robinson are back on the airwaves in Columbia soon. They set a high standard in this market, doing a great show for well over two decades, before being left without a show due to recent buying and selling of stations in the market. Quality never goes out of style, and they'll be back soon I'm sure. Black History is an ongoing process.