

Usery to present strike-ending plan to Clinton before deadline

WASHINGTON (AP) — Baseball players and owners failed to settle the strike by President Clinton's Monday deadline, forcing mediator W.J. Usery to make his own proposal to the White House.

After four futile days at the bargaining table, Usery said Sunday he became convinced the sides wouldn't make a deal. Usery will present his plan to the president sometime Monday — Clinton's deadline for an agreement and the 100th anniversary of Babe Ruth's birth.

"At the pace we were going, it would take a long time to get where we were going," Usery said. "We can't continue to move in inches when we need to move in yards."

Owners want a new economic system that will control players' salaries, which averaged nearly \$1.2 million in 1994. The union, intent on preserving its gains of the past two decades, struck Aug. 12 to fight off the owners' demand to place a cap on costs.

Only after Usery gives the president his proposed terms will he divulge them to both sides. He will urge players and owners to accept, but if they don't, the next move will be up to Clinton.

The president could use Usery's solution as the basis for special legislation to impose a settlement. Any bill would have to be approved by Congress and signed by the president.

Acting commissioner Bud Selig, who has attended just one bargaining session during his 2-year tenure, was to arrive in Washington on Monday. It was Selig, the Milwaukee Brewers owner, who announced the cancellation of the World Series Sept. 14.

Spring training is to start a week from Thursday, and administration officials have said they are against the owners' plan to use replacement players.

"Time is running out on us," said Usery, who was appointed special mediator by Clinton Oct. 14. "We all know the effect this is having on our nation. It's absolutely essential we try to get baseball playing again."

Usery planned to meet Sunday at the White House with Labor Secretary Robert Reich and deputy White House counsel Bruce Lindsey, the president's point men for baseball.

The administration planned to have Usery tell negotiators to work through the night, according to a senior administration official, speaking on the condition he not be identified.

"We want to keep them guessing about what we might do," the official said. "The more they feel pressure to do it themselves, the better off we are."

Usery asked players and owners to submit "their very best position" to him on

Sunday. Then, on Monday, Usery planned to give his proposal to the president even before presenting it to the parties. Usery said he would make his plan public later in the day.

"I would be hopeful they would accept it," Usery said. "For us to meet the president's deadline, we have to do what we're doing. ... This is very, very serious business."

Following Usery's announcement, back-channel negotiations still were going on. Tom Reich and Ron Shapiro, a pair of prominent player agents, were at the hotel where the talks are being held. The sides worked on formulating their final offers.

Usery, a former Labor Secretary in the Ford administration, cajoled owners into withdrawing their salary cap demand, but teams still are insisting on a luxury tax that will place a drag on salary growth.

The union says it will not accept a significant payroll tax, leaving the sides far apart on the 178th day of the strike, the eighth work stoppage in the major leagues since 1972. The walkout canceled the final 52 days and 669 games last season and wiped out the World Series for the first time since 1904.

The day after talks broke off on Dec. 22, owners imposed their salary cap plan. On Jan. 26, Clinton ordered talks to resume,

and the sides got back to the bargaining table Wednesday.

But the sense of urgency didn't translate into major movement. Owners made their new proposal on Wednesday, asking for a 75 percent tax on the amount of payrolls between \$35 million and \$42 million, and a 100 percent tax on the amount above that.

On Friday, owners withdrew their salary cap after the National Labor Relations Board said it was prepared to issue an unfair labor practice charge that the system was illegally imposed. That led to speculation that progress might follow. Instead, the sides turned snippy Saturday.

Players, showing little movement from their previous proposal of Dec. 22, countered with what amounted to a 5 percent tax on the amount of payrolls between \$20.3 million and \$52.9 million, a 15 percent tax on the amount from \$52.9 million to \$65.1 million, and a 25 percent tax above that.

The highest team payroll ever, according to the owners' accounting, was the Detroit Tigers last season at \$56.8 million.

In one move that may turn out to be significant, players offered to eliminate salary arbitration — an item at the head of the owners' hit list — if all the eligible players could become free agents.

WOMEN

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game was produced by Boyer and Crowe. This time Crowe returned the favor as she made a no-look pass to the trailing forward on the right side of the paint during a two-on-one break. Oregon went into the locker room holding a seemingly comfortable 10-point lead, 39-29.

As in the beginning of the first half, the Ducks came out flat at the start of the second half, allowing California to ease its way back into the game. The Bears were able to close within five points as the Ducks were nailed with six fouls in the opening six minutes of the half.

The Bears' flurry did not

last for long though as the Ducks stayed calm and quickly took charge in the final 13 minutes of the game. First, Renae Fegent hit for two points, then Jessica Schutt drained for three. She hooked up with Boyer for two more. This was only the beginning of the Ducks' 24-8 blow away run.

"I was pleased that we fought through things and things kind of turned around in the second half," Runge said.

With the Ducks holding a now very comfortable 72-50 lead, even for Runge, who has been scrutinized for not playing her bench players, put in the lineup of center Sandie Edwards, forwards Betty Ann

Boeving and Cicely Brewster, and guards Kirsten McKnight and Shanthi Barton for some much needed Pac-10 experience.

"I've taken some heat for not doing it in the Washington game," Runge said of her decision making. "I don't want to put them in situations where they can't be successful. So it's a good thing to reward those kids when possible."

"Our season is on the line every game for the rest of the year now," Crowe said after the game. "We have to win every single game if we want to make it. And beating Cal tonight was really important."

The next hurdle for the Ducks is Civil War at Oregon State on Thursday.

WRESTLING

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ning, as Sprague wrestled for the first time since Dec. 16 and beat the Cougar's 167-pound Jeremy Lott.

"I think it really makes a big difference to get Matt back in the lineup," Finley said. "It was nice to get him in there, and that is a big sparkplug in our team when that happens."

In the 134-pound matchup, Blake Tompkins drew a major decision over the Cougars' John Hendrick, and Cory Sonnen then beat the Cougars' 142-pound Justin Judkins — who Finley considers BYU's best wrestler — 13-3 as the Ducks racked up two straight major decisions.

Perhaps the most exciting action of the afternoon, though, came in the last five seconds of the meet, as the Ducks' heavy-weight Nathan Sullivan topped

off his five-point comeback with a takedown that gave him the win.

Going into the third period of the match, Sullivan trailed 5-1 to the Cougar's much heavier Sean Ponce. But with the Oregon team's cheers behind him, Sullivan pulled out the win as Ponce was called for two stalling penalties before Sullivan took him down.

"We had better performances this afternoon right down the line, better intensity, and better wrestling all the way through," Finley said. "I thought we were the aggressors in this whole meet, whereas last night against Oregon State we weren't very aggressive, and it looked like we were trying not to get beat very bad."

The team has only two more dual meets before the Pacific 10 Championships on Feb. 24 in Corvallis, and according to Finley, they are critical matches.

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