



ON GREENWOOD: THE NORTH TULSA SPORTS MACHINE

True grit, stellar coaching and adoring fans

By Gary Lee
The Oklahoma Eagle

They constitute a formidable club.

Tyler Lockett, celebrated by the NFL’s Seattle Seahawk fans as a football phenomenon, is the top member of the moment. Ask any sports enthusiast in the Emerald City, and they’ll likely recount the Seahawk wide receiver’s finest plays. One example is the spectacular play in the 2020 match-up against the Arizona Cardinals when Lockett got one arm free and grabbed a perfect pass from quarterback Russell Wilson and capture a 34-yard gain.

After seven seasons, his stats

tell the bigger story. At 29, the Booker T. Washington alum’s ranked ninth in the NFL with 1,175 yards and sixth with an average of 16.5 yards per catch. The Seattle Times has anointed him as “simply one of the elite.”

John Starks is another coveted member. New York Knicks fans remember him as a player of no fear, a point guard who used his entire presence to butt off opposing players. At 6’5” and 190, the Central High School alum’s brazen tenacity and unwavering desire to win helped guide the team to countless victories. Although retired, Starks’ reputation remains the stuff of legend.

The music group, A Tribe, Called Quest gave him a shout-out in its song Eight Million Stories. And ESPN has named him one of the all-time greatest Knicks.

And what would this club be without Iciss Tillis? The 6-foot-5 basketball forward was a WNBA stalwart with stints with three squads: the Detroit Shock, the New York Liberty and the Los Angeles Sparks. But locally, she is known as a celebrated – and dominate player – first as a WBCA High School All-American at Cascia Hall Preparatory School and then as an All-American for Duke University. She was pivotal also on the U.S. team playing in the Pan

American Games in 2003, helping the squad earn a silver medal.

And, of course, there’s Felix Jones, another Booker T. product to play professional football. The Dallas Cowboys drafted him in 2008, and the 6’ 200 pounds running back made an instant splash. Even a decade after moving on from the team, Jones’s top plays are part of Cowboy lore. Who could forget the 2008 game against the Philadelphia Eagles when he returned a kickoff 98 yards for a touchdown?

A shared North Tulsa Heritage

Athletic superstars in different

sports eras and far-flung urban areas. Gritty and driven, they are part of a distinctive group of athletes who hustled their way to sports fame. At first, blush, aside from raw sports hustle, seemed to have little in common.

And yet, as the Historic Greenwood District folks know, there is a strong thread and a legacy that bonds them together: they are all offspring of North Tulsa’s African American community. Although they are in different age groups, they were raised in roughly the same Northside neighborhoods. Jones and Lockett

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URBAN REMOVAL, PART II

Sand Springs: Erasing the Black community

By John Neal
For the Oklahoma Eagle

By the fall of 2004, Sand Springs city authorities were ready to push through a new “Urban Renewal” plan that would wipe out the entire Black community in the urban core of the city, including the longtime homes of dozens of Black families. A couple of hurdles remained, and they were significant. One was how to maneuver the plan through a web of legal requirements? And another: how to railroad this project through the Black residents?

Apparently, the forces behind the renewal project had hatched schemes to deal with both challenges. Their response to the second issue centered around a blatant disregard of the sentiments of Blacks in the community. When Irving Frank, an Indian Nation’s

Council of Governments (INCOG) official and the apparent mastermind of the plan, presented it in a meeting of the Sand Springs Planning Commission on September 21, 2004, he told the gathering: “It appears those businesses impacted as well as residences and churches are satisfied with the plan and are anxious to move forward.”

As Frank was undoubtedly aware, the opposite was the case. During public meetings held weeks earlier, Black residents of Sand Springs had voiced their discontent with the plan in public gatherings. KOTV, the CBS affiliate in Tulsa, had reported disapproval of the plan during the summer of 2004: “City Planners estimate about 177 people would

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