

10C Thursday, September 15, 1994 Star Tribune

Baseball/ Focus now on playing '95 season

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The two sides continued to blame one another for the negotiating stalemate.

"I think what's interesting today is that when we got the announcement from Bud, as well as being disappointing and tragic, it seemed to me it was anticlimactic in the extreme," Major League Baseball Association chief Donald Fehr said during a news conference.

Fehr said during a news conference he was not sure the owners over the past few weeks... there appeared to be an extraordinary lengths to find an agreement.

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Fehr said the union would not necessarily oppose participating in limited arbitration, but said any arbitration "This will only be solved at the bargaining table."

The owners have offered the players 30 percent of baseball's revenue in a proposal that calls for a new revenue split for each club. The players reportedly reject any such revenue cap but say they want to maintain the minimum system as well as the average player salary to maintain the \$1.2 million a year. Last year, the union made a proposal to 10 percent of the total revenue, the degree to which the teams share their revenues — and includes the game's franchise fees — but the owners categorically rejected the plan, saying it contained no mechanism for sharing player salaries. Franchise fees broke off Saturday.

The economic and commercial law subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to conduct a hearing on the owners' long-standing lawsuit from federal antitrust laws next Thursday. A procedural bill introduced last year to limit the players to a maximum of 10 percent of the total revenue in an attempt to declare an impasse in negotiations and ultimately impose a salary cap — from reaching the Senate floor for a vote this week. The union officials say they believe congressional scrutiny of the antitrust exemption will increase dramatically if the owners impose a salary cap.

There are many casualties. Until the players went on strike Aug. 12, this had been shaping up to be one of the most intriguing seasons in memory. San Diego's Tony Gwynn had a chance to become baseball's first 400 hitler since Ted Williams' record set in 1941. San Francisco's Mark Williams, Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr., and the Chicago White Sox's Frank Thomas had opportunities to challenge Roger Maris' single-season home run record of 61.

The New York Yankees appeared to be on route to breaking the longest postseason drought in franchise history. The Cleveland Cleveland Indians had opened a magnificent new downtown ballpark and was having its best season in 40 years. The Montreal Expos at last had won the team's first major league title and had the best record in the major leagues.

Estimates are that the players will lose roughly \$20 million in potential income this year because of the strike. Disbursements from their approximately \$173 million strike fund — stockpiled from licensing deals — will begin this week. The players, who haven't received paychecks since Aug. 15, will be mailed checks of up to \$10,000 from this disbursement, and have made plans for expenditures of up to \$10,000 each on Oct. 1 and as much as \$2,000 apiece on Oct. 15. Managers, coaches and trainers also receive payments from the player's strike fund.

The 28 teams reportedly could miss out on somewhere between \$300 million and \$600 million in potential revenue this year because of the strike. The clubs have no strike insurance but do have lines of credit. Sources say that Fehr already has warned King that the real labor war begins now, and that as many as six teams could be out of business by the time the next big league game is played — perhaps as late as next June, some union officials say privately.



Associated Press

Fans/ Many don't seem to care that season is over

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Handy anyone expressed surprise at the owners' decision. Noid travel-negotiator Julian Epstein, Louisville — organizer of annual summer tours of outdoor stadiums — said he had reached the point where he didn't want the season resumed. He believes owners and players need a binding settlement, not an 11th-hour agreement to save the fans.

But not everyone was so resigned to the outcome. The United States Conference of Mayors, of which Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton is a member, released Wednesday a copy of research it sent to the owners and players last week, urging a settlement.

According to its data, Minneapolis is losing \$36,000 in local taxes and \$44,000 in business revenue per game. A total of 900 jobs have been lost, and more are looming as the Twins prepare for significant staff layoffs.

There is no measuring the damage the game might have done to local jobs if they do, the union almost certainly would file an unfair labor practices charge with the National Labor Relations Board. Players already have begun talking about forming a new league as soon as next year.

The owners, if a salary cap is imposed, probably would attempt to open spring training camps next year with major leaguers who break ranks and minor leaguers willing to step in.

don't really know who to be mad at."

Baseball's biggest problem might be the number of children who weren't angry Wednesday. A lot of youngsters also were apathetic.

"I really haven't heard anybody groaning about it," said Steve Landgraf, director at King Park. "If they could call off the NFL or the NFL, that's where most of their heroes are — it would be different."

McDonough and Hiawatha Park director Paul Jager said they had heard only a few complaints from youngsters. McDonough wondered how many would have cared if the season had been resumed. Baseball supports recent national studies that heralded renewed baseball as the favorite sport of America's youth.

"I'm truly worried about the game," said Epstein, Louisville, who is involved with several national fan projects. "The nature of the beast is that we will come back, but we probably won't go back as much, we won't be as committed and we'll probably be more cynical."

Several other noted local fans are less concerned. David Unsworth, owner of the Energy Mini book store, said he agrees with the opinion expressed by St. Paul businessman Mike Vreck, that all children should "get bored" when libraries close down than when a baseball game closes.

Local author Steve Thornley, who has written several historical baseball books, said fans should see this for what it is: a big business labor dispute. He says he is angered by losing the World Series, but does not necessarily think baseball has lost its magic.

"People say, 'How can you come back?' Thornley said. "Well, the minimum went on strike, and I'm still accepting my mail. When the (Minneapolis) newspaper went on strike the last time — 1981, I believe — I went back and bought my newspaper when the strike ended... I look at this as I might look at another big business."

And yet, no matter how pragmatic, there is no denying a part of America's lore was lost Wednesday. There will be no World Series for the first time since 1904.

"Some of us don't have football," said Natasia Poppe of St. Paul, an elementary school teacher. "Baseball is for me. Baseball is someone else's kind of like summer has just been brought to a halt."

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