Dudley A. Nichols: Floods, American Radio Relay League, Hollywood and Hall of Fame Athletes

It was Wednesday, March 26, 1913 when torrential rains caused widespread flooding throughout the Midwest. At the University of Michigan wireless station was chief radio operator Benjamin N. Burglund. Hearing distress messages, in Morse code, from high school-aged students Herbert V. Akerberg and Dudley A. Nichols; both in the State of Ohio, Burglund immediately sends a call to all wireless operators asking for their assistance. This marked the beginning of relaying disaster messages using wireless telegraphy.

The year following the flooding, 1914, Hiram Percy Maxim and Clarence Tuska created the American Radio Relay League; the national association for amateur radio operators. The purpose of this newly formed organization was solely to relay messages, of importance, using amateur radio operators. Akerberg would later become Vice-President of Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) while Nichols would obtain his degree from the university and pursue a career as a Hollywood screenwriter.



Event Timeline of the American Radio Relay League. 1913; Midwest storms isolate large areas. Courtesy of ARRL

As a student at the University of Michigan, 1914-1918, not much is known of Dudley Nichols. His radio callsign, 8IM, is seen within the radio logbooks and The Michigan Technic notes that Nichols was a member of Theta Xi fraternity and was in-charge of the wireless telegraph laboratory and later the radio station at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station.



In Hollywood, Nichols received an Academy Award for "The Informer" and wrote or co-wrote the screenplays for Bringing Up Baby, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Scarlet Street, The Bells of St. Mary's, The Tin Star, The Battle of Midway and Pinky. Pinky, written by Nichols and produced by Darryl Zanuck, was an American Race Drama that included a former UCLA athlete, Kenny Washington.

Pinky Movie Trailer: https://m.imdb.com/name/nm0913486/?ref_=vp_back

Kenny "Kingfish" Washington attended UCLA where he was a standout in both baseball and football (his jersey was the first to be retired at UCLA; #13). At UCLA, Washington

was considered to be better than his UCLA teammate, Baseball Hall of Fame, Jackie Robinson. As one of the top collegiate players, Washington was named a second team All-American, however, when collegiate players were asked to select an All-American team, Washington was the only player to receive the votes of every player in the league. Later, playing 3-years with the Los Angeles Rams, Washington would average over 7-yards a carry and still holds the longest run from scrimmage of 92 yards.



L-R: Jackie Robinson, his Mother and Kenny Washington

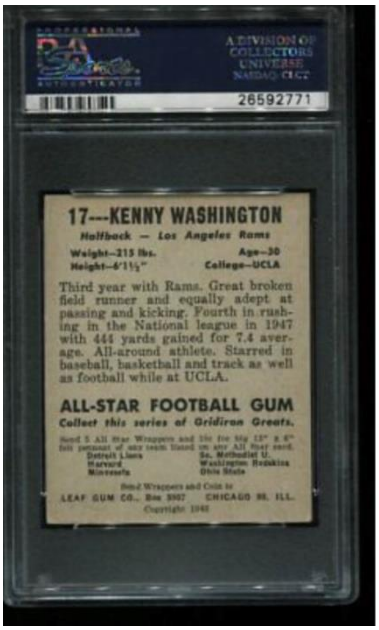


Kenny Washington #13 UCLA

While there was no rule prohibiting African-Americans in the National Football League, team owners purposely choose not to sign any to contracts. George Halas, then owner of the Chicago Bears, attempted to sign Washington but was unable to persuade the other NFL teams to allow this. Later, when Dan Reeves moved the Cleveland Rams to Los Angeles, a city anti-discrimination policy threatened to prevent the Rams from playing in the Los Angeles Coliseum. As a result, Washington, and his UCLA teammate Woody Strode, were signed to contracts on March 21, 1946. This marked the re-integration of African-Americans into the NFL.

Kenny's father, Edgar "Blue" Washington, played in baseball's Negro League and also worked as an actor appearing in "Gone with the Wind" and in "The Haunted Gold" with John Wayne. Having connections in the movie industry, Kenny also had roles in the 1949 movie "Pinky", and later in "The Jackie Robinson Story" (1950).





It was Jackie Robinson and Kenny Washington who the broke color barrier in their respective sports, however, only Robinson has been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. While the Pro Football Hall of Fame, in Canton, Ohio, does have an exhibit recognizing Washington as the first African-American to break the football color barrier, Washington has yet to be formally inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Kenny Washington Link: https://youtu.be/7GstE32yLhU

Similarly, in National Hockey League, it was Willie O'Ree (photo) who broke the color barrier while playing for the Boston Bruins during 1958. While only playing in 45 games, O'Ree was inducted into the NHL Hockey Hall of Fame in 2018 as a "Builder" of the sport. Additionally, the NHL has recently announced that O'Ree's Number 22 jersey will be raised to rafters of the TD Gardens, home to the Boston Bruins, during the 2022 season.



Willie O'Ree Hockey of Fame Induction Link: https://youtu.be/STpRn0MCOs8



In the National Basketball Association, Earl Lloyd (photo) broke the color barrier in 1950 while playing for the Washington Capitols. Lloyd would break another color barrier by becoming the first African-American to coach in the NBA as an assistant coach for the Detroit Pistons, later becoming their head coach. Lloyd would be inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2003.

In addition to Lloyd, Chuck Cooper, the first African-American player drafted into the NBA along with Nathaniel "Sweetwater" Clifton, the second African-American to be drafted into the NBA, are also enshrined into Basketballs Hall of Fame.

In professional golf, the first African-American professional golfer to play on the PGA Tour was Charles Sifford. Considered the "Jackie Robinson" of golf, Sifford was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2004. Later, in 2014, Sifford was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama.

As for Jackie Robinson, Robinson was inducted into the Baseball's Hall of Fame in 1962. The individual who signed Robinson to his first contract, breaking baseballs color barrier, was Branch Rickey. Rickey, while at the University of Michigan, was enrolled in the UM Law School while also serving as the Wolverines baseball coach. Rickey would be inducted into Baseballs Hall of Fame in 1962.

Inductee's into the Pro Football Hall of Fame occur on the eve of the Super Bowl. On this 75th Anniversary, it is now time to formally recognize Kenny Washington as a "Contributor" to the sport of professional football with his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Please encourage your local sportswriter (selection committee list provided below) to nominate Kenny Washington.

Selection Committee Link: https://www.profootballhof.com/heroes-of-the-game/becoming-a-hall-of-famer/

John Palmisano, KB8OIS
The University of Michigan Amateur Radio Club & the W8UM / W8AXZ History Project. 2021

Pro Football Selection Committee Names & Teams

Arizona	Kent Somers, Arizona Republic	Los Angeles (Rams)	Howard Balzer, Sports Illustrated
Atlanta	Darryl Ledbetter, Atlanta Journal	Miami	Armando Salguero, Miami Herald
Baltimore	Scott Garceau, 105.7 The Fan/WMAR-TV	Minnesota	Mark Craig, The Minneapolis Star-Tribune
Buffalo	Vic Carucci, Buffalo News	New England	Ron Borges, Talk of Fame Network
Carolina	Darin Gantt, Carolina Panthers	New Orleans	Jeff Duncan, The Athletic
Chicago	Dan Pompei, The Athletic	New York (Giants)	Bob Glauber, Newsday
Cincinnati	Geoff Hobson, Bengals.com	New York (Jets)	Gary Myers, Author
Cleveland	Tony Grossi, ESPN Cleveland/WKNR Radio	Philadelphia	Paul Domowitch, Philadelphia Daily News
Dallas	Rick Gosselin, Talk of Fame Network	Pittsburgh	Ed Bouchette, The Athletic
Denver	Jeff Legwold, ESPN/ESPN.com	San Francisco	Matt Maiocco, NBC Sports Bay Area
Detroit	Dave Birkett, Detroit Free Press	Seattle	Mike Sando, The Athletic
Green Bay	Pete Dougherty, Green Bay Press-Gazette	Tampa Bay	Ira Kaufman, JoeBucsFan.com
Houston	John McClain, Houston Chronicle	Tennessee	Paul Kuharsky, 104.5 The Zone
Indianapolis	Mike Chappell, Fox 59/CBS 4	Washington	Jarrett Bell, USA Today
Jacksonville	Sam Kouvaris, Florida Times-Union	PFWA	Mary Kay Cabot, Cleveland Plain Dealer
Kansas City	Terez Paylor, Yahoo	At-Large	Tony Dungy, NBC Sports
Las Vegas	Frank Cooney, The Sports Xchange	At-Large	John Clayton, ESPN Seattle#
Los Angeles (Chargers)	Eric Williams, Sports Illustrated	At-Large	Jason Cole, FanSided.com

At-Large	John Czarnecki, FOX Sports	At-Large	Bill Polian, SiriusXM
At-Large	Dan Fouts	At-Large	Sal Paolantonio, ESPN#
At-Large	Clark Judgeee	At-Large	Lisa Salters, ESPN *Monday Night Football*
At-Large	Peter King, NBC Sports#	At-Large	Jim Trotter, NFL Network#
At-Large	James Lofton, CBS Sports	At-Large	Charean Williams, Pro Football Talk
At-Large	Alex Marvez, SiriusXM	At-Large	Barry Wilner, Associated Press

References:

1. American Radio Relay League; Video excerpt
2. Bentley Historical Library. The University of Michigan
3. The Great Easter Day Flood of 1913. Trudy E. Bell
4. Pro Football Hall of Fame. Canton, Ohio