



Chicago's Michael Jordan has blown his way past opposing defenses en route to spectacular sky-walking slam dunks this season. While Jordan has been racking up a 37 points per game average — including 36 games of 40 or more points — he also has nearly single-handedly put the Bulls in the playoffs.

Bulls' Air Jordan is simply amazing

By RICK GANO
AP Sports Writer

MILWAUKEE — Fans wait at courtside three deep for a peek at the man whose high tops walk on air, whose graceful swoops toward the basket are already legend... even though he's only 24.

"I'm sometimes surprised at myself," Michael Jordan said Monday night after his second straight and seventh 50-point performance this season. "To get where you're going, sometimes you have to surprise yourself."

If he maintains his present clip, Jordan is headed to Springfield, Mass., and the NBA Hall of Fame. But for the time being, he'd just like to make the Chicago Bulls the best basketball team he can.

His 37-point average includes 36 games of 40 or more points and already has the Bulls in the playoffs.

But there's more.

The 6-foot-6 Jordan, in his third season, is the only NBA player to ever have more than 200

steals and 100 blocks in a single season. He needs only 37 points in his final two regular-season games to score 3,000 points this year, a plateau reached by only one other player — Wilt Chamberlain, who did it three times. Don't bet against it.

"I read about that in the newspaper. If I get it, I get it. Individual accolades are fine," Jordan said, adding that it's the team that is his main concern.

"I just want to make this franchise better every year I'm here," Jordan says. "I'd probably like to play eight more years."

That news could make some coaches, with the exception of the Bulls' Doug Collins, look for other fields of employment.

"I don't think there's another player in this league..." Collins says, drawing his words. "If you took Michael Jordan off this team and replaced him with any other player in the league, there's no way we'd have 40 wins. That's what he gives this team."

"The thing I'm most proud of is the way the guys in this room work to help him get open to do the things he can do to help make his job easier."

Jordan has consciously made the word "team" a part of his post-game interview ritual.

When he riddled the Milwaukee Bucks for 50 points Monday night, Jordan cited the Bulls' team defense, the ability of point guard Sedale Threatt to penetrate and the rebounding of teammate Charles Oakley as keys to the victory.

"My 50 points were not as big a factor as us getting the respect we deserve," said Jordan.

"Night in and night out Michael draws all the attention, and we try to get other guys to the open spots to take advantage of that," said Collins. The Bulls are not a one-man team — the rugged 6-9 Oakley averages 13 rebounds and 14 points.

But for Chicago to win in the playoffs, especially on the road, it needs the 40 and 50-point performances from Jordan. And that doesn't ensure victory.

Last year Jordan missed most of the season with a foot injury but came back for the playoffs and scored a career-high 63 points in a loss to the Boston Celtics. This season he had a 61-point effort against Detroit.

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Jackie Robinson overcame baseball's trials, racism

By JOHN NELSON
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — In the spring of 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers traveled to Chicago overnight by train to play the Cubs in their first meeting of the season.

It was to be a special game, one in a series of firsts. Jackie Robinson, a college-educated black man, was in a Dodgers uniform, playing baseball and changing the face of America.

Robinson already had become the first black man to play in the major leagues in the modern era, starting at first base for the Dodgers at Ebbets Field on April 15, 1947 — 40 years ago today.

When the doors were closed at Wrigley Field, there were more than 47,000 in a ballpark meant to hold about 38,000.

"The place was packed," Cubs outfielder Phil Cavarretta recalled. "and in those days, you know — I don't mean to be degrading — but black people very seldom came out to our games. This particular day, when Jackie was there with the Dodgers, the place was packed, and over half of them were black people."

This was a special day for black Americans in Chicago, just as there had been special days for blacks throughout the country during Robinson's first tour of the National League in 1947. Only later would all of America fully realize how special these days were.

Jack Roosevelt Robinson, the grandson of slaves, was born in Cairo, Ga., on Jan. 31, 1919, the fifth and last child of Mallie and Jerry Robinson, a plantation worker. Jerry Robinson left home for good when Jackie was 6 months old, and Mallie took the family west to Pasadena, Calif., the next year.

"They moved into an all-white sec-



Jackie Robinson, the first black man to play major league baseball in the modern era, steals home in a game in April 1956. It was 40 years ago today that

Robinson broke the color barrier in baseball when he started at first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers in a game at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, N.Y.

tion of northwest Pasadena, living in a two-story house on 121 Pepper St. It was there that Robinson first heard the word "nigger," and it was there that he learned how to fight back within the context of the games he would play later at UCLA and in major league baseball.

"Jackie was emotionally volatile,"

said Rachel Robinson, who married Jackie on Feb. 10, 1946, and was with him when he died on Oct. 24, 1972, of complications from a lifelong fight with diabetes.

"He was always ready to take action. Maybe volatile isn't the right word, but he had a strong emotional reaction to things. He knew all the techniques for fighting back within the structure of the sport he was playing."

Robinson's days at UCLA, where he was a standout football player and track star, and the time he spent barnstorming with a racially mixed baseball team were two things in Robinson's past said to have in-

fluenced Dodgers' General Manager Branch Rickey.

Already a pioneer in the areas of minor leagues and talent scouting, Rickey was ready to blaze another trail. He wanted to get a black man into baseball, and as World War II began to work its changes on the world, he felt the time was right. He

trigued Robinson's General Manager Branch Rickey.

In many ways, the Dodgers projected Robinson, especially in spring training. Instead of touring the South, as so many teams did, the Dodgers spent spring in Cuba and Panama, then came north.

"We couldn't stay with the team in three towns: Philadelphia, St. Louis and Cincinnati."

"You knew you had to go play someplace," former catcher Roy Campanella said. "You'd be there on time, play, shower up and then go find a black hotel. You couldn't stay with the team. You did what you had to do. It's always difficult to know you're shunned and couldn't stay with your teammates."

Campanella vividly remembers the first time he was forced to stay away from his teammates. It was in his hometown of Philadelphia.

"We weren't allowed to stay in the Bellevue Stratford Hotel," he said. "We couldn't stay with the team in three towns: Philadelphia, St. Louis and Cincinnati."

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