

Baseball fans missing point of strike; owners to blame

Now that the baseball strike is into its second week, it's time to clear up some misconceptions about this little labor dispute.

First of all, the players are not to blame this time. Most people are under the impression that the players are striking because they want more money from the owners. The average working stiff is crying about the players making too much money as it is. Cry all you want, but how much the players make is pretty much irrelevant in this strike.

Yes, the players make way too much. Yes, doctors and teachers deserve to make more than Barry Bonds and Bobby Bonilla. But when Joe from Michigan calls in to a radio talk show and bores everybody with his rehashing of this startling revelation that athletes are severely over-paid, it becomes painfully clear that he is missing the point all together.

It has almost become cliché now, but the players didn't hold a gun to the owners heads and force them to fork out all this money. The fact is that Barry Bonds and Ken Griffey Jr. fill sta-

diums. Thousands of fans pay their \$10 for parking, \$5-\$20 for a ticket, \$5 a beer, and \$4 a hot dog to see Bonds knock it out of the park. That's why Bonds makes what he makes. He more than justifies his earnings by his performance combined with the fan appeal that goes with his greatness.

Now Joe in Michigan is probably a middle class working kind of guy that appreciates the value of a dollar. He's probably a little bit jealous of the enormous incomes of these players as well. But what Joe from Michigan should recognize is that while the players make the exorbitant amounts of money that they do, they still have the right to protect that.

The owners want to impose a salary cap that would severely limit the amount of money players could make. How would Joe from Michigan like it he walked into work one day and there stood his boss with the news that he would only be able to make \$7-an-hour for the duration of his employment at that company. If Joe from Michigan was in a union, they certainly would have



CHRIS METZ

something to say about that. And this is exactly what the baseball players union is doing.

It's really time for America to wake up. The fans are just as responsible as the owners and players for the salaries that today's athletes make. Before the strike hit, baseball was on a record-setting pace for attendance. Bonds makes \$7 million a year because the fans will pay to see him play. All these people are running around screaming about how unfairly the fans are being treated in this whole mess. Well, the bad news is — nothing in life is fair. The President of the United States makes about \$200,000 a year to make decisions that affect the entire world. Doctors save lives, but they too

do not even make what a Mike Morgan makes in a year.

Now if we could turn saving lives into a sport in which millions of fans would fill stadiums to watch, then they would make what major league baseball players make. Indeed, in a perfect world doctors would garner the most money, and the President and sports columnists would follow closely behind.

The strike is actually quite entertaining to follow. When a baseball card dealer in New York dumps 2,000 cards off a roof, that's entertaining. When a sports fan calls in to a show and brags about his drunken exploits at a local bar (chopping up baseball memorabilia in a tree shredder), that's funny. It's scary to think that there are people out there that really think that they make a difference in a situation like this. Who do they think they're hurting, anyway? It just seems to make sense that dumping valuable cards off a roof would technically represent lost income for that card dealer. About the only thing that could possibly come out of these types of behavior is a free beer or a round of high-

fives from buddies.

So who do we blame for the strike? The most logical faction to blame is the owners. They can't even unite to present their case. The strike is really about owners versus owners. In short, the owners are a mess. Under the guidance of management negotiator Richard Ravitch, the owners aren't sure what they're doing.

This whole problem started with the owners realizing that there was a problem with the smaller market teams not being able to turn a profit. So instead of just implementing a revenue sharing plan, they had to drag the salary cap issue into it, further complicating the issue. The players are basically bystanders in this whole fiasco.

The players don't want to be on strike. Does anybody really think that Tony Gwynn wants to be on strike? He was a serious threat to hit .400 this season. How about Matt Williams, Frank Thomas, or Greg Maddux? This was to be a record-breaking season for each of them.

Chris Metz is the Emerald-sports editor.

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