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Field at Lane Tech To Be Renamed ‘Fritz Pollard Field’ In Honor Of Trailblazing Alum

Legacy of 1912 Alum Finally Celebrated on His Home Turf

CHICAGO - A 1912 Lane Tech alumnus and football pioneer who broke ground in countless settings will be honored and remembered for generations thanks to the perseverance of fans at his alma mater. Current students may not now know the legacy of Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard but they, along with generations that follow, will soon walk through the "Fritz Pollard Field" within the historic Lane Tech Stadium and be reminded of another Chicago Public Schools (CPS) great.

“We are so grateful to all those who brought to our attention the fortitude and many accomplishments of Fritz Pollard,” said CPS CEO Pedro Martinez. “We are excited to honor and celebrate this outstanding alum, athlete, coach and businessman.”

The Lane Tech Alumni Association (LTAA) worked with administrators of the north side high school and District officials to approve the name change and put in motion a renaming ceremony to take place during the football season later this year. On Wednesday during the Board’s monthly meeting, the Board of Education recognized school officials and members of the LTAA for their work to remember this successful alumnus.

“We are thrilled to finally acknowledge this pioneer in sports, education, and racial equity,” said Edwina Thompson, principal at Lane Tech College Prep. “While this moment is long overdue, we are confident that the legacy of Fritz Pollard will continue to inspire generations to strive for greatness.”

Pollard, raised in Rogers Park, became a three-sport star athlete at Lane Tech in baseball, track and field and football before becoming the first-ever African American football player to play at

Brown University and in the Rose Bowl. Pollard became one of the first African American professional football players, the first professional African American quarterback and the first African American coach in professional football. Pollard was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1954 and the NFL Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2005.

In addition, Pollard was the founder of the Chicago Black Hawks and Harlem Brown Bombers football teams, published the first black-owned tabloid, The New York Independent News, and founded and operated a talent agency, music production company, public relations firm, tax consultancy and investment firm.

“As we emerge from this pandemic and our society’s collective reckoning with ongoing race, equity and access issues, we can’t think of a better way for the Lane Tech community to come together and celebrate a man who first played for the myrtle and gold and went on to break ground at Brown University and in multiple more fields and sectors across America,” said Michele Weiner, president of the Lane Tech Alumni Association. “Sharing his story with the community has been a labor of love and source of school pride.”

As far back as the 90s, various Lane Tech community members had suggested honoring Pollard, but it wasn’t until a series of 2019 archival posts on the Alumni Association’s social media page triggered the suggestion by an alumnus and gained traction, according to Weiner. Amazingly, the year that Jackie Robinson was born, Pollard was already signing his first professional football contract, and yet his barrier-breaking accomplishments have remained largely unknown, even at Lane Tech, until recently.

The Lane Tech community will gather for a field-naming dedication ceremony at the 2022 Lane Tech Homecoming this fall with exact time and date to be shared closer to the event. CPS District officials, including the Office of Sports Administration (OSA) will continue to support the Lane Tech community and LTAA as they honor this alum. More details and field design proposal decks can be found [here](#).

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