

Union rep Rodgers is Super Bowl MVP

By JAMES PARKS

Two high-profile union members were in the spotlight this month.

On Super Bowl Sunday, Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers, the Packers' team rep for the NFL Players Association (NFLPA), took home the Super Bowl MVP award. The same day New England Patriot alternate rep Tom Brady was named Offensive Player of the Year for the 2010 season.

It is rare for two such high-profile players to serve as team reps, but both Rodgers and Brady are strong supporters of the union. When he was introduced as the Packers' new team rep last October, Rodgers made it clear that the union is important to him and his team-



AARON RODGERS

mates. He spoke out about how the prospect of a lockout in the 2011 season would hurt the community as well as the players.

"I think that's one thing we're trying to remember through this whole thing that's coming down here ... This lockout is bigger than just the players. It's bigger than the players vs. the owners. This is a deal that affects more than just 53 of us [the Packers' players]."

Team owners opted out of the collective bargaining agreement with the NFLPA two years before it was due to expire, saying it isn't working for them. But they refuse to provide audited fi-

nancial information to explain what is wrong in a business that generated \$9 billion in 2009, during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

On top of that \$9 billion and whatever they made in this football season, the owners will rake in another \$4 billion next season even if there are no games because CBS and the other networks that air NFL games have agreed to pay that amount to the NFL even if there is a lockout. In other words, because of CBS and the other networks, the owners have lockout insurance.

This Super Bowl also had another strong union tie. Both Green Bay and Pittsburgh are blue-collar manufacturing cities with rich union histories and where manufacturing is still a major industry.



Hoffmann retires from Laborers

Bill Hoffmann, a 32-year member of Laborers Local 296, retired Jan. 1. Hoffmann worked in the trade for 16 years, starting as a hod carrier. Local 296 hired him as a business agent in 1994, and in 1997 he became an organizer. He took a job with the international in 2001, working at the Laborers Northwest Regional Organizing Coalition. Hoffmann, 57, was active in his union and his community, which included a run for the Reynolds School Board. He says he has no ambitions to run for public office for now. "I just want to golf and fish," he told the Labor Press. His greatest disappointment, he said, was not seeing organized labor get back together under one big tent before he retired. "We need to all be working together," he said.

Time to register for MDA Labor Bowl March 13

The 22nd Annual Labor Bowl Challenge to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) will be held Sunday, March 13, at Hollywood Bowl, 4030 NE Halsey St., Portland.

Thirty lanes have been reserved. To date, 14 teams from five union locals have registered to bowl. This year's goal is to have 18 unions represented at the event.

Money is raised by pledges and a silent auction. Since its inception, Portland-area labor unions have collected \$311,828.75 for MDA. Money goes to buy wheelchairs and braces for children, as well as research and summer camps.

Registration starts at noon, with bowling under way at 1 p.m.

For more information, call Jim Cook, president of Letter Carriers Branch 82, at 503-493-5903. To donate items to the auction, call Debbie Burbank at 971-404-5384.

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Transit Union plans more rallies at TriMet Board

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 is continuing its informational picketing prior to TriMet Board meetings.

The next gathering is Wednesday, Feb. 23, from 8 to 9 a.m. at the Portland Building, 1120 SW 5th Ave., Portland. Following the action, the union is asking everyone to attend the Board meeting.

"I encourage you sign up to address the Board. Let your opinions be heard,"

said Local 757 President Jonathan Hunt. "The Board needs to know their lack of action is affecting real live people."

The sides met with a state mediator Jan. 28 and Feb. 2, with little progress made. They have been engaged in a labor dispute since the old contract expired Nov. 30, 2009. State law prohibits transit workers from striking and requires that all contract disputes be settled by binding arbitration.

ATU has filed two unfair labor practice (ULP) complaints. One alleges that TriMet changed its bargaining position when petitioning for arbitration in July 2010. The other is for unilaterally changing health insurance costs, a move the union says was in retaliation for filing the first ULP.

The ULPs aren't sheduled to be heard until May.

The union has asked Gov. John Kitzhaber to intervene.

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