

Sylvester Makes History And Very Few Notice It

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By EDDIE DAVIDSON

Desegregation has become so commonplace in the South, especially in Chattanooga, that when it occurs nowadays it goes virtually unnoticed. Such was the case Friday when 9-year-old Sylvester Harris Jr. of the Cleveland YMCA team stepped to the starting blocks in the 10-under boys' 50-meter freestyle in the CYF Invitational Swim Meet.

"Come to think of it, he is the first Black boy to participate in our meet," director Med Dement Jr. responded to an inquiry. Then he quickly added, "But in case there's any doubt, I want to make it perfectly clear that he's most welcome."

Young Harris finished eighth in his heat, but that possibly was because he had to move up from the 8-under division only last Sunday when he celebrated his ninth birthday, and that put him at a distinct disadvantage to boys who had been swimming in the 9-10 division all summer.

Sylvester, who will be a fourth grader at Stewart Elementary School in Cleveland next month, started swimming lessons last summer at the Cleveland YMCA, but he joined the team only four weeks ago at the urging of a lot of friends he had made at the "Y". He also plays in the Cleveland Y's elementary school basketball league.

His father, Sylvester Sr., was among the spectators at Friday's meet session and also seemed unaware that his son was the first of his race to compete in this meet. The security technician for Olin Chemical Corp. in Cleveland, a native of Muskogee, Okla., where he was a starting guard in high school basketball, pointed out that his son already had participated in two dual meets this season. "And I would say our reception, especially at East Ridge a couple of weeks ago, has been quite warm." His wife, Ora, is a fourth grade teacher at Allen Elementary School in Cleveland.

Sylvester Jr., who also swims the backstroke, is looking forward to a long career of swimming with the Cleveland YMCA team. He plans to participate until he reaches the cutoff line—his 18th birthday, his daddy said.

Pardon, but our slips are showing. First of all, I added an unexpected member to the Brackett household. There are only four brothers and sisters—all competing for CYF—and not five children in the family. Secondly, our composing room added 40 extra pounds to Bambi Davis overnight. She actually weighs 115 pounds, not 155. And third, Cumberland has won all but two of the CYF Invitational Swim meets thus

far, including the inaugural event. That first year Shepherd Hills was the Chattanooga Swim League cham-

pion, not the winner of the CYF meet.

Let's hope this slays all the gremlins.

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