

THROUGH THE YEARS

By FAY YOUNG

JACKIE ROBINSON was purchased outright by Branch Rickey Sr., president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, on Thursday, April 10, in the middle of the ball game between the Montreal Royals and the Brooklyn Dodgers. It was a straight cash deal with other players going to the International League club.

The decision received the approval of all the coaches as well as Leo Ernest Durocher (born in West Springfield, Mass.), then manager of the Brooklyn team. Rickey, often referred to as "The Brains," held a secret conference with his coaches at his Forest Hills home on Wednesday night. He found them in one frame of mind — to bring Robinson into the Dodger fold.

Rickey couldn't make up his

mind. Then in the middle of Thursday's ball game, he made a decision which will go down in history. We recall our interview with him last June in his Brooklyn office. He said then that Robinson would be given every chance to make good. Rickey kept his word.

Robinson, who played in the Negro American League in 1945, batted .349, led the International League in batting in 1946. He was named the best defensive second baseman in the league. Then on the suggestion of Durocher, Manager Clay Hopper, who hails from Mississippi, switched Robinson from second to first base against the Dodgers in the spring training. Jackie's record for the 13 exhibition games against the Dodgers in Panama and Havana was .340.

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IT IS HOPED THAT THE Negro fans, who want to see Robinson remain in big time baseball, will learn to treat him as another top-notch ball player. He should not be made to carry the added burden of "the race problem" on his shoulders. He will have a hard enough job playing the brand of baseball expected of any other big leaguer.

Two things are important. The first is the conduct of the Negro fans. Drinking is out in all National League parks. Profane language, if you have to use it, reserve it for your home where your wife can "brain" you.

Robinson will not be on trial as much as the Negro fan. The Negro fan has been the "hot potato" dodged by managers who would have taken a chance by signing a Negro player. The unruly Negro has and can set us back 25 years.

Jackie will be here on May 18. We hope that Sgt. Harness and "Two-gun Pete" and some other brave Negro policemen will be assigned to the Cubs park. Harness and "Two-gun" know the hoodlums. This situation shouldn't be but it is.

The second thing is that Robinson is against being singled out before a game to be called to home plate and be presented with numerous gifts. There will be eight other Dodger players in the game. Jackie insists on being treated as a ball player trying to make good and not as a Negro ball player seeking special privileges.

The Negro fan can help Robinson. The Negro fan can ruin him. Robinson is an American citizen, an ex-army officer, a ball player and a gentleman. Let us try and meet his qualifications as a gentleman. If you Chicagoans have got to raise a lot of hell, do a lot of cussing, go somewhere else.