

# Big bucks, old men headline baseball gossip

As winter thaws and spring begins, baseball quickly approaches another opening day. Only this year most of the interesting news involves any and everything under the sun except actually playing baseball.

The biggest news of 1991's spring involves new contracts and player comebacks. If the trend toward obscene salaries continues, next season's MVP for both leagues may have to be an agent, not a ballplayer.

The most talked about salaries are Boston's Roger Clemens (\$5.375 million per year) and Oakland's Jose Canseco (a measly \$4.7 million annually), but the real laughers are the salaries average players in both leagues have secured for themselves.

The question of whether Clemens or Canseco deserve lottery prize-like salaries seems trivial when one considers what people like Jim Gott, Jim Deshaies, Kirk McCaskill and Dave Valle will be pulling down this season.

Each of these players had mediocre seasons in 1990, yet persuaded their respective teams they deserved huge raises and membership into the million and two-million dollar club.

Deshaies' case is, without a doubt, the biggest joke of them all.

How does an agent convince a team that his cli-



From the Sidelines  
by  
**ROBERT WEBER**

ent, who finished the previous season with a 7-12 record, 3.78 ERA in 209 innings pitched, deserves a raise of \$1 million? It seems like it would be awfully hard to defend Deshaies' point of view without bursting into laughter.

Funny as it may sound, Deshaies' agent was able to convince the Houston Astros that his southpaw client deserved a contract worth \$2.1 million for 1991.

When people aren't discussing the skyrocketing salaries, they seem to be busy discussing the latest comebacks, most notably that of ex-Baltimore Oriole ace Jim Palmer.

Palmer, whose age (45) is remarkably similar to the speed of his fastball, has been invited to Baltimore's spring training camp in Sarasota, Fla. as a non-roster member.

If he is successful in making the Birds, and don't hold your breath waiting for that to happen, Palmer

will become the first person to be on a major league roster and a member of baseball's Hall of Fame. That's pretty impressive, but if he fails in his comeback, Palmer should be voted out of the Hall. After all, if you can't make the Orioles roster you don't belong in Cooperstown.

Two more old-timers trying to stretch another season out of their battered bodies are catchers Bob Boone and Gary Carter.

Boone and Carter, two of baseball's finest backstops in the early 1980s, have been invited to spring training by teams, Seattle and Los Angeles, respectively, that believe their positive influence in the clubhouse outweighs their lack of production on the field.

Boone, 43, is coming off a season for Kansas City that saw him collect a grand total of 28 hits in 117 plate appearances (.239). It's too bad Boone, who began his career with Philadelphia in 1972, will have to play second or possibly third fiddle to Valle, who hit a whopping .214 for Seattle in 1990.

Carter, on the other hand, appears confused about the idea of a farewell tour.

Come on, Gary. A farewell tour means you visit every city in the league for one last time during your final year in the league, not try and make the roster of every team after you've been cut.

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