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5114 Cedar Lake Road, Minneapolis, MN, 55416

Contact Norton Stillman (952) 546-6300 / Fax (952) 546-6303

nstill4402@aol.com

Breaking Through the Line

*Bobby Marshall, — The N.F.L.'s First
African American Player*

Terry McConnell

In *Breaking Through the Line* Terry McConnell tells the story of Bobby Marshall, one of the most extraordinary athletes in the history of sports. He starred in football, baseball, and track at the University of Minnesota, and also excelled in hockey before the Gophers mounted a varsity team. Marshall's successes at the U of MN weren't limited to sports, however. He also earned a law degree, and in later life he exhibited many exemplary leadership qualities.

Overcoming obstacles to success that many African Americans faced at the time, Marshall went on to become the first African American All American from the Big Ten in football, the first African American to coach in the Big Ten, and the first to play in the nascent NFL.

The author has scoured Midwestern newspaper sources for tales of the early years of professional sports, but he also devotes ample space to Marshall's contributions to civic life, as a lawyer, a director for the Minnesota State Grain Commission, a deacon of St. Peter's African Methodist Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, and as a community leader mentoring youth at the Phyliss Wheatley House, where he coached the youngsters in sports and served as an inspiring example of how to live a meaningful life.

Harvey Mackay writes that "Bobby Marshall was a trailblazer, and Terry McConnell's fascinating biography will inspire another generation of football fans to dream big dreams." And the *Star-Tribune's* Mark Craig note that "Terry's research on Bobby Marshall shines an interesting, in-depth look at the unfamiliar story of the NFL's first African-American player ... a Minnesota legend whose fame, unfortunately, fell through the cracks of time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Terry McConnell has been a secondary school educator for forty years, serving as a social studies teacher, school librarian, track and cross-country coach, tennis coach, video production teacher, and special education worker. He now serves as a breath instructor with his wife, Carol, teaching a course at Fitchburg State University in Fitchburg, MA, the nearby Greenfield YMCA, and in private practice.

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