



Black Spartans (1907-1948)

Curators

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Artist

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Exhibit Curators Statement

"Black Spartans (1907-1948)" represents ongoing research in SJSU Special Collections & Archives identifying documentation of Black experiences throughout SJSU history. This exhibit is the first of several installments.

Much of the information we have comes from the Spartan Daily student newspaper and the La Torre yearbooks. With too few exceptions, Black Spartans' stories are not told in their own words but from the perspectives of their majority white classmates. This is reflected in the language and focus of the articles. We invite you to read critically.

The Black Spartans featured in this exhibit pursued their educational goals while contending with institutionalized racism and other major crises of the 20th century: two World Wars, the influenza pandemic of 1918, and polio. Locally, "the deed to virtually every home in San Jose" included restrictions against Black and Asian residents known as "restrictive covenants" (Spartan Daily, February 16, 1948, page 2). On campus, blackface and minstrel shows were a regular part of student events.

"Black Spartans (1907-1948)" is an invitation to the community to join us in surfacing these stories, ensuring these histories are preserved and presented in a way that honors these students' lives. Contact us at special.collections@sjsu.edu to participate.

Carli V. Lowe - University Archivist
Kate Steffens - Special Collections Librarian

Artist Statement

The "Black Spartans (1907-1948)" exhibition is a homage to Black culture and history at San José State University and the Bay Area at large. Until recently, the significance of Black bodies in Bay Area history (as well as U.S. history) was overlooked. Unless it was associated with the struggles of civil rights leaders, athletes, or celebrity-personas, the story of a graduate from a state school wasn't valued because we weren't part of the mainstream culture. As a Black Spartan myself, I was deeply connected to these individuals that started out just like me. I saw a reflection of myself and my community throughout the process of making these mixed media portraits and came to realize how important it is to know your history because it becomes a catalyst for knowing who you are.

My work explores the intricacy of identity and the role culture, tradition, and history play. These portraits are embodiments of our Black Spartans, they are visual representations of the colorful and captivating lives they led. Through this work, I hope to influence other artists and individuals to take part in researching and finding out the infinite layers of what it means to be Black. Our history is beyond our struggle. We are the blueprint.

Yeab Kebede
'22 Digital Media Arts



Mark Courts attended San Jose State College from 1942-1943. He was involved in both football and boxing during his time on campus. He lived at the YMCA and worked at a local cannery, as many students did during the summer.

Mark Courts competes in a novice boxing tournament on a YMCA team led by fellow Black Spartan Woody Gibson, winning one bout and losing another.

Thirteen Bouts Set For Tonight's Novice Boxing Tournament Opener To Be Held In Men's Gymnasium

By JOHNNY HUBBARD

Twenty-six boxers will climb through the ropes into the ring at the Men's gym tonight to give an expected capacity crowd thirteen thrill-packed bouts.

It's the opening of the ninth annual Novice Boxing tournament, a three-night event this year—the preliminaries tonight and tomorrow to be held in the gym, and the finals on Friday in the Civic Auditorium.

A total of forty-five leather pushers, representing seven teams, will see action in the tourney—with the winners having a good chance to land a berth on the varsity squad, which has plenty of positions open this season.

Of the seven teams, four have already been presented and reviewed by the Daily — leaving three still to be covered.

"PEARL HARBOR AVENGERS"

The first of these three is that outfit known as "The Pearl Harbor Avengers" under the sponsorship and management of Roy Diederichsen and Stan Smith.

One of the few aggregations with a full roster, the "Avengers" boast battlers in every weight division from bantamweight to heavyweight.

Fighting for Diederichsen and Smith are the following boys:

- 120 lbs.—Hugo Visconti.
- 127 lbs.—Bill Briones.
- 135 lbs.—Jack Breslin.
- 145 lbs.—Tony Lovaglia.
- 155 lbs.—Bill Meyers.
- 165 lbs.—Pete Mayer.
- 175 lbs.—Sal Lombardi.

Heavyweight—Jack Porter.

"SOCCER TEAM SLUGGERS"

Another team under the guidance of the same two trainers, Diederichsen and Smith, is a two-man entry under the title of the "Soccer Team Sluggers".

Gus Pinoris at 155, and Ad Fishel at 165 are the only mittmen on this squad.

Woody Gibson holds the managerial reins over the last team to be considered—the YMCA outfit.

Four sluggers make up Gibson's entry. They are:

- 135 lbs.—Ray Abbott.
- 155 lbs.—Mark Courts.
- 165 lbs.—Willie Steele.
- 175 lbs.—Thelno Knowles.

These three teams, together with those already discussed — namely the "Mystery Men", the P. E. Majors, the all-fraternity team, and the Varsity House "Canvasbacks"—comprise the seven sponsoring organizations that are vieing for team honors in the tourney.

— PRELIMINARIES FOR TONIGHT —

Following is a complete list of the bouts set for tonight's novice preliminaries:

- 120 lb.—Davidson vs. Visconti.
- 127 lb.—Johnson vs. Britton.
- 135 lb.—Chiniei vs. Dailey, Hill vs. Breslin.
- 145 lb.—Foote vs. Young, Lovaglia vs. Baxter, Cazzaza vs. Hill.
- 155 lb.—Thomas vs. McConnell, Mason vs. Phillips.
- 165 lb.—Steele vs. MacDowell.
- 175 lb.—Thomas vs. Anoshian, Schreiner vs. Lombardi.

Heavyweight—Conforti vs. Crisler.

LIST OF ENTRIES

Forty-five fighters are entered in the tourney. They are, by weights:

- 120 lb.—Bob Montilla, Hugo Visconti, Bob Davidson.
- 127 lb.—Bill Briones, Jim Johnson, Marty Britton, George Carroll.
- 135 lbs.—Jimmy Chiniei, Jim Dailey, Frank Gaggia, Ray Abbott.

Jack Breslin, Bob Hill.

145 lb.—Orlyn Gire, Tony Lovaglia, Chet Young, George Foote, Carl Baxter, John Hill, Charlie Cazzaza.

155 lb.—Frank Thomas, Bill Meyers, Mark Courts, Brian Bradford, Bob Mason, Ad Fishel, Gordon Phillips, Wayne Fontes, Gus Pinoris, Porter McConnell.

165 lb.—Pete Mayer, Don MacDowell, Willie Steele, Knight Pitsker, Bill Watson.

175 lb.—George Thomas, Sal Lombardi, Press Kendall, Walt Schreiner, Thelno Knowles.

Heavyweight—Bob Case, Danny Conforti, Bob Creighton, Hal Crisler, Jack Porter.

Fast Fights Feature Novice Boxing Preliminaries

By JOHNNY HUBBARD

Three technical knockouts were pulled up by novice boxers in the second session of the annual tourney in the Men's gym last night—Bob Hill over Frank Gaggia, Mark Courts over Ad Fishel, and Thelno Knowles over Walt Schreiner—and these battles were outstanding among the total of thirteen tussles which took place.

The first TKO came in the third fight of the evening in the 135 lb. class, and was accomplished by Hill against his opponent in very short time — the crusher coming just about fifty seconds after the opening of the first round.

Jim Chiniei in the same weight division earned the right to meet Bill in the finals by scoring a convincing decision over Ray Abbott.

A LA ARMSTRONG

Reminiscent of "Perpetual Motion" Henry Armstrong was 155 lb. Mark Courts as he hammered Ad Fishel into submission in the first canto. He dropped his man twice in quick succession, and then referee Frank Bramhall stopped it.

Three other winners came through in the 155 lb. section, the semi-finals of which will take place tonight along with the finals. Victors were: Wayne Fontes dec. Frank Thomas; Gus Pinoris dec. Bill Meyers, and Bryan Bradford dec. Bob Mason.

175 lb. BATTLE

Probably the most exciting battle on the entire card was the Knowles-Schreiner 175 lb. clash, with Knowles a TKO winner. The lanky track star started throwing

leather from the bell, and although Schreiner tried to stay with him, Knowles was just too fast and often for him. He held the lead all the way through, had Walt in trouble in the first and second, and then finished it midway in the final stanza.

George Thomas, another light-heavy, won his semi-final against Pres Kendall on a decision, and so will meet Knowles in the finals tonight.

165 lb. CLASS

A thrilling final looms in the 165 lb. class between Willie Steele and Bill Watson—both of them looking very classy in toppling their adversaries last night. Steele had little trouble with his much shorter opponent, Pete Mayer, and Watson outslugged his much larger enemy, Knight Pitsker.

HEAVIES

Heavyweights, too, provided plenty of excitement for the large crowd on hand. Jack Porter, at about 185, gave Bob Creighton, almost 20 pounds heavier, a bad time for a while, but Creighton's weight and condition enabled him to come out on top. In the other "man mountain" tussle Bob Case eked out a surprise decision over his favored opponent, Dan Conforti.

Tony Lovaglia and Orlyn Gire were victorious over Chet Young and Charlie Casazza respectively at 145—and they will meet each other tonight.

George Carroll came on fast in the last round to squeeze out a close decision over Bill Briones at 127 lbs.

TEAM STANDINGS

As far as team scores go, the standings read something like this:

The "Mystery Men" hold a one-point lead over the APO-Gamma Phi fraternity team, 12-11. "MacArthur's Maulers" are in third position with nine digits. The Y. M. C. A. outfit is fourth with eight, the V-House "Canvasbacks" fifth with seven—and trailing are the "Pearl Harbor Avengers" with four, with the GPS "Aggies," the P. E. Majors, and the Soccer Team entry having one point each.

Points are figured on the following basis: Five points are given to winners of final matches, three to winners of semi-finals, and one to winners of the preliminary fights.

Tonight's Bouts

SEMI-FINALS

155 lbs.—Wayne Fontes vs. Gus Pinoris

Mark Courts vs. Bryan Bradford.

FINALS

120 lbs.—Bob Davidson vs. Bob Montilla.

127 lbs.—George Carroll vs. Jim Johnson.

135 lbs.—Jim Chiniei vs. Bob Hill.

145 lbs.—Tony Lovaglia vs. Orlyn Gire.

155 lbs.—Between winners of semi-final bouts.

165 lbs.—Willie Steele vs. Bill Watson.

175 lbs.—George Thomas vs. Thelno Knowles.

Heavyweight—Bob Case vs. Bob Creighton.

GAMMA PHI - APO OUTFIT WINS TEAM HONORS IN FRIDAY NIGHT'S NOVICE BOXING TOURNEY FINALS

Byran Bradford, blond 155 pound battler, had the unusual experience of being chosen the outstanding boxer of the Novice Tournament in the tourney finals at the Civic auditorium last Friday night—and then losing out in his fight for first-place honors of his weight division to aggressive Wayne Fontes.

Bradford, who had showed up well in his semi-final fight with Mark Courts earlier in the evening—taking a two-round TKO victory over the colored lad—was awarded the Charles Stone trophy just before climbing into the ring to fight the

155 finals with Fontes.

But Fontes evidently wasn't impressed with the honor bestowed upon his opponent, because he took early command of the fistle situation and piled up enough points to win a convincing decision.

The first round was even, but from then on it was evident that Bradford was up against a better man.

BRADFORD DESERVING

Despite this loss, however, it must be said that the blond middleweight looked like a real champ in his tussle with Courts. The colored boy had established a reputation as a heavy-artillery puncher in his Thursday night TKO triumph over Ad Fishel, and he was generally expected to give Bradford plenty of trouble.

For about one minute of the first stanza it looked as though he was going to live up to expectations, but then Bradford tagged him on the chin with a smashing right—and from then on Courts never had a look in. He was helpless, out on his feet when referee Frank Bramhall stopped the slaughter in the second round.

Fontes got his chance against Bradford by outpointing Gus Pinoris in another 155 lbs. semi-final.

Spartan Daily

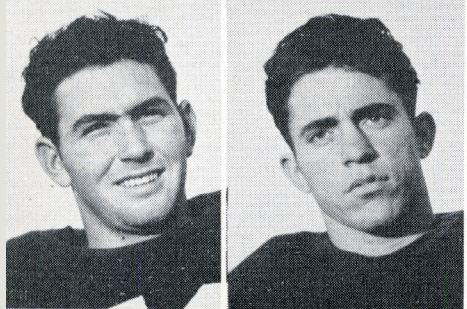
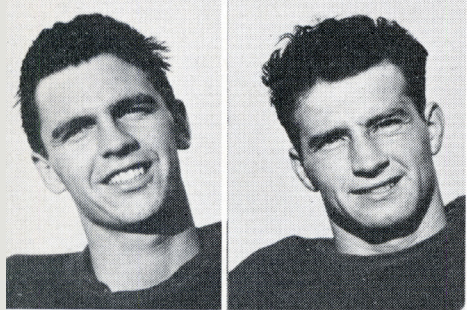
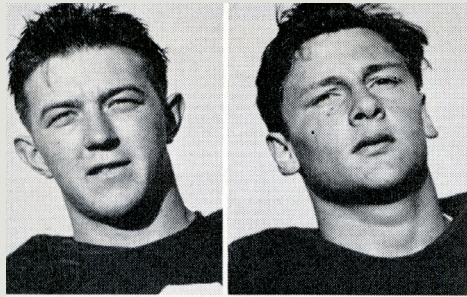
December 9, 1942

Spartan Daily

December 11, 1942

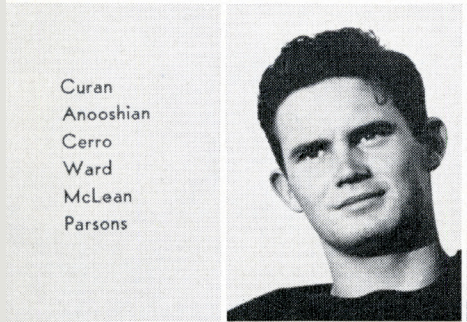
Spartan Daily

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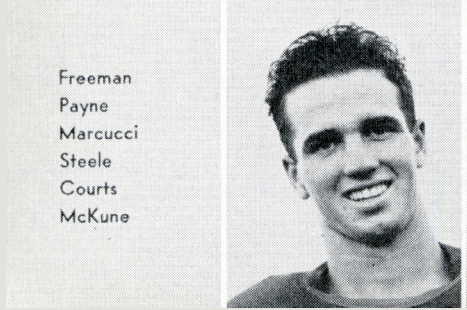


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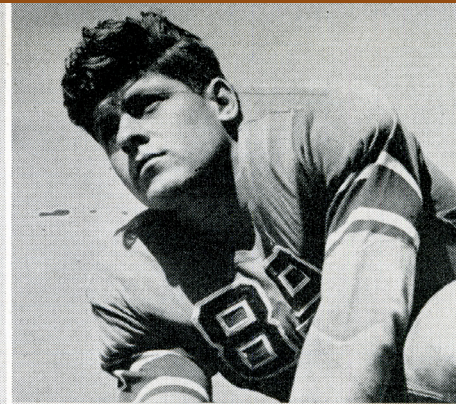
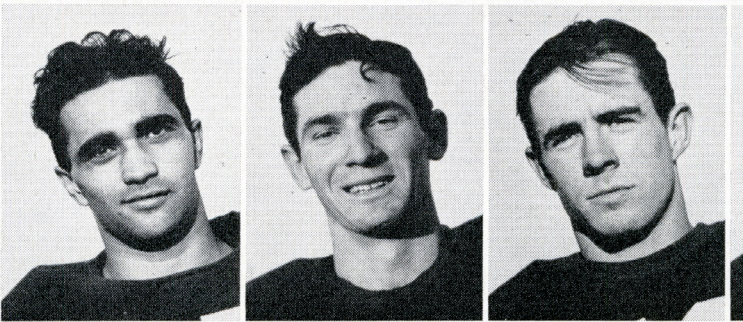
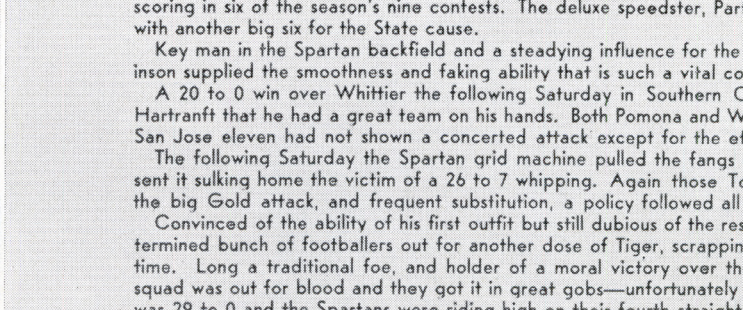
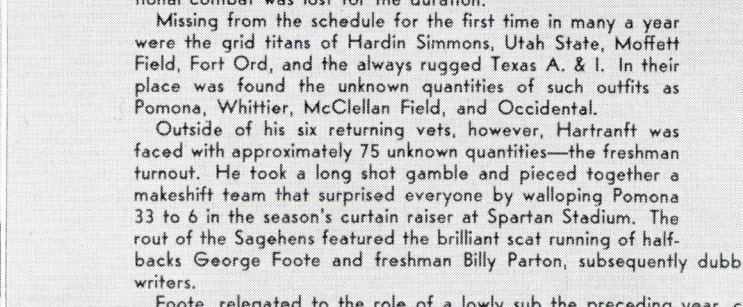
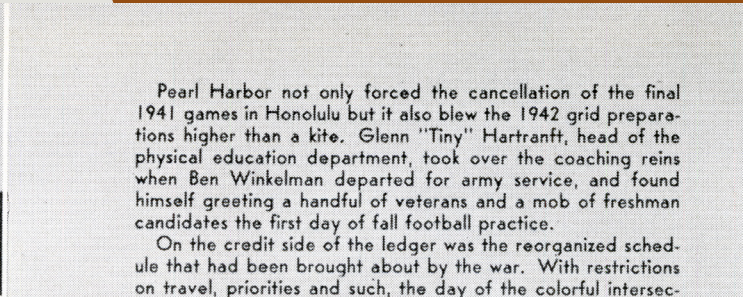
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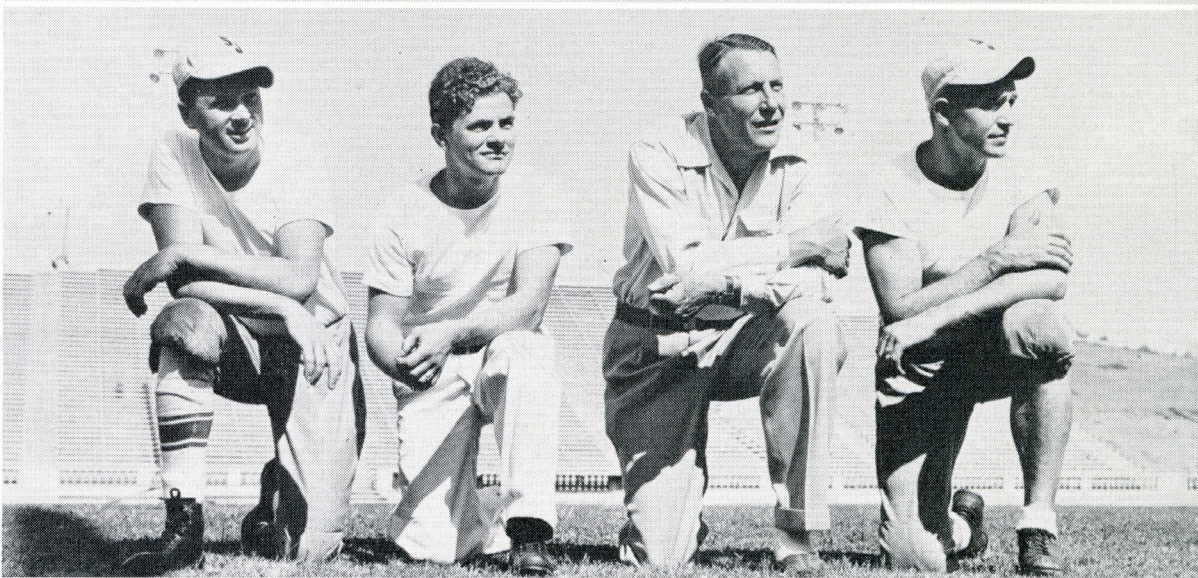
Curan
Anooshian
Cerro
Ward
McLean
Parsons



Freeman
Payne
Marcucci
Steele
Courts
McKune



WILLIE WOOL



La Torre Yearbook

1943

Mark Courts is pictured as a member of the Football Team.

