



FRITZ POLLARD
1912

AN HONOR LONG OVERDUE



Frederick D. Pollard

The Pollards were the first family to integrate unincorporated Rogers Park in the 1890s

Fritz was the 7th of 8 Pollard children born in 1894 to a multi-racial mother and African American father

Mentored by older brother Leslie, Fritz was a three-sport, elite athlete at Lane and was compared to the fleet-footed god, "Mercury"

He played shortstop on Lane's "indoor" baseball team

At a track meet in 1912 he took first in high and low hurdles, second in the half-mile and third in high jump, and won "County" three times

Fritz compensated for his small stature with speed and agility as a running back on the football team

Nicknamed the "Human Torpedo", Pollard was the first African American to play football for Brown University where he was credited for almost single-handedly beating both Yale and Harvard in the same week scoring six touchdowns and running for more than 540 yards

He was the first African American to play in the Rose Bowl in 1916, and to be named to Walter Camp's All-American team

Fritz was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1954

He was one of the first two African American athletes to play in the NFL & the first African American quarterback

Along with Jim Thorpe, he was one of the highest paid players in the early '20s

Fritz was the first African American coach in the NFL

He was posthumously inducted into the NFL Football Hall of Fame in 2005

The Fritz Pollard Alliance Foundation advocates for more BIPOC coaches and front office executives in the NFL

Fritz actively hired and showcased African American football players

He founded the Chicago Black Hawks and Harlem Brown Bombers all-black barnstorming football teams

He was the publisher of the first black-owned tabloid, *The New York Independent News*

Fritz also founded and operated a talent agency, music production company, PR firm, tax consultancy and investment firm

Pollard died May 11, 1986



In March 21, 2020 when the Governor of Illinois issued the Covid stay at home order, the LTAA began a social media campaign to keep members and friends engaged and thinking about something besides the pandemic.

Dipping into the archives, we published social media posts on class rings, the architecture of the school, and on Sunday, March 23rd when there were no sports to watch, we offered a brief digital biography of Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard from the Class of 1912.

Readers who had never heard of this amazing Lane alumnus were intrigued, while several others who were familiar with Pollard's football career were stunned to learn he was actually a Lane Tech graduate, but one brief comment on Facebook really captured our imagination. Ronald "Chip" Fisher '81 offered a simple opinion, "Lane Stadium should be named in his honor!"



It turns out Fisher, who was a triple-letter Letterman at Lane, is a sports management professional and educator. In fact he was teaching University of Texas students about Pollard back in 2003 in his "Race and Sports" journalism course. "Pollard endured racial discrimination and still became a successful football player on every level", offers Fisher, "he also showed the intellectual capacity to coach and lead men to a championship, and became successful in several business ventures after football. This is all historical fact and important for all Laneites past and present to be aware of every time they walk onto Lane stadium's *Fritz Pollard Field*."

In researching the feasibility of renaming the stadium, the LTAA learned that CPS regulations might present some challenges, so Lane Stadium would need to remain Lane Stadium, but the field certainly could be dedicated. "Fritz

Pollard Field at Lane Stadium" became the goal, so the next step was approval from the school administration. With the help of Nick Logalbo '01, Lane's Athletic Director, an affirmative response was easily secured, and the Local School Council enthusiastically embraced the idea soon after.

Simultaneously, Chicago free-lance writer Mark Schipper was crafting a feature piece on Pollard for the Sun-Times and contacted the LTAA for historical facts and images from our 1909-1912 yearbooks. When he learned about the Pollard initiative the Alumni Association was planning, he made that effort a focus of the piece, which was published on October 15th to the delight of many in the Lane community. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/education/2020/10/14/21506746/lane-tech-college-prep-frederick-douglas-fritz-pollard-alumni-football>

Now the LTAA is working with a variety of CPS personnel to identify the steps that would allow for stadium and/or field signage, a proper dedication, development of companion curriculum for students, and a campaign to finance those plans. Stay tuned to the LTAA for progress reports.

Fritz Pollard began his professional football career with the Akron Pros in 1919... the year that Jackie Robinson was born, yet too few know about this incredible Lane Tech trailblazer. We are excited at the prospect of sharing the story of his determination, his accomplishments and his legacy, and hope the entire Lane Tech community will join us in making Fritz Pollard Field a reality in 2021.

