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THEATER REVIEW

A Baseball Legend Playing a New Position: Flawed Human

By EDDIE GOLDSTEIN

Sports fans wonder if the long-ball histrionics of Barry Bonds are chemically enhanced and hear that a \$27 million offer offends Lattrell Sprewell, who explains that he's concerned about feeding his family. So what happened to true sports heroes like Jackie Robinson? He's featured in a new play where even a treasured icon is not sacrosanct.

"Stealin' Home (A Baseball Fantasy)," written and directed by Fred Newman, takes a revealing look at the man who broke baseball's color barrier. "Stealin' Home" depicts the friendship between Robinson (Garrett Lee

Hendricks) and Pee Wee Reese (Andy Parker), his teammate, over four decades and pulls few punches on the revered Brooklyn Dodger.

'Stealin' Home (A Baseball Fantasy) *Castillo Theatre*

Respectful of Robinson's historical impact, Mr. Newman shows us the competitive, prideful and playful star - then jump-cuts to Robinson's defending his rarely recounted later years supporting Richard Nixon and testifying against Paul Robeson at the Army-McCarthy hearings.

A clumsy final scene imagines Robinson sharing perspectives on

his triumphs and failures during a "second lifetime." Still, despite the clunky use of a Greek chorus, embodied in the character of Sojourner (Donisha Brown), "Stealin' Home" has much to share on racism, hero worship, cultural changes in the United States and latent homosexuality in the locker room. Perhaps the most valuable insight on contemporary role models is that only heroes in tights and capes can live a lifetime in the public eye without regrets.

"Stealin' Home (A Baseball Fantasy)" runs through Dec. 12 at the Castillo Theater, 543 West 42nd Street.