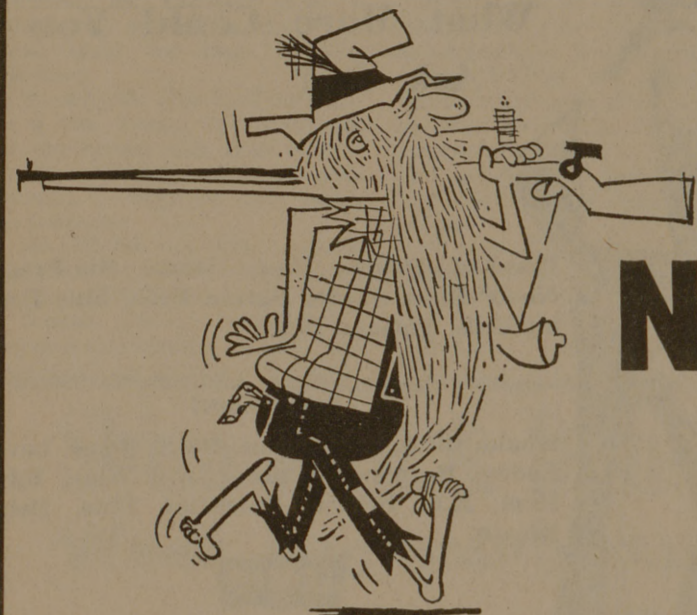


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HELPING THE OFFENSE CALL A PLAY during spring training is Emory Bellard. The new head coach put his team through its first workout in a week Wednesday as the Easter holidays ended for the Aggies. Bellard is pre-

paring his charges for the Maroon-White game April 14. The team works out Tuesday-Friday at 4:00, with scrimmages scheduled the next two Saturdays. Workouts are open to the public. (Photo by Mike Rice)

Games put off; strike continues

By MIKE RATHET
Associated Press Sports Writer

What happens every spring didn't happen Wednesday—and it won't happen today either.

For the first time in baseball's 103-year history, a general strike by the players delayed the start of the season, forcing postponement of Wednesday's traditional opener at Cincinnati.

And as Wednesday wore on, today's eight-game schedule crumbled as well—along with one Friday contest, Philadelphia's game at St. Louis.

No formal negotiating sessions were announced for today, although John Gaherin, the owners' representative, said he would meet with Marvin Miller, executive director of the Major League Baseball Players Association. The time and location were not immediately disclosed.

Despite this meeting, however, prospects for an early settlement in the pension dispute between players and owners appeared bleak even though heavy losses are anticipated on both sides.

If the strike lasts through the weekend, for example, an educated guess places the loss to the 24 major league clubs at about \$2.5 million.

For the average player—one earning about \$22,500—the strike will cost him about \$140 a game in salary. And for the game's highest paid star, Atlanta's Hank Aaron, it'll mean a loss of about \$1,250 a game.

Vice President Paul Richards of the Braves, one of the last teams to announce postponement of today's game, suggested there might not be any baseball "for a long, long time."

Richards, in Chicago, where the owners met Tuesday, blasted Miller, saying the owners aren't against the players but are "fed up" with Miller.

"Unless the players take a stand now," Richards said, "there isn't going to be any baseball for a long, long time." The owners he said, "simply aren't going to let Marvin Miller run over them any more."

And the players, he continued, should end the strike "for their own good. If they don't it's the players who are going to pay the price."

Richards suggested the players should turn to Commissioner Bowie Kuhn for resolution of the dispute. Kuhn returned to New York from Chicago after sitting in on the owners' meeting, but was unavailable for immediate comment.

In Baltimore, meanwhile, Miller met Wednesday with 18 members of the Orioles, then accused team manager Earl Weaver with trying to illegally break the strike.

Weaver had said earlier that he had polled his players and that all but five of the 26 had been willing to defy the ban and open the season on schedule.

Further, Weaver said, a poll by him showed that, of those 21 players, 16 had been willing to play an exhibition game scheduled for last Saturday.

Miller, following his meeting with the Oriole players at the suburban home of third baseman Brooks Robinson, said of Weaver:

"There's a fine point in labor laws and he's gone way overboard. His attempts to break the strike have been as a representative of management—which has nothing to do with being a field manager."

"Weaver is entitled to give his opinion and talk to the players," Miller said, "but when he exercises coercion and makes threats, direct and implied, that's different . . ."

And Robinson, the Orioles'

player representative, disputed Weaver's version of the pre-season poll.

"Actually," the third baseman said, "the vote was 16-4 that we would be willing to play the exhibition games but only if the owners would agree to accept figures of the actuaries on the amount of surplus already existing in the pension fund."

And after the meeting with Miller, Robinson added:

"We are more unified now than ever before."

Among the players, meanwhile, there was considerable speculation about the possible duration of the strike, the reason for the polarization between the two sides and how quick games could be played if—and when—the strike ends.

"I don't see any break in this thing," said Houston pitcher

Larry Dierker, the club's player representative. "I think the Astros' pitcher Dave Lee—campus 'the owners are out to punish' of Miller. This guy hasn't baseball, but he has done a lot for the players, accomplishing benefits they wouldn't have otherwise obtained."

The Astros' general manager H. B. "Spec" Richardson, who doubted the weekend series in Atlanta could be played after the strike ended immediately.

"Even after this thing is settled," he said, "I want to see pitchers throw."

Several Pittsburgh players worked out at the University of Pittsburgh Wednesday, but were barred from further use of college's facilities.

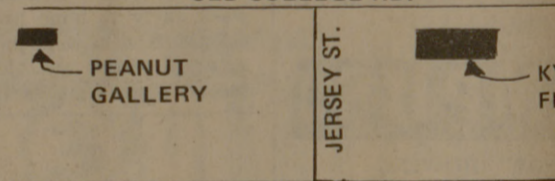
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by Gordon Richardson



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