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Reusse/ Players' counterproposal was a sham, a public relations gimmick

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Don Fehr, the executive director of the players' association, waited for the union with his usual optimism. After four weeks, the players came up with a counterproposal that was a sham, a public relations gimmick. The counterproposal Fehr and public relations are a counterproposal at Armco Carbon and the Quaker.

On Wednesday, Fehr again was trying to depict the players — with their \$1.2 million average salary — as the innocent victims of an evil cartel. Don, baby, you're the guy who called the strike that canceled the World Series for the first time in 90 years. Sorry, but the clock of negotiation does not fit this time.

Kent Herbek could have had his Oct. 2 report, and we could have had a World Series. Then, the labor battle could have been waged in the negotiating table and in the courts.

Next spring is too late for Herbek, He played his last game — a 17-7 victory over Boston — on Aug. 10 in the Metrodome. The crowd gave him a standing ovation, but he was not in anticipation that this was the strike that actually could wipe out the end of a season.

"The strike had been in the back of my mind for a few weeks," Herbek said. "We were in a town for the first time in the season and I would talk back in the bus as we were leaving and say, 'You know, if there's a strike, this might be the last time I played in that ballpark.'"

"There are a lot of bumps and bruises in this game. This is another one."

Herbek was talking of bumps and bruises of both the physical and emotional variety. This was an emotional bruise — the end of his career arriving seven weeks early.

"That's OK," Herbek said. "There is plenty of room to get bumped and bruised on this body."

It would not have been an official conversation with Herbek. He did not include a self-deprecating line concerning his bid. That's OK, too, because his daughter — Heidi, 21 — loves the big guy just the way he is.

"We get a load of bread, go over to the park and feed the ducks," Herbek said. "She loves feeding the ducks. I might be feeding them up for the NFL during training camp, but she doesn't know that."

Kent and Jennie Herbek have managed to take over Planet Hollywood for a retirement party one night in late October. You can bet the invitations will be sent to everyone from Probal to the organization's underlings — people Herbek always treated as friends, not servants.

"I had a great relationship with the players I came on with," Herbek said. "We lost 102 games in 1982, and Billy Cauder was the perfect manager for a young team like that. Billy knew he didn't have the horses to pull the wagon, so rather than get us to let us get better. We know to '44 or so, when Carl Probal bought the team, that we would be able to stay together and maybe win."

"If anything has changed that I don't like, it's that the younger players don't seem to value the relationship with the people who work in the front office, work in the clubhouse. 'Respect the people in the game' — that's what Tom Kelly



Kent Herbek: "It was fun, right to the finish."

"That's what made the game fun for me. We didn't win much the last couple of years, because we didn't have the horses, but Tom Kelly still was the manager, the coaches were the same and we still had good people all through the organization. It was fun, right to the finish."

The finish came Wednesday. Big Herbek and all the fan he brought to the American game are gone. He was pushed out of the way by Bill and Fehr, to make way for baseball's Armageddon.

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