

# Strike, Spinks & Billy Ray

by Al McGilberry

The season is over. Gene Upshaw, president of the N.F.L. Players Association called a strike of his 1500 members of the National Football League on the night of Monday, September 20th. Stadiums are closed, locker rooms are empty and America is without their number one pastime. Where are you Pete Rozelle? Pete is Commissioner of the owners, who has negotiated million dollar TV contracts, is dragging his feet in bargaining in good faith with the players.

Pete and the owners have not yet met with the players or their executive director Ed Garvey. They gave their ball to Jack Donlon and told him to run with it. Jack stated the owners would be prepared to go all season if necessary to prove their point: that they want to control the sport, and not share a thing with the players. They want to pay the players whatever they want to and hold their athletic life in a paternalistic fashion. Donlon also stated the players would not be paid. They could clear out their belongings and all practice fields would be closed.

I have always felt that football lacked the strong leadership the other sports, baseball and basketball, have shown. Why they let themselves get into this position after seeing a history of owners exploiting the players I'll never know. The owners know that the players are underpaid but they have always paid a few stars, but most better eat the dog food or go home. Now that the owners are getting so much money their greed is so overwhelming that they want to break the union.

Fans very seldom understand the issues. Most of the time they side with the owners. The fans never realize how tough the game can be; how short the career of each player is. And the players actually make the sacrifices and make the game

what it is. Many a fine player has gone home to digging ditches rather than be stepped on like a foot on a stone. Why the fans feel the rich owners deserve all the money and the players are overpaid is beyond my understanding.

But the day of the underpaid football player is over. The players are demanding a huge piece of the action, and why not? They are taking the hard shots and there is no game without them.

The owners had a whole year to get with the union, especially after they signed such a lucrative T.V. contract, which they do not want to share with anyone. I have stated before that sport is big business and is no different than AT&T, IBM or any other corporation. They do not understand the working class or want to see them as co-workers.

The football strike is long overdue. But our lives will still go on. Sport, folks, is only a game. We can live with it or without it. So hats off to the players. They finally realized that they're in the game of life and to win you must fight for everything you get. Only the strong survive and the weak belong on the sidelines.

There is so much phoniness in boxing today, but Braxton is for real. In the fight against Spinks I'll take Braxton in 9. What do you think?



BILLY RAY BATES

Two players from the N.B.A. died last week: Bill Robinzine, formerly of the Utah Jazz, and Billy Ray Bates of the Portland Trailblazers. Robinzine died of heartache and committed suicide, while Bates has played his last game in the

League. Both men were not prepared for life; both felt the game is a song that has no end. I feel for both, for when you have been used as a towel, when it gets dirty you wash it for another time. The newness was gone from Robinzine, the towel had too many holes for Bates. Both are sad cases that only the living can send prayers.

Athletes are vulnerable to all the effects of life, the good and the bad. Bates was a star without a generator to continue shining. He needed help but couldn't find it. He was a man who didn't understand the rules. I really feel for him. Robinzine, like many in sport, never prepared for the day when the shot would fail and the money would stop the easy roll into his pocket. Both cried but no one could hear their cries. It's sad and a lesson for the young. Prepare like the ant, for bad days are sure to come. Goodbye Billy I hope you land on your feet because no one will bring you up from your knees.



Braxton jabs Scott.

The big fight is on it way—Braxton and Spinks. I watched the networks prepare us for the unification bout Saturday. It was obvious that Spinks was going to win the mismatch; after all the money is with Spinks and Braxton meeting for the title.

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