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# Big-league baseball

## 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, revolutionized the 100-year old structure of the game.

The big question: where are the parties involved — the players, owners and fans — likely to go in the 1980s?

Where is this great sport heading — this game that for more than 100

years normally would have ruined people. But the public adored them. They excused the indiscretions because the guilty had brought them pleasure — and man has always been willing to pay a high price for pleasure.

An exciting decade during which Babe Ruth's career home run record was surpassed and a team other than the New York Yankees won three consecutive World Series, the 1970s will nevertheless be remembered for its off-the-field confrontations.

These confrontations covered the whole range of the players' relationship 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 only a few. They guffawed, as they had done during the 1950s when the players claimed they were slaves, when the owners said they would go broke.

The fans chuckled at the players and owners alike. No one doubted the truth when Marvin Miller, executive director of the Players Association who is on the longest winning streak in the history of sports, noted, "if the owners ran their other businesses the way they run their baseball teams, they would all be

paupers." Ray Kroc, mercurial owner of the San Diego Padres, got the same reaction when he commented on Dave Winfield's demand for a contract worth \$18 million over 10 years, "if he wants to run the club, why doesn't he make me an offer to buy it?"

Some outraged voices were raised but, for the most part, the public viewed such antics with amusement.

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 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

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, considering parking lots and concessions, 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-bred 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

concept of identifying with a city never enters his mind. Nor, to be honest to him, does it enter the minds of the modern corporate owners. One, who sings a siren song of identification with his city, is, in fact, considering transferring one of the greatest of all franchises to a neighboring state.

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 about 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 community, 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 responsible person than Baseball Commis-

sioner Bowie Kuhn doesn't understand why.

The A's, Yankees and Reds monopolized the headlines. They outdistanced teams but in the end the A's and Yankees they represented their time and in the end the Reds they represented something out of the past.

The A's, owned by contractor owner Charles O. Finley, was

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

straight World Series — a team that surpassed only by the 1918 and 1949-54 Yankees. They were an irritating crew, however, in the clubhouse. They wore handlebar mustaches and sideburns like players of the past and fought among themselves in the clubhouse. They became as much a club for what they did off the field as their accomplishments on it.

Even an adoring baseball reader and the cynical New York ones. The Yankees media didn't desert. The Yankees of Steinbrenner, Blyler, in a crew of mercenaries, gathered around man obsessed with the game. He proved he was No. 1 in baseball as in everything else he did. He was the hand at, who violated every rule of baseball's long-time image, Thurman Munson, Mike Eassey and all the rest — yes, the fine ball players. But they were Steinbrenner and his hyperger, Billy Martin — wrote a book in baseball history that can be described as shabby.

The Reds were an even better team and won two World Series. They were led by future Hall of Famers like Pete Rose, Johnny Bench, George Foster, Dave Concepcion and others. In a way, they represented baseball a certain amount of stability during the turbulent years.

On the other hand, and why? The money and ran and they were opportunity presented itself. Where have you gone more Kelle DiMaggio?

## IOC may grant OK for hopeful

United Press International  
GUNNISON, Colo. — Former world record holder and two-time bronze medal winner Dwight Stones says some American athletes may try to enter the Summer Olympics in Moscow, if given that opportunity by the International Olympic Committee.

And, Stones says he believes the IOC will change its bylaws in an effort to offset the effects of an American-led boycott of the games.

"I think the IOC will make it possible 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 compete 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

U.S. Olympic Committee's decision to boycott.

"I'm for the boycott and I'm for it all along," said Stones, who won bronze medals at Munich and Seoul in the last two Summer Olympics.

"There's something about body having a party in their yard and beating up someone their backyard that just doesn't sit with me," added Stones, in reference to the Soviet invasion of

Stones, 26, said he agreed with others that the boycott will be a blow to amateur athletes in the United States but "the decision serves a greater purpose than the line."

Stones also said while he respects the decision by the U.S. Olympic Committee to go along with President Carter's boycott proposal, he feels the decision should have been made sooner.

"I think they (USOC) went into making the decision, and should have endorsed the decision from day one," Stone said.

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At the start of the 1980s, it is reasonable to suggest that baseball will flourish.

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

At the start of the 1980s, it is reasonable 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 shoggers and auto mechanics into the goddesses and gods of the entertainment world. It didn't make any difference whether Harlow worked for Paramount 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, Flynnns, Coopers flitted from studio to studio. Their escapades made headlines

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