

Claude Johnson Bio

Claude Johnson is the founder and president of Black Fives, Inc. (<http://www.blackfives.com>), a vintage sports licensing company dedicated to researching, preserving, promoting, and teaching about the history of African American basketball teams that played from the early 1900s through the racial integration of the National Basketball Association in 1950, a period known as the Black Fives Era.



Johnson created the company starting with little more than his library card. “I’ve always liked history, but history is limited unless we make it meaningful for today,” says Johnson, who is a considered a leading authority on this history. He also advocates on behalf of the descendants of the pioneering basketball players and contributors of the era who helped pave the way the game today.

Prior to Black Fives, Inc., Johnson gained extensive, well-rounded experience during a 20-year career in corporate America that included engineering, management, and executive positions with Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, IBM, American Express, the National Basketball Association, Nike, and Benetton Sportsystem.

The Black Fives brand consists of a historically important collection of intellectual property consisting of team names, logos, trademarks, copyrights, uniform designs, a photo archive, artifacts, and related material, which it has licensed to companies that include Nike, Converse, ESPN, and BET. The company’s website includes a blog that features Johnson’s insights, analysis, commentary, and advice.

Johnson, his brand, and his website have received national media attention through product placement and editorial coverage in outlets that include *ESPN*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *HOOP Magazine*, *The New York Sun*, *BET*, *FOX Television*, *NPR*, *The Tom Joyner Morning Show*, *MTV*, *NBA.com*, *SLAM Magazine*, and *The New York Times*.

Johnson holds a B.S. Civil Engineering and M.S. Mechanical Engineering degrees from Carnegie Mellon University and Stanford University, respectively. He was born in Vienna, Austria, and lived there as well as in Germany and in the Belgian Congo prior to moving to the United States as a youngster. Johnson is fluent in German.

In addition to his engagements as a lecturer and motivational speaker at corporations, schools, colleges, historical societies, and museums, Johnson is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Greenwich Public Library, the Association of Professional Basketball Researchers, the North American Society for Sport History, and the American Library Association.

He is also on the Advisory Council of the Carnegie Mellon University Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and a member of the university’s Andrew Carnegie Society.

Johnson, his wife, and their three boys live in Greenwich, Ct.