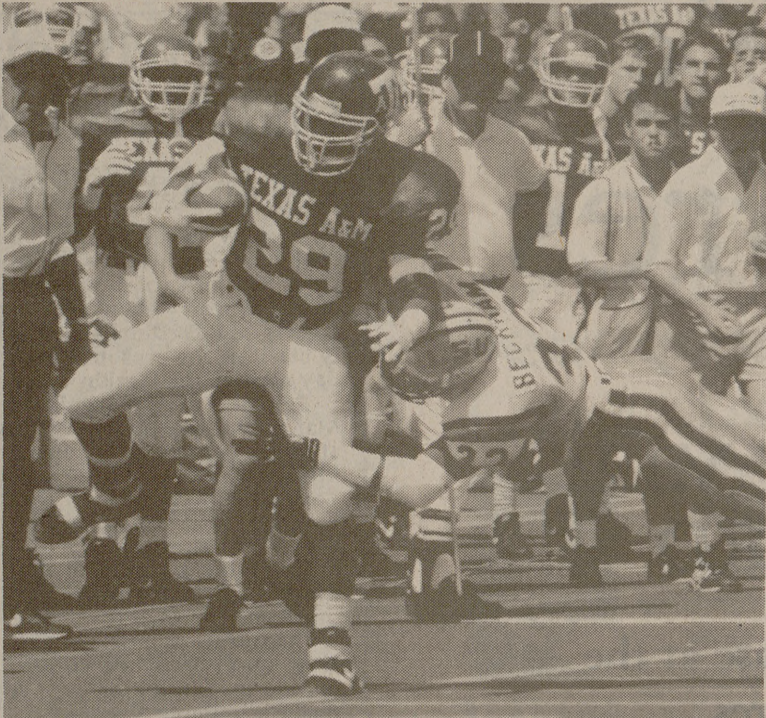


Ripken's numbers don't add up to new birthday contract

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BALTIMORE — Cal Ripken's numbers this season don't add up to the ones on his new contract: \$32.5 million for five years. The new contract isn't just about the present. It's also a reward for the past and an advance for the future. Ripken was batting .247 with 10 homers and 56 RBIs when the Baltimore Orioles gave him the richest contract in baseball history on Monday night.

Gehrig's record in the uniform on another team. Ripken was scheduled to play in his 1,700th successive game Wednesday night, leaving him 430 games short of Gehrig's record. If all goes as planned, the record will fall in 1995. That's just another part of the Ripken package. It used to be that homers and RBIs were his chief selling point, but the 32-year-old shortstop has fallen upon hard times. And it remains to be seen whether his best days are behind him.



Patrick Bates, shown here intercepting a pass against LSU last season, will be part of the Aggies secondary in tonight's Disneyland Pigskin Classic game against Stanford.

He proceeded to go 0 for 4 with an error. So it doesn't make much sense unless you consider Ripken is a 10-time American League All-Star who will pack fans into Camden Yards and fill the team's coffers as he nears Lou Gehrig's record of 2,130 consecutive games played.

In the days leading up to the finalization of the contract, Ripken said the negotiations had proven to be a major distraction. Now that all that is out of the way, he hopes to turn things around.

"I thought to myself when I was at the All-Star game in San Diego, it would be a sad irony if the loudest applause at next year's game (at Camden Yards) were to be for Cal Ripken wearing some other uniform," Orioles president Larry Lucchino said. Ripken began to feel that he just might have to go elsewhere for employment. Negotiations for the contract began last September and eventually Ripken's hopes of remaining in Baltimore began to diminish.

"I don't want to hide behind an excuse. I'm not going to say it's the reason I only have 10 homers at this point," he said. "I just know that I haven't been able to focus and concentrate the way I did in the past. Hopefully, this will give me a fresh start. I'm not going to make any promises and say now that this over everything is fine. Who knows? That might not be the root of the problem anyway."

"At first I thought there would be a five percent chance I'd go elsewhere. Then it became 10 percent and then 15 percent," he said. "I thought that maybe it would be a situation where I wouldn't be allowed to be an Oriole."

Ripken could have asked to renegotiate this year's pact but to him, a deal's a deal. "I never felt that I was underpaid. I felt as if I was lucky to be getting paid," he said. "You sign a contract and you live up to that contract. At that time it gave me a tremendous amount of security, allowed me to do a lot of things financially. I take the same view with this contract as I did the last contract — I'm lucky."

Dallas far from signing All-Pros Irvin, Novacek

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IRVING — The Dallas Cowboys don't appear to be anywhere near signing their three offensive team holdouts — center Mark Stepnoski, wide receiver Michael Irvin and tight end Jay Novacek — and teammates are getting impatient. Defensive end Tony Tolbert, who signed a three-year contract on Sunday, wrote the numbers 88, 84, and 53 on his gloves at practice. "Just a show of support," Tolbert said for No. 88 Irvin, No. 84 Novacek and No. 53 Stepnoski.

The Novacek signing appears the most critical. The Cowboys have no tight end with Novacek's passing catching skills. He caught 59 passes last year for 664 yards, although he missed four games with a knee injury. "We need those three guys to be the kind of football team we can be," said quarterback Troy Aikman. "We can be good with what we have, but we can be great with them." Novacek has asked for \$3.6 million for three seasons; the Cowboys have offered \$2.44 million for three years.

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