

Chalk, Ocania. *Pioneers of Black Sport: The Early Days of the Black Professional Athlete in Baseball, Basketball, Boxing, and Football*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975. Pp. xiii, 305. Index, appendix, notes, illustrations. \$7.95.

Ocania Chalk has been a reporter for the *Washington Evening News* and now works for U.S. Labor publications in the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Washington, D.C. Deep interests in sports and in his black heritage fueled Chalk's energies during the five years spent collecting data for *Pioneers of Black Sport*. The contributions of black people have been omitted from much of recorded American history. Newspaper reporters describing Jackie Robinson's major league debut inaccurately called him the first black major leaguer and in other ways revealed the paucity of information about black athletes who starred during professional baseball's early days. Chalk and other authors during the past decade have combed the archives and dusted off the names of forgotten black pioneers in sports. (Perhaps the best of these efforts is A. S. "Do" Young's *Negro Firsts in Sports*, Johnson Pub. Co., 1968.) Chalk's efforts are limited to professional athletes in four sports.

As a chronicle of the accomplishments of forgotten athletes, Chalk's book is a success. He relies heavily upon newspapers in reciting a litany of names, dates, biographies, and statistical achievements of the men who were the precursors of Jackie Robinson, Bill Russell, Joe Louis, and Jim Brown.

As a sports' story, Chalk's book has many shortcomings. Despite the wealth of characters, events, and a gripping topic, a gripping story fails to emerge. It often reads like a dictionary. Most of the 140 photographs are of poor quality, and their layout lacks the polished professional touch.

To be fair, Chalk throws considerable light upon the cast of characters who played upon the "stages" of professional baseball, basketball, boxing, and football in the early days. The book was intended as a tribute to these men in the hope that they will not be forgotten, and as a reminder to black Americans that their heritage is much richer than most sports books would lead them to believe. It succeeds in that intent.

Tri-State University

John Behee