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From Exclusion to Accountability: Race, Media, and the Diversification of Boston Sports Now

Boston has carried a complicated and often damaging reputation regarding its history with race and sports. From the early 20th century through the Civil Rights Era and, finally, the present day, the city's athletic institutions reflected broader systems of racism that shaped who was allowed visibility, admiration, and opportunity. My thesis examines how Boston sports gradually diversified over time, focusing on how roles played by professional teams, sports media, and public attitudes changed from encouraging to challenging racial inequality. Using historical analysis, and media criticism of Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, and Boston's major franchises, this project traces the shift from overt exclusion and media silence toward integration, accountability and institutional reform. My research found that racism in Boston sports was not maintained individually through fan behavior but through structural barriers, biased reporting, and long standing normalized exclusion. While integration policies and civil rights reforms forced change, the cultural attitudes and public perception didn't follow. This reinforced Boston's national racist reputation even as the city's social conditions improved. In recent decades, increased media observations, athlete visibility, and league-wide diversity initiatives have contributed to measurable progress, though tensions remain. Boston sports did not simply diversify through time, but through deliberate pressure, visibility, and accountability, demonstrating how even deeply rooted systems of exclusion can evolve when silence is replaced with unrelenting pursuit of change.