

Palmeiro

Continued from page 5

"I didn't understand why the Cubs did what they did," he said. "They told me after the season was over that I was going to be in their plans for many years to come and that I was one of the few players that was untouchable."

"Obviously that wasn't true and I was really upset about it."

Things, however, have turned out alright for Palmeiro. Last season, he finished third in the American League with a .319 mark and he led the league with 191 hits.

This year he'll embark on only his fourth full major league season, he's only 26-years-old and he's already a solid leader of a young and fast-moving team.

Palmeiro considers himself a leader, but not really a vocal leader.

"I don't consider myself a talkative type leader," Palmeiro said. "I like to lead by my actions on the field. I especially try to help a young player coming up. I think when a young player comes up and he's treated with respect and he's treated like one of the veterans, then they're more comfortable and they'll play better."

With the Rangers needing to fill some holes in their lineup with new players this year, the helping hand of Rafael Palmeiro could ease the perennial also-rans into a pennant contender.

Wudel

from page 5

Teams have to pay players with exorbitant contracts, and also pay their plane fares, wash their soiled jerseys, and pay for other amenities inherent to the game. These fees build up.

Networks have on-air personalities, cameramen, key grips, truck drivers, and others to pay.

But commercials impair the game for the players and the fans. Commercials after a touchdown are followed by more advertisements on the other side of the ensuing kickoff.

The waiting is the hardest part.

Networks are all too eager to take advantage of any break in the action. TV timeouts extend a two-hour contest to over three hours, and distress an otherwise happy fan.

Pain. Rules are being implemented to take the pain factor away from the game.

Granted, no one really wants these competitors to suffer unpleasant injuries, but football is a contact sport and pain is a reality of the game.

Unlike the violence of boxing, where padded gloves are all that stand in the way of consciousness or the lack thereof, football players are given a suit of hard plastic armor to protect themselves from head to toe.

But certain people don't feel it's enough. Such is the case with the in-the-grasp rule to protect the ever-fragile quarterback.

The quarterback is the leader of a team's attack, but is given favoritism by pansy rules that keep them from being thrown to the ground. In the good book of football definitions that is considered a tackle.

These players should be subjected to the same kind of punishment as their 10 fellow teammates. A quarterback is now considered sacked if a defensive player is simply grasping hold of his socks. An injustice to the offense and the defense, as well as those watching at home.

So let the men play. And let the fans enjoy the sport the way it was meant to be.

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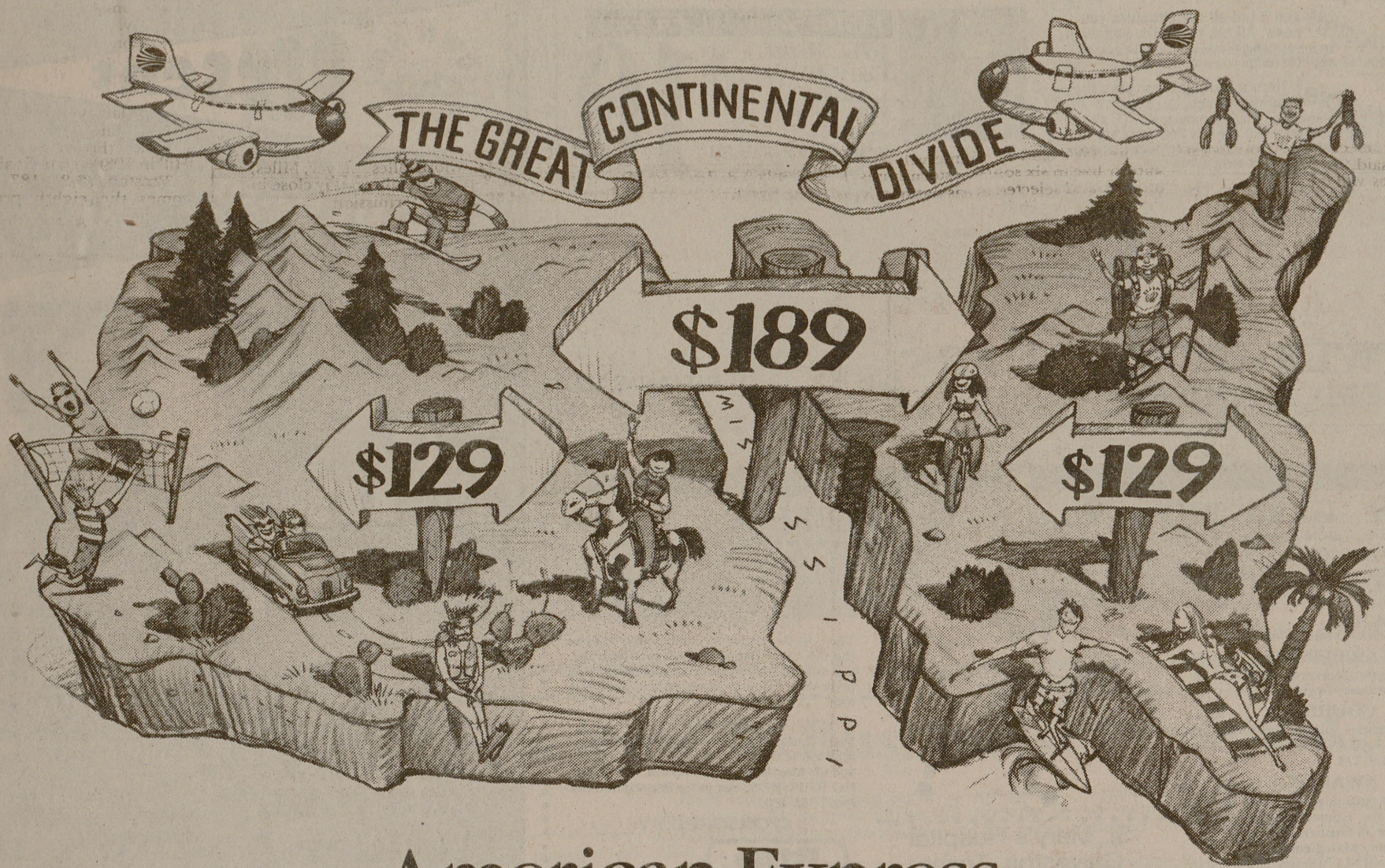
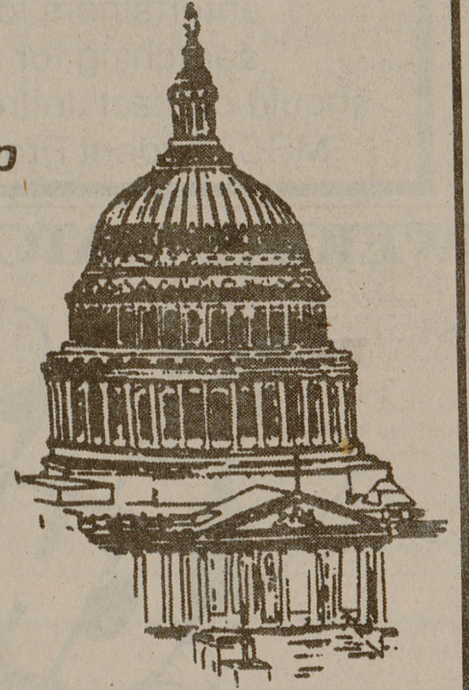
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