

## **Sports Illustrated**

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Sport has long been comfortable in its pride at being one of the few areas of American society in which the Negro has found opportunity—and equality. But has sport in America deceived itself? Is its liberality a myth, its tolerance a deceit? Increasingly, black athletes are saying that sport is doing a disservice to their race by setting up false goals, perpetuating prejudice and establishing an insidious bondage all its own. Now, when Negro athletes are shaking numerous college administrations with their demands and a boycott of the 1968 Olympics is no idle threat, Sports Illustrated explores the roots and validity of the black athlete's unrest—and finds them well founded. In a five-part series Jack Olsen reports on the shockingly frustrating life of the black college athlete, the vast gulf between black and white sportsmen, how a Southwestern university treats the Negroes who are making it famous, black-white problems among the pros and what racism has done to one NFL team

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## Part 1:

# The Cruel Deception

By Jack Olsen

Every morning the world of sports wakes up and congratulates itself on its contributions to race relations. The litany has been repeated so many times that it is believed almost universally. It goes: "Look what sports has done for the Negro."

To be sure, there are a few fair-minded men who are willing to suggest that perhaps the Negro has done something for sports in return. Says George McCarty, athletic director of the University of Texas at El Paso, "In general, the nigger athlete is a little hungrier, and we have been blessed with having some real outstanding ones. We think they've done a lot for us, and we think we've done a lot for them."

The McCarty attitude is echoed on many campuses. Says a university president: "Sure, the Negroes helped our image, but don't forget, they got built up, too. Every one of them that's been here got out of the ghetto. Four of our colored alumni are playing pro basketball right now, and seven are in pro football, and you can't just say that we got a bunch of cattle in here and milked them. It was profitable both ways."

Some argue that anyone with two eyes can see what sports have done for the Negro, and offer Willie Mays as exhibit A. Where would Willie be without baseball? Chopping cotton? Firing a smelter in Birmingham? Or take Bill Russell, player-coach of the Boston Celtics. He goes around making antiwhite remarks and collecting a six-figure check for taking part in a game. Without sports, the argument runs, he would be lucky to be working as a janitor in his home town of Oakland. Jim Brown is another one. He retires from pro football with a fortune in his sock and becomes an overnight success as a movie actor, all be-

cause of sports, and then founds an organization aimed at getting black men jobs, all the while talking out of the side of his mouth about the whites. Why, sports created Jim Brown, gave him a free education at Syracuse University, catapulted him to national fame as a star fullback for the Cleveland Browns.

That's the way the argument goes, and eventually it reaches the classic in case histories, a 6' 8" 250-pound assistant professor of sociology who wears love beads and shades and a black beret and urges Negro athletes to boycott the Olympics, to rise up against various athletic departments of various colleges and to smite the white sports establishment with all their collective power. This fanatical superblack is Harry Edwards, out of East St. Louis, Ill., where he attended various jails as a youth before it was discovered that he could whirl a discus half a mile and San Jose State College offered him an athletic scholarship. Thus, one arrives at the ultimate irony—that Harry Edwards, the mouthpiece of the black athletic rebellion, himself was lifted out of the ghetto by the white sports establishment. Why, if it were not for sports Harry Edwards probably would be alongside his brother Donald, serving 25 years to life in the Iowa State Penitentiary for armed robbery, or following in the footsteps of his father, an alumnus of Pontiac State Penitentiary, or his mother, who once came home from a street brawl wearing 86 stitches.

You can hear these arguments any night of the week in the saloon of your choice, even in the *Negro* saloon of your choice. The cliché that sports has been good to the Negro has been accepted by black and white, liberal and conservative, intellectual and red-neck. And the Negro athlete who has the nerve to

suggest that all is not perfect is branded as ungrateful, a cur that bites the hand. "If only we could achieve in housing, in education, in economic opportunity, all the things we have achieved in sports," says a typically grateful Negro leader, "the race problem in the United States would disappear."

But Negro athletes do not agree. Almost to a man, they are dissatisfied, disgruntled and disillusioned.

Black collegiate athletes say they are dehumanized, exploited and discarded, and some even say they were happier back in the ghetto.

Black professional athletes say they are underpaid, shunted into certain stereotyped positions and treated like subhumans by Paleolithic coaches who regard them as watermelon-eating idiots.

A member of the University of Houston's coaching staff once made the mistake of telling Halfback Warren McVea, "I think this university's athletic program has been pretty damn good to you." McVea, a short, black artillery shell of a man, snapped back, "I think I've been pretty damn good to this university. I want you to remember one thing: you came to me, I didn't come to you."

"People say, 'Wasn't football good to you?'" recalls Jim Parker, retired All-Pro lineman of the Baltimore Colts. "I say, 'Hell, no, I've been good to it.' Football did no better for me than what I put into it."

Someone asked Percy Harris, line football coach at all-black Du Sable High School in Chicago, what he got out of four years of scholarship athletics at various institutions in the Southwest. "Well, let's see," the 28-year-old Negro mused. "At the University of New Mexico I got a sweater. At Cameron State College in Oklahoma I got a blanket. At

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Southwestern State I got a jacket and a blanket."

"Black students aren't given athletic scholarships for the purpose of education," says Harry Edwards. "Blacks are brought in to perform. Any education they get is incidental to their main job, which is playing sports. In most cases, their college lives are educational blanks." And like it or not, face up to it or not, condemn it or not, Harry Edwards is right.

With rare exceptions, the American college coach expects his Negro athletes to concentrate on the job for which they were hired. The aim is neither graduation nor education. The *sine qua non* for the Negro athlete is maintaining his eligibility. At the end of the last second of the last minute of the last hour of a Negro athlete's eligibility, he is likely to find himself dumped unceremoniously into the harsh academic world. Tutors who wrote his themes disappear; professors who gave him superior grades for inferior work rigidize their marking

standards; counselors who advised courses in basket-weaving and fly casting suddenly point out that certain postponed courses in English and mathematics and history must be passed before graduation.

"There is nothing in the world so forlorn and useless as a Negro college athlete who has used up his eligibility," says a white sociologist who, incidentally, functions as a lineman in the National Football League. "If he's going into the pros, of course, that's something different. But how many of them will make it with the pros? One in a hundred?"

Certain truths about the Negro college athlete have been carefully concealed in the groves of academe, and for good reason. Some of the truths are painful, some are embarrassing, some show too clearly the heavy hand of white America. The most obvious of these truths is that precious few Negro athletes are qualified to attend college in the first place. The gulf between the lower schools

of the white and the lower schools of the Negro remains a Grand Canyon; many of the Negro athletes who arrive on college campuses never read a book from cover to cover, or had any reason to. They were busy facing or reacting to the problems that confront the poor and deprived. On campus they wallow in fear and confusion for a few weeks until jockstrap alumni and campus counselors show them the various easy routes available to athletes.

These shortcuts, of course, seldom lead to a degree, and that is the second fundamental fact about the Negro athletes in American colleges: they rarely graduate with their classes, and the majority of them do not graduate at all. They are wet-nursed in their courses long enough to remain eligible, and after all the corner-cutting and duplicity and outright cheating, they return to the Negro community as "leaders" and "college men," when in fact they have done little more than hire out as Hessians for four years, or long enough to bring a conference championship to dear old Siwash. Yet their fame is such in the black community that other black children are eager to follow the same futile course.

The black professional athlete accomplishes much the same thing, although at a greater economic return to himself. His example in the Negro community shows small boys the way. Sports becomes a bridge out of the ghetto. But for how many? The number is terribly small. At the most, sports has led a few thousand Negroes into a better life while substituting a meaningless dream for hundreds of thousands of other Negroes. It has helped to perpetuate an oppressive system. For every Willie Mays or Bob Hayes there are countless Negroes who obviously had abundant will and determination to succeed, but who dedicated their childhoods and their energies to baseball gloves and shoulder pads. If there were other ways out and up, they were blinded to them by the success of a few sports celebrities. These are the Negro doctors who never were, the Negro lawyers who are desperately needed, the Negro city planners who have never existed. This has been the major effect of sports on the Negro, and it overrides all others.

James Baldwin wrote: "Every Negro boy . . . realizes, at once, profoundly, because he wants to live, that he stands in





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to hear. If you turned the Globetrotters white overnight they wouldn't draw the manager the next night."

Willie Worsley talks this way and sees these things because he is representative of the new Negro athlete. If he is sometimes truculent and suspicious, he is always dignified and proud. He has the "Negro instant" attitude. Warren McVea defines Negro instant: "It means that in anything involving my people I don't think twice. It's 'Negro instant.'"

The first requirement of this new Negro athlete with his new attitude of Negro instant is a pride in things black, in black ways of acting and thinking—not the old fictionalized darky stereotypes with their laziness and duplicity and connivery, but the new verve and grace that the black man brings to sports.

"Take those great football teams of Michigan State," says Sam Skinner, Negro sports editor of San Francisco's *Sun-Reporter*. "Bubba Smith and his boys used to bring their records and play soul music. Now this is better than a pep talk. Listening to James Brown is better than listening to Duffy Daugherty."

Says Harry Edwards: "Black people are communal by culture. They prepare communally. They dance, they play games communally. That slap on the hand you see Lew Alcindor give Mike Warren, or vice versa, that means something to those brothers. It means something to the brothers in the stands. It means something to the brothers who are watching the TV sets."

Ronald Fair, the Negro novelist, believes that the black athlete, with his superior skills and proud new attitude, has become a dominant figure in the Negro struggle for equality. To Fair, black athletes "have a commanding position in all of Negro society." He made the hero of his novel *Hog Butcher* an 18-year-old athlete, because he recognized the preeminence of the black athlete's role. The hero is bold; he speaks out. "It's sad," Fair says, "but the Negro athlete used to be afraid to do this. He was afraid he'd lose his position. He's not afraid anymore."

The new Negro athlete no longer accepts the thesis that every victory for the black competitor represents a step forward for the great mass of blacks. "They are unwilling to equate personal success with racial success," says Sterling Stuckey, a 36-year-old Negro who

has taught history at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. "The young black intellectual knows that individual success—for himself or for athletes—means very little about the progress of the race."

Nowadays the Negro community will respect the black competitor, but the respect will not last if the athlete confines his activities to the field. "There is a growing demand that the athlete take part in the affairs of the Negro community, that he use his prestige, the position he's acquired, to make himself a force in the improvement of the position of all Negroes," says Bob Wheeler, assistant superintendent of Kansas City public schools. "Negroes are apt to show hostility to a Negro athlete who doesn't take full advantage of his opportunities."

"The black athlete has finally realized he's got to have some kind of life when he takes that uniform off," says Bernie Casey of the Los Angeles Rams. "For many years he said, 'I'll just play the game and get my money and be a good nigger.' But now he knows the house nigger is dead. I'm not speaking of physical death, but of spiritual death, which could be the worst of all."

Militants like Harry Edwards reserve their harshest criticism for blacks who refuse to speak out, who remain "house niggers." Edwards professes to prefer George Wallace. "At least we know where Wallace stands, and at least he's not afraid to say what he thinks," Edwards told an audience recently. His voice drips with sarcasm and derision when he talks about certain mild-mannered Negro athletes. "As long as you have black athletes making it to the top and then shutting up like Uncle Willie Mays, or like Jesse Owens or Joe Louis, well, then, athletics has done very little for the black community. It has helped black individuals to delude themselves, this is all. But when you have people speaking out like Jackie Robinson, Bill Russell and Oscar Robertson, you begin to feel the importance of sports to the black community. When you have people like Satch Sanders going out and getting a million-dollar grant from the Federal Government to revitalize housing in the black community of Boston—well, they didn't give it to him because he was some Joe off the street, but because he was Satch Sanders of the Celtics and because he had made himself a

public figure and had access to the white man's media and public-opinion forces."

The examples set by some and the exhortations of others are making it almost impossible for today's Negro athlete to remain simply an athlete, even though lots of them would prefer the middle-of-the-road position. The Negro star who refuses to take a firm stand on racial matters finds himself, at worst, ostracized by his race, consigned to Bernie Casey's "spiritual death," or, at best, left in a kind of limbo between white and black. Some, like Willie Mays, try to take refuge in a passive role. Willie gives money to Negro causes, but he is not the most likely candidate to be leading a black boycott on the San Francisco Giants. "I'm a ballplayer," Mays says. "I am not a politician or a writer or a historian. I can do best for my people by doing what I do best."

More and more, Willie Mays finds himself becoming what Mike Garrett of the Kansas City Chiefs calls "a marginal man," exciting the deep respect of neither race, and, indeed, the outright dislike of some. For a long time, Garrett, the Heisman Trophy winner from the University of Southern California, was falling into the same limbo. "I didn't fit into the slum that I came from, and I didn't fit into the white-oriented social world of USC with its emphasis on fraternity row," Garrett recalls. "I was a marginal man. And when I became a professional football player I felt the same way, only more so."

But like many other black athletes, Garrett is stepping out of his limbo and beginning to take firm stands on black and white matters. He has made a personal commitment to his race. "As a Negro celebrity," he says, "I know that I must go back and help less fortunate Negroes, even though in my heart I may not want to." Mike Garrett's "marginal" days are ending. He is responding to pressures on the Negro athlete. He is becoming the proud new black who is reworking the future of his race, rendering the "house nigger" all but obsolete, and turning the world of sports upside down in the process.

What is happening today amounts to a revolt by the black athlete against the framework and attitudes of American sport, and that such a thing could occur in his own pet province has astonished the white sports follower. The rea-



son for the astonishment is that the man in the grandstand knows nothing about the Negro athlete whom he professes to understand, appreciate and ennoble as a symbol of the enlightened attitude of the world of sport toward segregation and intolerance. A wall of ignorance and unfounded suppositions is shielding the fan from the realities of the black athlete's background and his hopes.

The cases of two of last season's most celebrated basketball players serve as examples. One is Don Smith, Iowa State All-America, ghetto-born and trouble bred, the pride of a Midwestern campus that would have been stunned if it had ever heard him quietly, deliberately, in the soft accent that four years at Iowa State have developed in him, tell the story of his youth. The other is Elvin Hayes of Houston, the famed "Big E," a rural Negro, yet the product of an astonishing family and a man intently searching out his own route through the black-white maze.

What does the white man cheering in the grandstand know of Don Smith or Elvin Hayes? Not a thing—and that is part of the shame. Now meet them.

**D**on Smith fidgeted nervously on the bench one night late last winter. Iowa State had just lost to Kansas State in the crucial game of the season, and ever since the final horn had blown in the big armory in Ames, Iowa, the students and fans had been sitting patiently in their seats. This had been the last home game for Smith, a 21-year-old light-skinned Negro from the slums of Brooklyn, and statisticians were busy working out the final summation of his brilliant college athletic career. It developed that he was the second best Big Eight rebounder of all time, behind Bill Bridges, and the third best Big Eight scorer behind Clyde Lovellette and Bob Boozer. He had been All-Conference each year, Sophomore of the Year in 1966 and Big Eight Player of the Year in 1968. He had made the Helms Foundation first-string All-American and half a dozen other All-Americans as well. Earlier in the season he had matched up against Lew Alcindor of UCLA, scoring 33 points and picking up 12 rebounds. Somebody asked Alcindor what he thought of Elvin Hayes of Houston.

"He's one of the best," said the taciturn Lew, "along with Don Smith of Iowa State."

Now Smith waited shyly in the armory while his jersey was officially retired, the student body presented him with a plaque, the mayor of Ames presented him with a handsome piece of luggage and Dr. W. Robert Parks, the university president, presented him with a color photograph of himself in action. Smith said only a few words in response. He said he was grateful for the gifts and for his years at Iowa State. Mostly, he said, he was sorry he had missed three free throws in the last six minutes.

"Just like him," said an instructor in the audience. "Everybody's telling him how great he is and he's apologizing for missing free throws."

"Yeah," said a man sitting alongside. "For a shine, that is one good boy."

Yeah, one good boy. . . .

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The first house we lived in in Brooklyn was a second-floor apartment at 454 Vanderbilt. It belonged to my grandmother. My mother and father were separated, and I slept alone in the living room and nine others slept in the two bedrooms. It was a typical ghetto house with roaches and rats and mice and everything else you can imagine. When I was little it was hard to get into the house because of what was going on downstairs. There was a restaurant downstairs that used to have a jukebox playing and dope addicts and drunks and everything possible were in the halls. People used to get shot and stabbed, and there were prostitutes all around, but this didn't bother me—they were just making a living. I remember the roaches better than the prostitutes.

When I was 11 we moved to a project at 135 Richards Street in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. I went with my mother and my sister and brother. This was a better apartment than the other one, but we only stayed a year because I got us kicked out. If you get an accumulation of fines they kick you out. You used to get fines for messing with the elevators or being on the grass or on the roof. We were kids and we played football on the grass and that was illegal. We were supposed to play at the park, but that was usually taken by the

older people. We used to go on the roof to look around, and we used to stop the elevators between floors and drink wine. One day I was gone to this rock 'n' roll show in Manhattan and when I came home that night and knocked on the door there was no answer. So I went outside and climbed up this lamppost and looked inside and saw that there was no furniture, so I took it for granted we had been kicked out. I went to my grandmother's house and, sure enough, everybody was there.

They started calling me "Duck" because my feet were so big. One of my friends was Cemetery and another was Knife, because he was so sharp, and another was Nutt. Cemetery is a Muslim now. I don't know where Knife is. Nutt died of an overdose about three years ago. Some of the guys are still on the corner, drinking wine and taking dope.

The first junior high school I went to was P.S. 9, but I got kicked out because I was implicated in a stealing incident. I didn't have any thoughts at all about stealing. It was like a game to me, played by just about everybody. I remember the first thing I stole was \$20 from my grandmother, and that was when I was 8.

As a kid I was always out. When I would go to Manhattan it usually was to steal. I used to take anything I could get my hands on: jewelry and toys. I used to keep them or sell them. I used to keep the baseballs I stole and play with them. If I couldn't steal anything else I'd steal candy bars—just to be stealing something. When I would get caught in a store I wouldn't go back. I would go steal somewhere else. They wouldn't press any charges; they would just tell me not to do it again. I used to stay out all night and sell newspapers. I stole the papers off the back of a truck and sold them for 5¢ or 6¢ each.

I hardly even knew there was a white community or a white society. When we watched TV it was another world and it never dawned on me that this was reality. Once when I was about 10 I was hitching a ride on the back of a bus and a white cop saw me and told me to get off and stop. I got off and ran and he ran after me. He hit me on the neck with his billy club and yelled, "Stop, you black nigger!" This was really the first time that I knew there were two worlds. Later, when I was around

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14, we were stealing in a bakery and a cop came up and told us to stop. We ran, and he shot up in the air and we stopped. I was arrested a lot of times. Once I was arrested for jimmying open a parking meter. They sent me to the Youth House for about two months. It was nice. They had three meals a day. They taught lessons, and you had your own room.

When I was 16 I used to hang out with this guy who burglarized houses. One day someone saw him up on the fire escape in a Jewish neighborhood. A friend and I were sitting waiting for him to come down, and the cops picked us all up. They asked us if we knew anything and we denied it. Then they took us down to the police station and beat us with their fists. *Huge* cops. When we would say we knew nothing they would hit us in the face with these big fists. So we told. I went to jail for two months after that. I didn't like it at all. Hardened criminals were there. The police used to say that I was so bad I was going to wind up in the electric chair.

I smoked pot in high school, but I think I did it just because everybody was doing it. I used to get a \$5 bag that would make 20 joints. I never did get into the heroin stage. A lot of my friends are now junkies out on the street. We used to fight a white gang called the Hill-toppers all the time. I used a car aerial or a Molotov cocktail. We had zip guns and .22s. Once in a while somebody would get killed. One day I dropped my guard and went out in the wrong territory and another gang, the Chaplains, caught me and stomped me.

The last time I stole was in my junior year of high school. Some friends and I mugged a white man looking for a black prostitute. We got \$320. I was an average kid on the block. The bad kids would mug people all the time. I just did it on weekends.

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This was the Don Smith that Iowa State took into its sheltering ivy halls and called its own. He did his best for Iowa State: All-America, Big Eight Player of the Year. But did the college do its best for him? He recalls feeling lost from the moment he arrived. He moved into a dormitory and had a white roommate with a farming background. "Every weekend he'd go home," Smith recalls, "and he'd

leave little notes behind like, 'Don't touch my razor!' It was always don't touch this or don't touch that. One day I saw something he had written and it said how hard it was for him to live with a nigger."

Smith found typical Negro athlete problems with the athletic department: "They don't care about the black athlete per se. They just want him to produce. Instead of trying to help us they want us to pass just enough to get by. They tried to put me into physical education, but I didn't want to be in it because I didn't enjoy it."

And, as always, the social life was limited. "I only had five or six dates my first year, and I felt like those girls just felt sorry for me. Me and my white teammates never did anything together. On campus all the white players would go to parties together, but I was never invited to go with them. They didn't care what I did. They just thought of me as a basketball player."

And so later that evening of his last home game, after hearing himself lauded and praised and appreciated—an evening that would have set up a white athlete for life—Smith was not particularly excited. His transition from promising rookie to nationally known star had not appreciably improved his off-court campus life. He reckoned, thinking back, that of all the white people he had met in that strange, flat land of Iowa, only two had been sincere. He still felt awkward around whites. He still did not trust them. He was proud of his education, and his exceptional basketball ability had earned him a contract with the Cincinnati Royals. But he would not recommend Iowa State as a place for a black athlete—at least a black athlete who wanted to be happy.

**E**lvin Hayes, as they like to say down in Houston, is something else. One night when the University of Houston basketball team was flying home from another successful appearance on the road, a newspaperman tried to get Hayes's attention. "Hey, boy!" the reporter called.

A silence came over the cabin of the plane. Players stopped what they were doing. Refreshments were poised in mid-air and conversations ceased. Elvin

Hayes, the team's big wheelhorse, turned to the reporter and said softly: "Boy's on *Tarzan*. Boy plays on *Tarzan*. I'm no boy. I'm 22 years old. I worked hard to become a man. I don't call you boy."

"I'm sorry," the newspaperman said. "I didn't mean anything by it."

"I hope not," Hayes said softly, and returned to his conversation.

Elvin Hayes does not take part in boycotts; he does not make loud demands on the white athletic establishment; he does not proselytize younger Negro athletes to take up arms against the inequities that visit the Negro in sports. He respects the militant Negro athletes, but he has chosen a different path.

Hayes is eight inches over 6 feet tall, 240 pounds in weight, dark coffee in color. He is broad and thick in the nose and lips, and his eyes are set so wide apart that one often has the feeling of talking only to half of him. He wears a small mustache, like most Negro athletes, and his hair is cropped close to his skull. He has a bright, flashing smile, but he does not throw it around indiscriminately. The smile of Elvin Hayes does not appear the instant a white man says hello. It must be earned. But mostly Elvin is polite and taciturn, the quietest person in any gathering, and there is about him a massive dignity that comes only partly from his height. In a room full of Negroes and whites, he stands apart, a figure of total independence. No one will ever see Elvin Hayes chicken-walking across a stage prattling about the imminent arrival of the magistrate.

For three years Elvin Hayes was the hero of Houston, admired and respected by black and white alike. He was always the last Cougar to be introduced over the P.A. system before each home game, and by the time the second or third man had been introduced, the chant of "E . . . E . . . E" had become so loud that the other players could only be identified by their numbers. When Elvin would finally detach his long body from the bench, throw down the polka-dot towel that was a team trademark and amble out on the floor in his size 16s, the needles on the VI meters in the radio booth would veer across the red line.

Then Elvin used up his last semester of eligibility and ignored the local ABA professional basketball team to sign for an estimated \$440,000 with the NBA's San Diego Rockets. The folks who used



to chant "E . . . E . . . E" now took a new view of him. Letters to the editors began mentioning how ungrateful Elvin had become. Fans would call radio programs and air their objections to the way their former hero had ignored the offers of the Houston Mavericks. Street-corner conversations were even more to the point. "I used to think he knew his place," a cab driver said, "but now he's acting like one of your smart-ass Northern jigs." A Houston reporter summed up the attitude of the townsfolk: "When Elvin was representing the University of Houston on the court, he was called 'a credit to his race.' But when he signed with the San Diego team he became another 'smart nigger.' Houston's attitude about him turned just like that." And once again that familiar cry was heard: "Sports has been good to him. He should be more grateful to the people who made him." One is reminded of a remark made long ago by the heavyweight champion of the rational world. "Who made me is *me*," said Cassius Clay with authority. Who made Elvin Hayes of Rayville, La. is Elvin Hayes.

Rayville is a town in northeast Louisiana about 60 miles up-country from Waterproof, four miles from Bee Bayou and just down the road from Alto and Holly Ridge. Its 5,000 residents, divided about 50-50 racially, work in small businesses, cotton gins, a clothing mill or two. The farms around Rayville are tilled by machines nowadays, and hundreds of field hands, Negroes almost to the last man, have gone away to places like Dallas and Los Angeles and Chicago seeking work. The Negro youth of Rayville has a tendency to rattle around in meaningless pursuits, now that cotton has ended as a way of life.

Racially, Rayville is relaxed as Southern towns go. The big midtown high school has been integrated for a couple of years, although hardly any Negroes elect to attend. The malt and sundae stand on the corner of Madeline and Louisa streets has a window for whites and a window for Negroes, but no one gets upset about it. "You have to expect that in a Southern town," says Elvin Hayes's sister, Bunnatine. "It doesn't bother us."

Now that Elvin Hayes is a famous All-America basketball player, everyone in Rayville professes to be his dear friend, his old acquaintance. "Ah've known El-

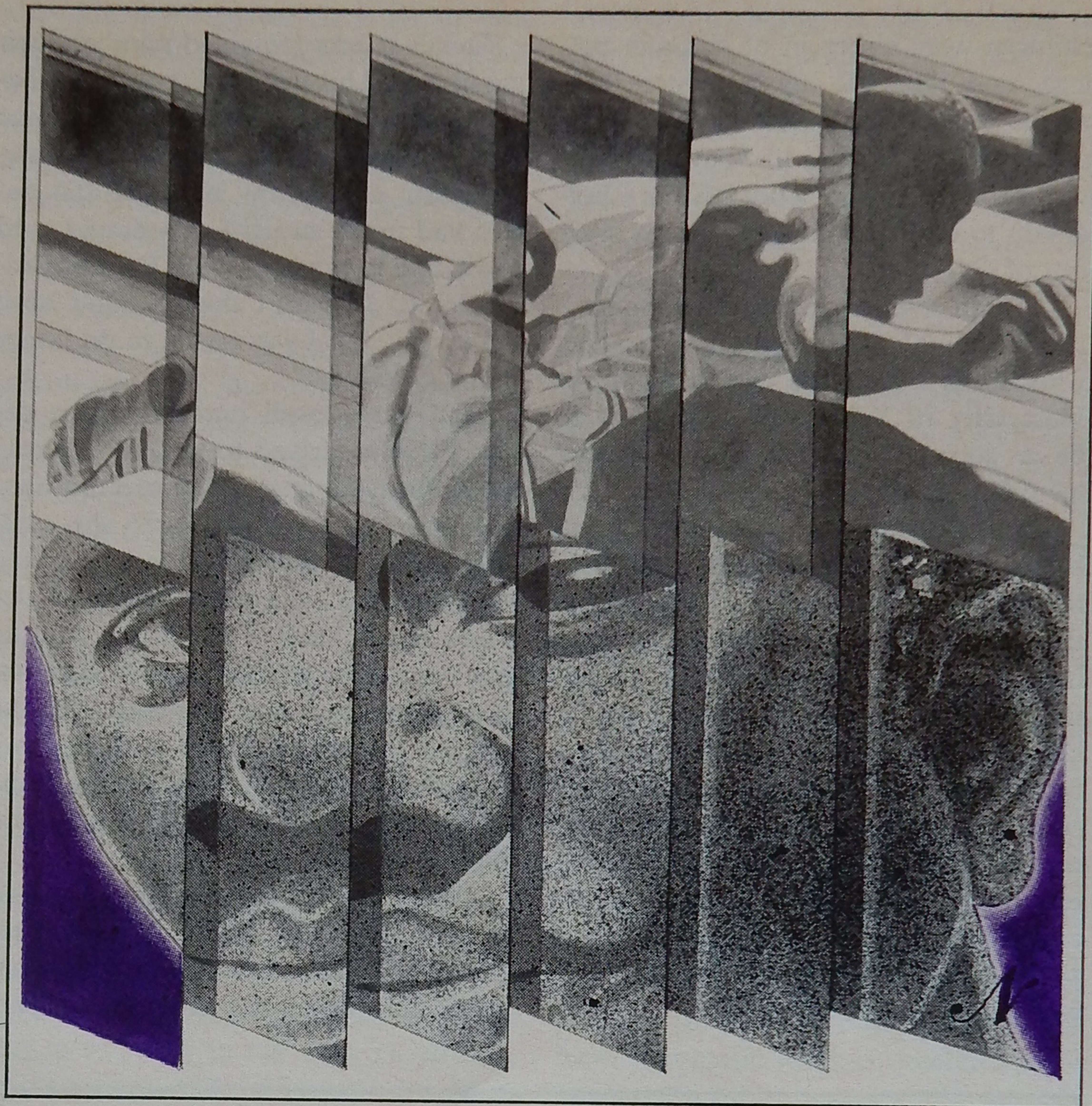
ving all his laff," says a white man at the Rayville Motel, on the west end of town. "Fan boy, fan family." Later someone passes the remark along to James Smith, principal of the all-black Eula D. Britton school where Elvin attended class. James Smith laughs a big laugh and says, "That white man doesn't know Elvin or anybody else on this side of town. This is a different world."

The "different world" is the east part of Rayville, literally the other side of the tracks, where black families live in homes ranging from shacks to a few fairly comfortable dwellings. The Hayes family is better off than most. You walk across a few wooden boards that span a gully and you're on the front steps of the rectangular frame house at 603 Texas Street. There are no sidewalks. The Hayes house is not fancy; the ceiling sags, and now and then a leak has to be patched, but there is space and order and warmth and a 59-year-old matriarch runs the show, and don't you forget it. Mrs. Savannah Hayes, mother of Elvin and five others, sits in a stiff-back chair in the parlor and explains how and why she and her late husband

sent their six children to college:

"I been in the fields. Raised on a farm. My daddy worked another man's land. I chopped cotton and I picked cotton. Before I was married, I always said, 'If I ever own a family I want them to have a better chance than I have.' Well, I married a man who felt the same way. Chris Hayes. A powerful man. He had a fourth-grade education, but he'd traveled all around the world as a fireman on a ship, and he'd learned a few things. We settled here, and he began firing the boilers at the Union [cotton] Compress, and when the children came along he'd tell 'em, 'I'll wear overalls for you if you'll go to school, but if *you* won't, I won't!' And what he wasn't telling them, I was. So we started sending our children off to college one by one, and my husband worked two jobs to pay for it. Sometimes three jobs. Even after my husband had a heart attack, you couldn't stop him. And when he lay on his death bed, he said to me, 'Don't feel like everything gonna be done when I'm gone. Keep them children in school. The Lawd's gonna make a way for you to do it.' Well, the Lawd did. Four of our

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children were either in or through college, and that left my daughter Bunnatine and Elvin. Bunnatine got a full academic scholarship to Southern University, and Elvin got a full athletic scholarship to Houston, and that made it six out of six."

"If you lived in my parents' house," recalls Elvin's oldest sister, Christine, who holds a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin, "you *had* to be a success. Otherwise, my mother wouldn't let you in."

Elvin was the baby of the family, and by the time he entered the Eula D. Britton school a few blocks from his home the Hayes pattern of academic excellence had been firmly established. For a while the tradition worked against the gangly boy. In school he was deeply troubled by the idea that too much was expected of him, that he would be judged by the records of his five older brothers and sisters and found wanting. "And my mother used to be on me all the time," Elvin says now. "She'd say, 'If you don't do well you're gonna be a failure!'"

Elvin's marks remained poor, though passing, and his personality problem became more severe. "My sister Bunnatine came just before me, and she was valedictorian, and all my brothers and sisters had made straight A averages, and I just said to myself, 'Well, I'm not gonna do it.' It wasn't that I didn't have the ability, but I was trying to do things in my own way."

Mrs. Hayes well remembers the device Elvin contrived to help him retreat from the troubling reality around him. "Oh, how I *do* remember!" she says. "He put up a bucket with a hole in the bottom, right on a beautiful water elm I had in the back of the house, and he threw a rubber ball into that bucket and stomped around that tree and dried the ground out till he killed it. Killed my beautiful water elm! Then he hung the bucket on the side of the house and kept right on."

"Well, a kid in my neighborhood had to play outside or not at all," Elvin recalls. "We didn't have the facilities that other kids have. No concrete to play

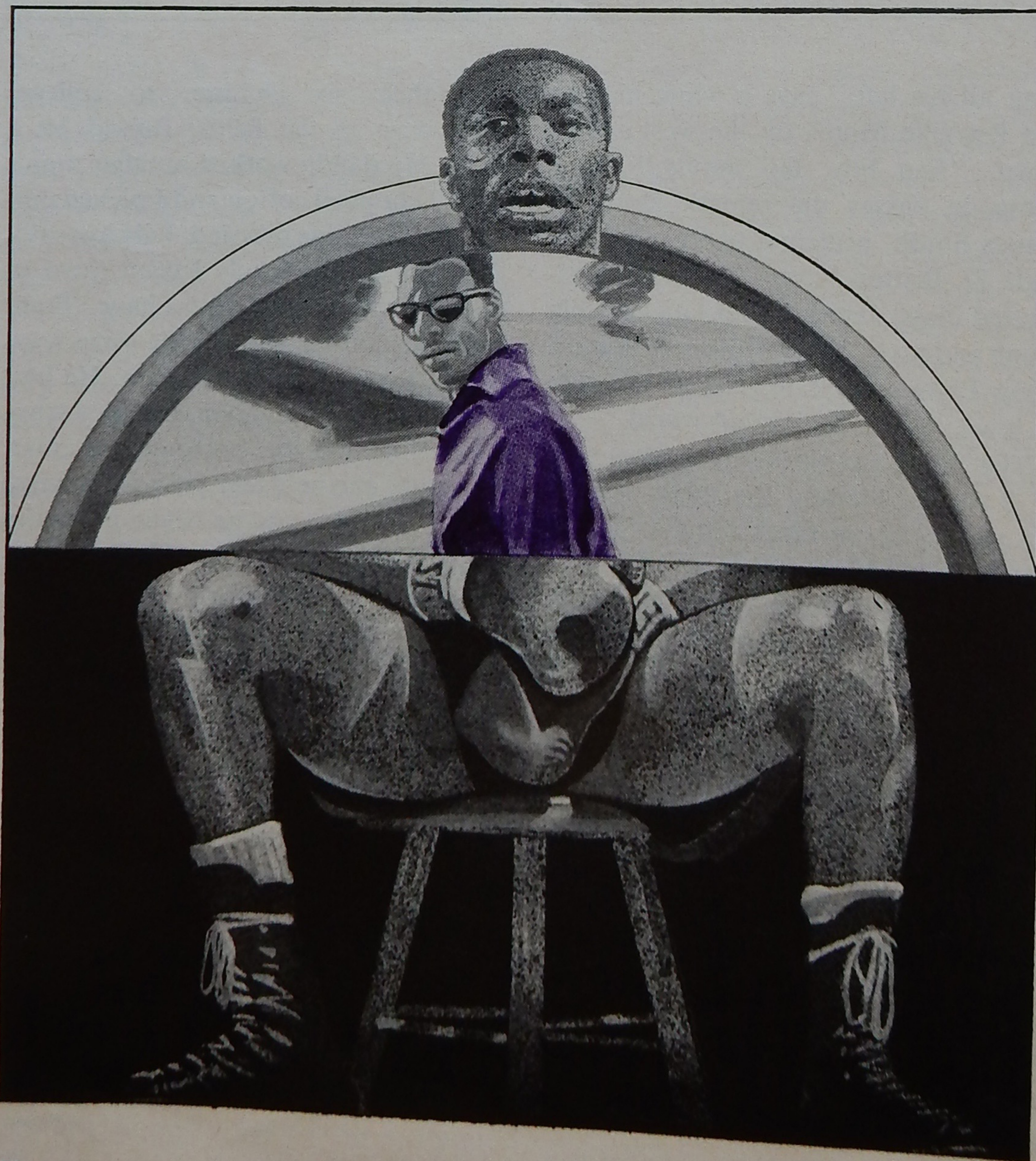
on. No baskets to shoot at. My basketball was one of those five-and-ten-cent-store rubber balls about the size of a softball. I lallygagged around with balls like that right through high school."

Elvin's idol and model was Bill Russell. All day long he would stand under the bucket, perfecting moves that were designed to confound and defeat the great Celtic center. "Once in a while I'd see him bouncing that ball," says Melvin Rogers, "and he'd spin to his left and shoot a basket, and he'd say to me, 'Bill Russell got me to the right, so I hooked to the left!' That's all he had on his mind: Bill Russell. If there was a President of the United States, Elvin didn't know it."

In the eighth grade Elvin was still playing the role of the child who wanted to be different from his brothers and sisters, and he had started running with a bad crowd. "I became tough, and they had to put me in a special section of my class. But while I was running with that crowd I learned a lot about kids that they called bad. Nobody understood those kids. Nobody took the time. A lot of them had no other way to be noticed. They were poor; they had no books in their house; they had bad backgrounds. The only way they could be noticed in the world and get any attention at all was to be bad, to do mischievous things."

Elvin had not been in with the "bad" crowd for long when he came under the influence of the Rev. Dr. John Calvin, a former dean of men at Grambling. "Dr. Calvin showed me that someone understood me, and he made me realize that someone was willing to give me a hand and help me. He told me it was fine for me to want to be a basketball player, but I couldn't if I didn't study. He told me that the two things went together. This was the eighth grade. This was the turning point. From then on I started bearing down. From then on it was nothing but study and practice, study and practice."

At first, Elvin was too gawky and clumsy to count for much in the free ebb and flow of a basketball game. One year he was cut from the freshman team, and he spent that whole summer shooting baskets. He shot 11 hours a day. Eleven. He is sure, because it is not the kind of thing you forget. "That boy worked," says Melvin Rogers. "He had





## The Black Athlete *continued*

have a bookshelf. White people can't seem to realize the environments these boys come from. It's easier to sit back and say they're inherently stupid, racially inferior, than it is to confront this problem and see it whole and do something about it."

Few Negroes are willing to discuss the cultural gulf; they prefer to pretend that it does not exist. The Negro has been called stupid for so many generations that he is supersensitive about allusions to matters like his reading speed, his spelling, his cultural background. KU's back, Don Shanklin, never read a book until he got to college. Harry Gunner of Oregon State had read one: *The Willie Mays Story*. Willie McDaniel, a KU tackle, cannot recall reading a real book, "But I did read some comic books. No, come to think of it I mostly just looked at the pictures."

The simple fact is that the black athlete who enters a white college must cram his belated education into four hectic years. He must make up for black secondary school systems that are underfinanced, understaffed and markedly inferior, and he must excel on the playing field all the while.

Shanklin talks about his "separate-but-equal" high school in Amarillo: "We had all the titles. We had a Spanish teacher, a trig and algebra and geometry teacher, a physics teacher, all the titles. But the trig teacher couldn't teach trig. She didn't have the background. There was a boy in my class used to get up and teach it sometimes; he was supposed to be helping the teacher, but he wound up doing more teaching than she did. In English it was the same way, except we didn't have no kid to help out. In my senior year of English we wrote one theme. It was the only writing I ever did before I came to college. My theme was on *What Christmas Means to Me*. Mostly I emphasized the toys and gifts and the holiday from school."

Mike Garrett has bad memories of his first days on the campus of the University of Southern California. "I was prepared only for football. I couldn't read and write as well as my classmates. How could I compete with students who had gone to high school in Beverly Hills, places like that?"

Melvin Rogers tells of how the Eula D. Britton school "couldn't offer a for-

foreign language until last year. Our students were cut way down on their choice of colleges, because most colleges won't accept a high school graduate with less than two years of a foreign language. So right away we're inadequate. We still don't teach trig or any of the higher math that kids need these days." The Northern ghetto schools are not much better. "The differences are almost negligible," says Educator Novotny. "About the only advantage the Northern Negro gets is more up-to-date textbooks."

The University of Missouri's conscientious football coach, Dan Devine, one of the few coaches with a real understanding of the Negro's problems, sums up a lot in a brief way when he says, "I get letters from Negroes in which the spelling and punctuation are so bad it would make you want to cry."

"No white can say what a Negro goes through till you been a Negro," says Willie Worsley, one of the captains of the Texas at El Paso basketball team. "You may talk to Negroes, go out with Negroes and hang around with Negroes, but you don't know until you be one, and you can't be one if you're white. It's two different worlds, man."

How different? Consider a fundamental aspect of life—food. In the white world, food is something that is ladled out three or more times a day, consumed and largely forgotten. In the Negro world, food is a fascination, a preoccupation, an obsession. "Our colored athletes will spend their last dime on food," says Bobby Dobbs, football coach at Texas at El Paso. "They are a people that can go and eat in the chow hall, but if they've got any money later that night they will be over at the Wiener schnitzel or the fried chicken place. I don't think the white race puts that premium on food. Some people say it's because Negro children go hungry a lot. But I just think it's inherent with their race. That's what they live for is to eat, I think."

One is always meeting members of the sporting establishment who feel that certain characteristics of the average Negro are "inherent with their race." Tags and nickel slogans are popular in the world of sports, and the Negro athlete spends his life in a tight mesh woven of the white man's prejudices, clichés and sweeping simplifications.

"They say we like to eat," says Melvin Rogers, "and I say I agree; brother, we love to eat. And you take any white American who was brought up poor in the depression years and you'll find somebody else who loves to eat, and that's how simple it is. The depression never ended for the Negro; hunger is something he lives with, and he's gonna shovel that food down any chance he gets. Two years after he becomes financially stable, he's still shoveling that food down, trying to fill that hole in his stomach. Ten years later he's not much different. Inherent in the race? Not any more inherent than poverty."

The technique of hustling extra food at lunchtime has become a fine art with Negro high school athletes, most of whom come from the same deprived homes as the other Negro students and yet require more than a normal amount of sustenance. Melvin Rogers instructs his athletes on how to get extra milk—find somebody who doesn't like it and stand behind him in the cafeteria line. Another coach tells his players to make friends with girls who have not developed a taste for beans. Willie Worsley cultivated the Jewish students at De Witt Clinton High School in the Bronx, because "Jewish fellows don't eat too much at school. They get so much to eat at home they're just bored by the cafeteria food."

But not every Negro athlete is so lucky, or so clever. Some achieve years of athletic success on diets that would not sustain Tiny Tim. Bill Myles can show you dozens of them. Myles is a Negro who played center for Drake University's football team and returned to the black world as football coach at all-Negro Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Mo. "Sometimes I go to coaching clinics and hear some white coach tell me all the problems he has with the fathers—they complain that their sons are being discriminated against or that some other man's son is getting bigger write-ups in the paper. How can I talk to those coaches about common problems? My problem isn't how to deal with an irritated father, but to go out and buy a box of Cream of Wheat and half a dozen eggs so that one of my players and his family can eat for another day."

Last year Myles began to realize that he had a potential professional athlete on his hands, a boy who could run the 60-



yard dash in 6.2 seconds and the 100 in 9.7 and who rushed for 960 yards and 13 touchdowns in his senior year and had half a dozen colleges eyeing him. One day Myles went to the boy's address and found that he was living in a friend's car and scrounging food on the streets. Myles got the boy a job at the school so he could afford an occasional warm meal. As soon as the boy began eating he began trying harder in the classroom. "He'd been spending too much of his time figuring out how to eat," Myles says. The boy's name is Robert Buford.

**R**obert Buford is a 19-year-old very black boy, slightly built (5' 10", 163 pounds), with a Floyd Patterson haircut, a quick smile that reveals an uneven line of white teeth and a large nose spread over the middle of his face. He says it is a long story how he wound up living in cars, but the story mostly is that he kept being sent from relative to relative in various cities, and finally he ran out of relatives.

"I stayed in different cars every night till the beginning of last football season, when it started to get cold," says Buford. "I only had the clothes I was wearing. The only time I could take a shower was when my body started to odor and when I went into a friend's house they would smell me—that would be embarrassing—and they would tell their son to have me take a bath at their house. Now that I have \$23 a week coming in, I live in a room.

"The people in my family are surprised that I have kept going to school. I been in trouble, yes, but not a whole lot. I have only been in jail once. When I was young I was arrested two or three times. The big time was when my brother went to Kansas and stole a car. I was driving it and got caught. They put me in jail for a day even when I told them I didn't know the car was stolen.

"I always wanted to be a hustler. Every time you would look up, the hustler would always have money. But that was before I started playing football. Now I want to be a pro football player.

"I used to starve a lot, but now when I'm gonna play in a game or run in a track meet I try to always get lunch. I have to bum money—ask people to give

me a nickel or a dime—and most of the time I don't eat. I never eat breakfast, and sometime I miss the lunch meal and the evening meal, too.

"This year the coach got me a job, helping out around the school, and then when I set a meet record at an indoor track meet the school nurse baked me a birthday cake with my name on top of it. I didn't know what a birthday cake was, and it wasn't my birthday anyway, so she told me to pretend it was. School's not really such a bad place. I wake up at 6 o'clock and get to work at 7. I clean out the gym and then I talk to the fellows. My first class is metals, and it starts at 8:15. After that I go to English class and I don't like it. I got three right out of 100 on my English test. Most of the time I don't read. I don't write much, either. After English I go to woodwork, and after that I go to lunch. Then after lunch I have choir and then woodwork again and then gym. I don't go to gym much. I skip sixth and seventh periods and play pool."

Talking to Buford (he does not like to be called Robert or Bob, just "Buford"), one begins to get a chilled feeling. All through his recital of misery and despair he sounds neither miserable nor desperate. And suddenly one realizes that Buford is merely describing life as it is. He knows no other. Moving from a grandmother's place to a cousin's place to an aunt's place to parked cars is *normal*; never eating breakfast is *normal*; barely knowing how to read is *normal*. There is not a hint of self-pity about Buford, nor does he compare himself to other, luckier boys. He knows no luckier boys. In Buford's lexicon a bad boy is one who goes to the penitentiary for a long term. A hungry boy is one who has not eaten in two or three days. These are everyday definitions in the Negro ghetto of Kansas City.

Buford will not graduate from Lincoln High School—he will receive a certificate of completion that says merely that he was a good citizen and endured his allotted time in the halls of learning. He is a special student and goes to special classes. According to Coach Myles, Buford's mentality is average: "He just can't read." But he has heard about college, and he is desperate to go, not only for social reasons but as a stepping stone to pro football.

"The only people who put the col-

lege idea into his head were the college coaches," says a Lincoln teacher with the air of a man who sniffs disaster. Buford is exhilarated by the idea; he thinks he will go to junior college to catch up and then accept the best scholarship offer. Already he is planning to get a job this summer, "So when I go to college I'll have some clothes to wear." He does not say, "if I go to college." He says, "I don't want nobody to look at me and say, 'That boy used to be a good high school football player. Look at him now, out in the streets with all the drunks.'"

Someone has filled Buford's head with sugarplum visions of college life. "It's going to be fun in college," he says, "because most of the white boys and girls seem real nice and they're always talking to you and asking you how you're doing. College is the place you make a lot of friends."

Robert Buford, deprived black athlete, has a big surprise coming.

Ten years ago Buford would have breezed his way right out of the Kansas City ghetto and into any one of several dozens of colleges that wooed him. Nowadays standards have been tightened, and it will not be so easy for him to attend any college at random. But attend he will, for Buford represents too great a temptation to certain American schools that are selling themselves to the public on the basis of their athletic reputations. Some institution will yield to the temptation, and Buford, with his wood-working credits and his slow reading speed and his near inability to write will wind up posing as Joe College, while the campus intellectuals cluck around him and brag about how democratic their school has become and point Buford out on Brotherhood Day and say, "See? There's the proof. Except for his color, he's just like you and me."

Buford represents an extreme, but by no means can he be considered atypical. Every year hundreds of Robert Bufords find themselves on campuses, drowning in problems: money, where to get it, how to handle it; schedules, how to meet them; temptations, how to avoid them; classes and homework and meetings and chalk talks, and practice, practice, practice. Do most of them learn how to solve the problems? No. The gulf is too wide. Most Negro athletes remain on the black side forever.

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Coaches go through triple agonies trying to shepherd their black athletes across the gulf and seldom succeed, and for their troubles they usually have only themselves to blame. Coaches are paid to win, not to solve social problems. If a Negro with straight D's in electric shop can run the 100 fast enough there is always a coach willing to recruit him. And when the trouble starts it is the fault of the Negro—inherent in the race—never the school.

In every college that recruits Negroes financial problems are commonplace. To the average Negro, perched way across there on the other side of the gulf, money is another country. He knows as much about handling cash as the average white student knows about handling coatimundis; they are equally rare in their cultures. "Here's a kid that came to this university without a dime," says a track coach about a black world-class athlete. "Now he has a 1966 car. His apartment is great. He spends \$30 or \$40 every chance he gets. He's got the very best of clothes. He's got two television sets. Big ones. Consoles! He

bought a \$550 RCA stereo. I slip the kid money whenever I can. I made him money on the indoor circuit. I'm not supposed to, but I did. He wants everything, but he hates to pay the price. So he's up to his ears in debt." In a word, the athlete knows nothing about money. He is handling it for the first time. He is like a looter standing in front of a broken pawnshop window. His needs are greater than his sense of responsibility. With the poor, it comes with the territory.

Harry Edwards says, "You talk about accepting responsibility. Well, I say to you, you take a new-born black child and you put him in a big, black box with a closed black top, and you open up that top when he's 21 and you say, 'Now, boy, you try to do my work!' Is it fair to expect him to measure up to a white child who you never put in a box?"

Because he has just popped out of that black box, the Negro athlete endures unbearable agonies of alienation and plain fright in the white classroom. Despite all the findings of biologists and anthropologists, most Negroes are con-

vinced that whites are inherently smarter, that the Negro somehow is deficient in brainpower. Negroes are just as prone as certain whites to mistake the cultural gulf for a biological gulf, and they down-rate themselves accordingly.

"The saddest cases of all are the ones that could pass their courses but just can't believe it," says John Novotny. "They are so bowled over by the white kids and the big words and the academic atmosphere that they give up."

The biggest part of the Negro college athlete's problem is the English language spoken one way in the white culture and another in the black. White students, even the least intelligent ones, develop something of a feel for correct usage, but the most intelligent Negro students arrive on campus talking another tongue; they cannot have a feel for the white man's English because they have seldom heard it spoken.

Morgan Wootten, who coaches basketball at DeMatha Catholic High School in Hyattsville, Md., the only high school that ever beat Lew Alcindor's team, remembers asking a white student 10 English questions from the college boards. The boy got all 10 right, but he could not offer the slightest explanation for any of his answers. They just "sounded" right, and since the boy had a white, Anglo-Saxon background and the college-board examinations have a white, Anglo-Saxon background, the boy scored 100%. When the same 10 questions were asked of Negro students they would seldom get more than five or six correct. The answers simply did not "sound right."

"Black English has a different vocabulary," says John Novotny. "The average Negro doesn't speak English at home. We should offer him English as a foreign language in college. The problem begins the second the professor gives an assignment. Many of our Negro athletes have never been required to follow instructions. So the first thing that happens is they fail to take down the correct instructions. They don't even hear or comprehend correctly. It's the white man's language, and they don't get it."

Although it is possible to get a college degree and still remain on the black side of the gulf, it is more common for the Negro athlete simply to fail to graduate. Colleges draw the line at giving their black athletes undeserved diplomas. So



long as the Negro athlete has any eligibility left, he somehow hangs on in school. But after the last game his friendly advisor will call him in and remind him that he lacks too many required courses to graduate. Of course, he can return next year—at his own expense.

The statistics are depressing. For example, at the University of Washington between 1957 and 1967 seven Negro football players graduated, 13 did not. At the University of Oregon in the last three years, six Negro athletes graduated, five did not. Of 46 Negro athletes at the University of Utah, only one finished school in the normal four-year span, and only 11 others eventually got a degree. Utah State has graduated nine of 40 Negro athletes, five of them as four-year students. (In every instance at both Utah schools the ones who returned for degrees were professional football players.) Wyoming officials report they graduate less than 20%. Since 1960 California at Berkeley has graduated seven of 12 football players. Minnesota graduated four of nine Negro athletes in 1966 and 1967 and Michigan State eight of 14 football players in a three-year span. So it goes.

The University of Kansas is one of the rare institutions that suddenly has begun to develop some pride in the academic records of its Negro athletes—intensive and sincere efforts are now being made to help some of them—but it was only yesterday that Wilt Chamberlain and Wayne Hightower and Gale Sayers and Walt Wesley were dancing their little dance at KU and then moving on, very little the wiser for the experience. None graduated. There were four senior Negroes on Loyola of Chicago's varsity basketball team this season; none graduated with his class.

Two years ago the all-black starters of Texas at El Paso defeated the all-white team of the University of Kentucky for the NCAA basketball championship, and the nationally televised game brought cries of joy to black militants and white liberals alike. If they had scratched a millimeter below the surface they would have realized that the victory was shallow. Of the five white players who started the game for Kentucky, five graduated. Of the five black players who started for UT at El Paso, none have graduated. Nor have the other two Negroes who were sitting on the Texas at El Paso bench. But they were

not attending college for that purpose. They were there as black hired hands to bring a national championship to the little-known school, and the matter of their education ranked a distant second. A couple of them are still hanging around El Paso playing in pickup basketball games and making a buck.

"They don't get an education because their primary purpose is to compete," Harry Edwards says of Negro college athletes. "Their primary responsibility is to the athletic department, and at the end of four years they wind up with no degree, no job, and no references."

Tex Winter of Kansas State is one of the few white coaches willing to approach the subject with any degree of candor, and Winter does not like what he sees. "In basketball, we're getting ourselves into a situation where outstanding Negroes with talent are being exploited. We go out and look for the exceptional Negro basketball player, and without regard to his background, education, intelligence, morals and character we bring him into a white college environment with one purpose in mind—to get what we can out of him as a basketball player. The question now has become: Can you build a winning team without that kind of recruiting?"

"If we're going to recruit deprived Negroes and exploit them in sports, then we've got to give them the special educational treatment they require," says John Novotny. "If we don't want to give them special attention, we'd better stop recruiting them."

Some few coaches are beginning to understand that the Negro athlete can no longer be drilled in the rudiments of the fast break and then nudged toward the classroom without any further assistance. "Every coach who recruits a young man has responsibilities to that player from the moment he steps on campus," says Jim Padgett, the enlightened new head basketball coach at the troubled University of California. "It's a huge step for the Negro athlete coming

from a small town or a slum to a university. Those problems are the responsibility of the coach who brings him there."

Atlanta Falcon Back Junior Coffey says about his playing days at the University of Washington: "That was the big lack, the big problem. Coach [Jim] Owens seemed to feel that just because you're a Negro he shouldn't give you that extra hand. But that's wrong. A Negro in college is facing a big challenge, and he sometimes gets confused and needs guidance that the whites don't need. The whites have businessmen, lawyers, doctors and other whites to turn to. We scarcely have anybody."

And what of the star Negro athlete who simply lacks the qualifications and the intellect for college level work, who cannot make it at the white university no matter how many John Novotnys are willing to work with him and Jim Padgetts willing to counsel him? Does he quietly seek other honorable lines of work? No, he doesn't, and won't. There is always a place for a Negro athlete who can bring a college fame. As a Big Ten basketball coach says: "Things are now getting to the point where all a coach has to do is go out and pick up four or five good Negro players and let things take their natural course. In order to succeed—which means to win—coaches are being forced to resort to what I would bluntly call nothing else but the slave trade."

Because there is this brisk brokerage in hot-shot black athletes, and because college athletic directors are the original guys who can't say no, all manner of black athletes arrive on America's campuses. One or two may be superbly qualified, a few are eminently deserving, some are able, some are latent talents that bloom, some struggle through—and many are embittered failures. But there is one thing every last one of them discovers: life for a Negro athlete on an American college campus isn't what they thought it was going to be. No, sir.

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## Next Week

*The black athlete on campus: urged by recruiters to join a society that ill suits him, he is excluded from the school community and demeaned by men who do not understand his special problems. He is wholly in the hands of one figure—his coach—who tells him not only how to play, but what to study, how to live and—above all—whom he must never date.*