



ONE OF THE MANY PAINTINGS at the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum shows a player making a safe slide into base.

— Herald staff photo by Jim Merriott

Baseball bug hits first warm day

A while back, when the weather finally changed from freezing cold to a warm beautiful day, the baseball bug bit me.

Then recently, I traveled to Kansas City, Mo. for a family reunion.

While I was in Kansas City, I took my family to my old neighborhood. This was a place I had not visited for over 40 years.

Growing up in the inner city during the 1950s was an experience much different than rural western Kansas.

My parents were typical working class people, who lived in a tenement. On the city block where I grew up, there were 72 kids.

We lived at 1324 East 37th Street, just off Paseo Boulevard. Today, it's a vacant lot, but 40 years ago, it was a diversified neighborhood of immigrants from all over the world, each searching for the American Dream.

During the years that I attended Faxon Elementary School from kindergarten to seventh grade, the neighborhood made a 180 degree change.

It went from predominately caucasian to about 85 percent black, in roughly eight to ten years.

It was tough growing up there during racially troubled 1960s.



The Jayhawker

By Jim Merriott

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Protests, fire bombings, shootings and racial unrest were common in the inner city.

The thing that we all had in common was baseball and in that neighborhood, only the ball was white.

After 40 years, not only has the neighborhood changed, but attitudes as well.

People have learned to live together and respect each other.

During the '50s and '60s, I was fortunate to meet some of the old retired Negro League baseball players, who were not allowed to play in the major leagues until 1947.

My father had grown up in the area and had played baseball against several of these gentlemen.

After the Negro Leagues disbanded in the early '50s, several of them were down on their luck.

One of my father's sports opponents was John Jordan "Buck" O'Neil, the first black major league

baseball coach and scout, who was featured in Ken Burn's series on the "History of Baseball."

O'Neil worked with my father to help several of the old ball players. Dad hired some to work at the business he managed.

During the summers, when I was out of school and after I turned 16 and before I joined the Army, I was fortunate enough to get to work with several of these men.

During that time the colored men ate their lunches in a different part of the building than the white workers.

I was the only white person who ate lunch with these retired ball players. I wasn't being a liberal. I just loved baseball.

The more I think about those times, the more I realize the importance of history.

While I was in Kansas City this time, I was fortunate to visit the

Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, a private, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history of Negro baseball.

I spoke with the museum's Director of Marketing, Bob Kendrick.

He told me about the museum and about the influence of Mr. O'Neil in America's culture.

"We are fortunate to have such a fine facility for all baseball fans to visit," said Kendrick. "This museum is a part of American history, it shows a period of time that would be lost if its story was untold. Great players such as Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks, Larry Doby, Lou Brock, Satchel Paige and Joe Black paved the way for today's black athletes.

Thanks to O'Neil, this part of American history has not been forgotten.

Midwestern baseball fans are lucky to be so close to such a great facility with such a rich tradition.

If your family is planning a trip to Kansas City, I would recommend stopping by the museum, just off I-70 and Paseo Boulevard at 18th and Vine.

If you are a baseball fan and planning on catching a Kansas City Royals game this summer, this is a must see.

Berry breaks through at speedway

By Darin Racek

The weather was perfect for both drivers and fans at the Decatur County Speedway on Saturday.

Darren Berry, McCook; David Murray Jr. and Dalton Dolan, Oberlin; Travis Sherfick, WaKeeney; Aaron Koch, Cambridge, Neb.; and Max Pollmann, Trenton, Neb. won the A-feature on the 3/8-mile track.

The United Rebel Sprint Series 305 cars put on an exciting show for their 25-lap main event.

Jeff Radcliffe, Hill City, flew out to the lead at the start, with heat winner Ken Lutters, Ransom, in tow. Berry, who started in row four, quietly began picking off cars, working his way to second place by lap seven.

On the next lap, Berry made his move on Radcliffe. Radcliffe fell back and a new battle ensued for second place between, Jon Johnson of Utica and Ray Seemann of Jetmore.

All racing stopped on lap 11 after a crash in corner four.

Corey Koberstein, Holyoke, Colo., and his car flew off the track to avoid the looped car of North Platte driver Tom Belsky. Koberstein, whose car hit the retaining wall that sets back from the track. Fortunately, Corey was able to walk away from the accident.

When the race restarted Berry had a sluggish start, nearly giving Seemann and Johnson the chance they needed to get by him. Berry regained his composure and moved out to a comfortable lead. Once Seemann was able to get away from "The Kansas Tornado," he set his sights on the McCook youngster.

On the last lap, Seemann made his move in corner three, going to the outside of Berry. As he was passing, he tried to take some of Berry's line, with hopes it would slow the McCook driver. Berry would have none of it, and after the two made slight contact, Berry hit the throttle, aimed

for the finish line, and beat Seemann by a slight margin, earning his first ever URSS A Feature victory.

Cody Salem of St. Joseph, Mo., made a move around Jon Johnson late in the race to earn third. Smokey Fairbank, Ransom, finished fifth, despite having troubles most of the night tuning a new engine to run properly.

Murray earned his 399th career IMCA Modified A-feature win in a big way.

After a complete restart at the beginning of the race, Murray slipped by fellow heat winner Jerry Teal, Hays, for the lead. Fifteen unabated laps later, Murray had over a straightaway lead as he crossed the finish line.

Matt Fabrizius, WaKeeney, was trying out a modified for another racer and proved to everyone how good that car was by starting near the back and moving into second. Mark Zorn of Russell, Teal and Jeff Tubbs of Colby were the other top five finishers.

Travis Sherfick terminated the IMCA Stock Car class in his eighth win of the year.

The WaKeeney driver drove by Jason Rogers, Selden, on lap two and was never seen by the rest of the field again. Justin Bussell, Imperial, Neb., held off Jay Hachmeister, Lenora, for third. Larry Pollmann, McCook, finished fifth. Bussell and teammate Shawn Bigham, Imperial, Neb., were the heat race winners.

The IMCA Hobby Stock A feature was one strange race.

Four cars started the race. Fourth-place finisher Michael Thummell, Phillipsburg, dropped out early with mechanical issues. Kelly Karnopp, Norton, was running second to hobby stock heat winner Aaron Koch when something happened to his car, forcing him to go to the pits. He was credited with third. Eric Wahrman, Palco, was the only competition Koch had left, and after a tire went flat on his car, he went to

the pits with second in his pocket. That left Koch as the lone survivor, and winner, of the race.

Despite having mechanical issues with his classic modified the previous night, Max Pollmann was back to business on Saturday. The classic modified heat winner took the lead on the opening lap, and never surrendered the spot.

Rick Touslee, Oberlin, kept Pollmann in his sights, but couldn't catch up. Billy Aeby, Imperial, Neb., got by Larry Ayers, Oberlin, for third and Alex Pollmann, Trenton, Neb., rounded out the top five.

Mitch Hamilton, McCook, came with his mini-truck and won in his heat race, taking the win over Dolan, Dale Heyen of Oberlin, and Loyd Schoen of Lenora.

The A feature however, was dominated by Dolan. Hamilton finished ahead of Heyen and Schoen for second.

Action returns to the speedway on Monday when the Blood, Sweat, and Tears IMCA modifieds will be in town

The IMCA stock cars, IMCA hobby stocks, sportmods, classic modifieds, and mini-trucks will all be on hand as well. The pit gates open at 3 p.m., the grandstands open at 5 p.m. and races start at 7 p.m.

Saturday night results:
URSS Sprint Cars

Heat 1: 72, Ray Seemann; 5R, Randy Bantam; and 12, Darren Berry
Heat 2: 86, Jon Johnson; 07, Corey Lutters; and 21R, Jeff Radcliffe
Heat 3: 79, Ken Lutters; 55, Chuck Lutters; and 36W, Willie Wynn

A Feature
Racers: 12, Darren Berry; 72, Ray Seemann; 23, Cody Salem; 86, Jon Johnson; 2, Smokey Fairbank; 79, Ken Lutters; C3, Reed Bernbeck; 36W, Willie Wynn; 5R, Randy Bantam; 82, Mark Bantam; 2H, Bill Hays; 28, Tom Belsky; 29, Corey Koberstein (DNF); 21R, Jeff Radcliffe (DNF); 3R, Shawn Radcliffe (DNF); 43L, Tyler Linner

(DNF); 55, Chuck Lutters (DNF); 07, Corey Lutters (DNF); and 777, Tom Vacura (DNS).

IMCA Modifieds
Heat 1: 6T, Jerry Teel; 37, Jeff Tubbs; and 21Z, Mark Zorn.
Heat 2: 97M, David Murray; 737, Nick Tubbs; and X, Joe Bellm.

A Feature:
Drivers: 97M, David Murray; 66D, Matt Fabrizius; 21Z, Mark Zorn; 6T, Jerry Teel; 37, Jeff Tubbs; 737, Nick Tubbs; X, Joe Bellm; 16, Kevin Massey; 383, Milo Lippelmann; BST, Ryan Gaylord; 41, Randy Weber.

IMCA Stock Cars
Heat 1: 8B, Shawn Bigham; 66, Travis Sherfick; and 07W, Arnold Williams.

Heat 2: 11B, Justin Bussell; 444, Wheat Lippelmann; and 08, Jay Hachmeister.

A Feature
Drivers: 66, Travis Sherfick; 37, Jason Rogers; 11B, Justin Bussell; 08, Jay Hachmeister;

413, Larry Pollmann; 07W, Arnold Williams; 8B, Shawn Bigham; and 444, Wheat Lippelmann

IMCA Hobby Stocks
Heat: 70KO, Aaron Koch; 3N1, Kelly Karnopp; and 13W, Eric Wahrman.

A Feature
Drivers: 70KO, Aaron Koch; 13W, Eric Wahrman (DNF); 3N1, Kelly Karnopp (DNF); and 21M, Michael Thummell (DNF).

Classic Modifieds
Heat: P82, Max Pollmann; 711, Billy Aeby; and 26RT, Rick Touslee.

A Feature
Drivers: P82, Max Pollmann; 26RT, Rick Touslee; 711, Billy Aeby; 22, Larry Ayers; P83, Alex Pollmann; and 98, Matt Matson (DNF).

Mini-Trucks
Heat: 33, Mitch Hamilton; 3D, Dalton Dolan; and 77D, Dale Heyen.

A Feature
Drivers: 3D, Dalton Dolan; 33, Mitch Hamilton; 77D, Dale Heyen; and 08, Loyd Schoen.

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