In recognition of the 75th anniversary of Jackie Robinson

Sports historian to speak on Jackie Robinson’s rookie season that broke MLB racial barrier

What: Mark Everett Kelly will speak on the events surrounding Jackie Robinson’s rookie season as the first black player in the major leagues

When: 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 12

Where: Florence-Lauderdale Public Library
    Fiction Colonnade

Jackie Robinson said if he could choose one of the most important moments in his life, it would be the year 1947, in Yankee Stadium, on the opening day of the World Series.

Representing the Dodgers, on that day Robinson became the first black man to play in a world series, and the first black man to play in the major leagues.

In his autobiography, “Jackie Robinson: I Never Had It Made,” he recounts that experience in the book’s preface. His daily life was filled with snubs, rebuffs and rejections. Racial slurs were continuously shouted at him from the stands, and hate mail and threats deluged him and his family.

Rookie Jackie Robinson keep his composure. He knew he had a long road ahead if, what he called “The Noble Experiment,” were to succeed.
Mark Everett Kelly, a two-time Emmy award recipient, former ESPN researcher, sports historian, author and motivational speaker, will illuminate the events surrounding the 1946 and 1947 seasons after Jackie Robinson signed on with the Dodgers, and the decision of Dodgers manager Branch Rickey, a white man, leading up to that historic moment.

“Some day, I’m going to have to stand before God, and if he asks me why I didn’t let that Robinson fellow play ball, I don’t think saying ‘because of the color of his skin’ would be a good enough answer,” Rickey is widely quoted as saying.

Kelly’s presentation will begin at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 12, at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library Fiction Colonnade. His presentation is significant during this, the 75th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking the MLB racial barrier. Despite the pressures and threats resulting from that momentous step onto the field, Jackie Robinson was named Rookie of the Year his first season in the major leagues.

Robinson’s career proved he was among the very best MBL players in the sport’s history. His endurance during the racist system that was designed to be stacked against his success continues to be inspiring to other African American athletes who have come after him.

“…Jackie Robinson was a pillar of strength to me,” wrote Hank Aaron in an introduction in Robinson’s autobiography. “It meant an awful lot to know that there was somebody before me who paved the way, who gave me an opportunity to play the big leagues. When I was going through the things I had to go through – doubting myself – I knew this was only the tip of the iceberg of what Jackie Robinson had gone through. I said to myself I would be doing him an injustice if I quit. And this gave me the strength to continue.”