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# **Big-league** baseball

consecutive World Series, the 1970s

will nevertheless be remembered for its off-the-field confrontations.

whole range of the players' relation-

ship with management and the public. It brought about, first, a crucial

alteration in the reserve clause and,

second, a free agent market which some purists said threatened the foundations of the game.

Average fans earning \$15,000 to

\$20,000 a year were aghast to learn

that the average salary of a baseball

player in 1979 was \$121,000. They marveled at multi-million-dollar contracts won by such players as

Nolan Ryan, Reggie Jackson, J.R.

Richard and Bruce Sutter to name

had done during the 1950s when the players claimed they were slaves, when the owners said they would go

The fans chuckled at the players and owners alike. No one doubted the truth when Marvin Miller, ex-ecutive director of the Players Asso-

ciation who is on the longest winning streak in the history of sports, noted,

'if the owners ran their other

## Players' abilities outweigh tendency to gold-brick

United Press International NEW YORK — Baseball enters the 1980s with a new relationship among the players, the owners and the fans.

The change, created by a decade of convulsions during the 1970s, re-volutionized the 100-year old structure of the game.

The big question: where are the parties involved — the players, own-ers and fans — likely to go in the 1980s? Where is this great sport heading - this game that for more than 100

### At the start of the 1980s, it is reasonable to suggest that base-ball will flourish.

years has survived the people who play it and run it?

At the start of the 1980s, it is asonable to suggest that baseball will flourish. Its ailments can very accurately be compared to those of the motion picture industry between 1920 and 1950. This was the Golden Age of Hollywood. Tinsel Town captivated America. It made shopgirls and auto mechanics into the goddesses and gods of the entertainment world. It didn't make any difference whether Harlow worked for Para-mount or Gable for Goldwyn-Mayer. An intoxicated public turned out to see its heroines and heroes perform and catapulted them to pedestals of gold.

The Harlows, Gables, Flynns, Coopers flitted from studio to studio. Their escapades made headlines



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broke

which normally would have ruined people. But the public adored them. They excused the indiscretions bepaupers." Ray Kroc, mercurial owner of the San Diego Padres, got the same reaction when he commented on Dave Winfield's demand for a cause the guilty had brought them pleasure — and man has always been contract worth \$18 million over 10 years, "if he wants to run the club, willing to pay a high price for pleawhy doesn't he make me an offer to An exciting decade during which Babe Ruth's career home run record was surpassed and a team other than buy it?

Some outraged voices were raised but, for the most part, the public viewed such antics with amusement. the New York Yankees won three

Sports writers, duly concerned with the wretched state of the world they saw around them, pontificated that baseball might be in the process of destroying itself. What other end These confrontations covered the could one predict for a summer sport which played its showcase World Series in the winter-time weather of Baltimore and New York while a winter sport like pro football staged its showcase Super Bowl in the summer-time weather of Florida and California

Now, in 1980 it is true that it is absurd for a baseball player who hits .230 to earn \$121,000 a year when a

#### It is pointless to tell today's baseball players about Pete Reiser. They think he was a jerk. Reiser, a Brooklyn Dodger in the 1940s, was so dedicated that he smashed into walls nine times and almost lost his life twice — chasing fly balls.

man who helps build hotels by walking on girders 60 stories above Manhattan's sidewalks makes \$25,000. But life is full of absurdities and the men who walk the girders go to the ball parks and cheer for their heroes.

More than 40 million people paid their way through the turnstiles to see big league baseball in 1979. They paid an average of \$6 a person, con-sidering parking lots and conces-sions, which means the ball clubs had an on-the-spot income of about \$250 million. Add to this an estimated \$75 million in radio and TV contracts and it is obvious that the sport is flourishing financially.

And what do we have here with our baseball player of the 1980s? He is a businessman ballplayer, far removed from the farm-breds of the 1920s or the depression-products of the 1940s. He is more at home reading The Wall Street Journal than the Sporting News. He follows the buck. He couldn't care less whether he plays in X-City or Y-City. The old

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concept of identifying with a city never enters his mind. Nor, to be honest to him, does it enter the minds of the modern cor-

enter the minds of the modern cor-porate owners. One, who sings a siren song of identification with his city, is, in fact, considering transferring one of the greatest of all franch-

ises to a neighboring state. This modern ball player is in the top one percent of the nation from a standpoint of income. He has a pension plan that is the envy of millions. He has such long-term contracts, with built-in clauses, that he can gold brick — and does — whenever he

The fans won't find any Pete Reisers among the modern lot. Reiser, a Brooklyn Dodger in the 1940s, was so dedicated that he smashed into walls nine times — and almost lost his life twice — chasing fly balls. Today's players take the caroms off the walls and live to start the next day's game. It is pointless to tell them ab-out Reiser. They think he was a jerk.

At the same time these insatiable brats are playing baseball better than it has ever been played before. The pitchers throw harder. The fielders field better. The hitters hit the ball farther. Everybody can run faster. They are the products of a bigger manpower pool. They were brought up from childhood on better diets. They had better coaching. They keep in shape during the off-season. They are superior in every way to the ancients of their sport. They are obnoxious but they are

good. And they flaunt it. Boy, do they flaunt it!

The greatest stories of the 1970s involved one man — Hank Aaron — and three teams — the Oakland A's, New York Yankees and Cincinnati Reds

Aaron, a splendid hitter who was not an activist in the black commun-ity, topped Ruth's home run record when he hit his 715th in the opening game of the Atlanta Braves' season in 1974. His approach to the mark had been accompanied by a campaign of vilification. White America did not want a black man to break Ruth's record and told Aaron so. He still bears the scars and no less a responsible person than Baseball Commis-

team and won two Word Two of t They were led by future Hald oach Cher ers like Pete Rose, Johnny he team in George Foster, Dave Com 9-12 record and others. In a way, they see ord and som give baseball a certain anout "They had bility during the turbulent" if the best On the other hand, they a With the the money and ran and whapp plans opportunity presented itself unning cl Where have you gone more Kelle DiMaggio? give baseball a certain amou

DiMaggio? IOC may gran (

**OK** for hopefu U.S. Olympic Com United Press International U.S. Olym GUNNISON, Colo. — Former to boycott. 'I'm for the boycott and ha

for it all along," said Stones, bronze medals at Munich at bronze medal winner Dwight Stones says some American athletes may try to enter the Summer Orympics by pics. Moscow, if given that opportunity by pics. "There's something about the state of the

nistan.

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outstanding teams but in the the A's and Yankees they sented their time and in the the Reds they represented something out of the pat. The A's, owned by contro owner Charles O. Finley, we

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The greatest stories of the NBA involved one man -Aaron — and three team Oakland A's, New York In and Cincinnati Reds.

straight World Series - a ment surpassed only by the N The Tex and 1949-54 Yankees. They weam trave irritating crew, however, pete in the they wore handlebar music Coach B sideburns like players of the a tune-up for a fourth among themselve in Austin. and fought among themselves clubhouse. They became as in "Most er for what they did off the field Nix. "The l

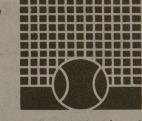
their accomplishments on it team's con Even an adoring basebal be ready and the cynical New York comweeks.' cations media didn't deserv Nix, cations media didn't deser Nix, who Yankees of Steinbrenner. Her Baylor, in crew of mercenaries, gathersperimenti man obsessed with the deBrown wi

prove he was No. 1 in basebal as in everything else he tr hand at, who violated every of baseball's long-time image son, Thurman Munson, ers and all the rest - yes, un fine ball players. But they

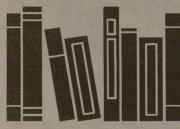
Steinbrenner and his hyer ger, Billy Martin — wrote at Texas Ad in baseball history that can eam, with described as shabby. gfive let The Beds were an err The Reds were an except aining Mo

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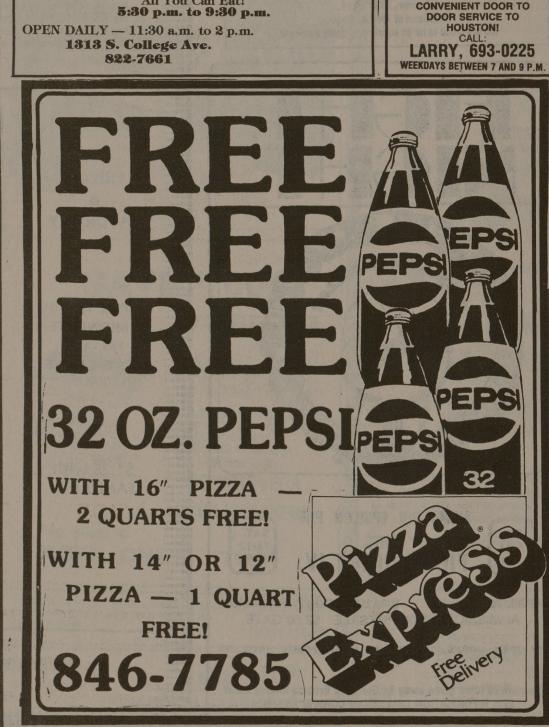
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mittee yard and beating up som And, Stones says he believes the IOC will change its bylaws in an effort to offset the effects of an Amer-ican-led boycott of the games. "I think the IOC will make it possitheir backyard that just doe with me," added Stones, ence to the Soviet invasion

world record holder and two-time

ble for everyone to compete," Stones said. "Lord Killanin (president of the IOC) will want to have as large a representation as possible. He has tunnel vision just like most Olympic officials do."

At present, no athlete can com-pete in the Olympics without the sponsorship of the National Olympic Committee in his or her country.

The IOC meets this weekend in Switzerland, and Stones says the Olympics governing body may vote to change its bylaws to allow for individual entries. Stones, who was hoping to make the American team for a third time, says he will not defy the from day one," Stone said

Stone also said while hes the decision by the U.S. Committee to go along with dent Carter's boycott prop feels the decision should have

Stones, 26, said he age others that the boycott will

vere blow to amateur at United States but "the deci

serve a greater purpose

made sooner. "I think they (USOC) wer into making the decision, should have endorsed the

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