

# Outside the Lines

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## Chairman's Note

**Don't forget to renew.** If you haven't renewed your SABR membership for 2001, now is the time. Contact the SABR office: 812 Huron Rd. East, #719, Cleveland, OH 44115, E-mail info@sabr.org. For those who don't renew, this will your last issue of *Outside the Lines*.

**Update your postal and E-mail addresses!** Every year, several newsletters are returned because forwarding orders have expired, and a handful of E-mailed surveys bounce back as undeliverable. The Business of Baseball Committee mailing list is maintained by me, not by the SABR office -- if you didn't receive a survey, I don't have your correct E-mail address.

**Any proposals for the Committee's "special project"?** SABR Publications Director Mark Alvarez has invited all research committees and regional groups to submit an article for a forthcoming SABR special publication. If you're working on something you'd like to have considered, please let me know.

## MLB News

**Revenue sharing winners and losers.** In December, the *New York Daily News* printed the list:

**Givers:** Yankees (\$22 million), Mets (\$18 million), Indians (\$13 million), Braves and Red Sox (\$12 million), Dodgers (\$11 million), Rangers and Orioles (\$9 million), Mariners (\$8 million), Rockies, Cardinals and Giants (\$7 million), Astros, Tigers and Cubs (\$6 million), White Sox (\$5 million), Diamondbacks (\$1 million).

**Receivers:** Expos (\$24 million), Twins (\$21 million), Marlins (\$16 million), Brewers (\$15 million), Athletics (\$13 million), Pirates (\$12 million), Phillies (\$11 million), Angels, Reds and Padres (\$8 million), Devil Rays and Blue Jays (\$7 million).

**Commissioner Selig proposes "competitive balance" draft.** This draft, recommended by the owners' Blue Ribbon Economic Panel, would allow the eight clubs with the worst records over the past three years to draft one player each from the eight with the best records. Each club subject to the draft could protect only 25 players in its entire organization -- a real threat to clubs with deep farm systems. (This was the same format which allowed the White Sox to draft Tom Seaver from the Mets in 1984: the Mets protected 12 players who had never played in the majors, including Dwight Gooden, Kevin Mitchell, Len Dykstra and Sid Fernandez.) If implemented after the 2001 season, the draft would likely have the perverse result of allowing the Orioles to draft from the Athletics.

**Selig threatens \$1 million fine for owners discussing labor issues.** Commissioner Selig has informed owners that he will be the only management spokesman on labor issues, and that any owner talking to the press will be fined up to \$1 million. He then fined Boston's John Harrington a reported \$500,000 for telling the Boston *Globe* that "you're not going to see a lockout happen again."

**More minorities in MLB.** MLB's Equal Opportunity Committee reported that as of June 30, 2000, 22% of MLB employees were minorities, up from 20% in 1997. 10% of employees were black (down 1%), 9% Hispanic (up 2%) and 3% Asian (up 1%). The percentage of minorities in executive positions rose 1%, to 15%; the percentage of minority coaches, instructors and scouts rose 4%, to 30%. There are six minority managers (Felipe Alou, Dusty Baker, Don Baylor, Davey Lopes, Jerry Manuel and Lloyd McClendon), and one minority GM (Ken Williams of the White Sox).

**MLB hires Rob Bowman as Internet czar.** Bowman left Outpost.com to become CEO and president of MLB Advanced Media. He's supervising a total overhaul of mlb.com, which will coordinate the Internet activities of all 30 teams as well as provide a central source for stats and features.

**Richie Phillips just won't go away.** The umpires' former representative has sued Bud Selig, Sandy

Alderson and others in the Commissioner's Office, as well as umps Joe Brinkman, John Hirschbeck and Tim Welke, for defaming him with "various false, misleading and malicious statements disparaging the ability, professionalism, and integrity of Phillips." I'd add a comment, but since I'm also SABR's Legal Advisor, I deem it best to say *absolutely nothing* here about the litigious Mr. Phillips' ability, professionalism and integrity. I will, however, quote defendant Ron Manfred's response to the suit: "I think this is the latest in Mr. Phillips' long line in unsuccessful attempts to litigate his way out of his own blunders."

### Around the Majors

**10 Diamondbacks defer salary to ease cash-flow crunch.** The gesture – by five starting position players and the entire starting rotation – is expected to save the club \$16 million this year, though at a very substantial cost down the road. Owner Jerry Colangelo insists he's "as sure as I am that the sun will come up tomorrow" that the club will be able to afford the deferred payments.

**Orioles seek concessions from Baltimore stadium authority.** Envious of additional perks allegedly granted to Art Modell for moving the Browns to Baltimore, the Orioles seek to obtain the same benefits through arbitration. Among the Orioles' demands: the right to sell naming rights to Oriole Park at Camden Yards, a \$26 million rent credit and an interest-free loan to build more skyboxes.

**Chicago Tribune inadvertently exposes subsidiaries' fiscal chicanery.** On February 4, the *Tribune*, whose parent company owns both the Chicago Cubs and WGN, reported that last year the Cubs received \$7.6 million for airing 72 games on WGN TV, a national cable superstation – \$5.4 million less than Fox Sports Net paid to air the same number of games only in Chicago. The Cubs also ranked 17th in radio revenues, receiving only \$4 million from – you guessed it – WGN Radio, the clear-channel flagship of a 38-station regional network.

**Coors Field already paid for.** Thanks to a strong economy and lower interest rates, the six-county Denver Metropolitan Major League Baseball Stadium District paid off Coors Field's \$215 million bond issue in ten years rather than the expected 20.

**Marlins reach tentative agreement for new park.** Owner John Henry will build the new facility in Miami's Bicentennial Park. Plans for the \$385 million, 40,000-seat stadium include 60 luxury boxes, 3,000 club seats and 15,000 parking spaces. The Marlins would pay \$240 million over the course of a 40-year lease, while Dade County would contribute the land and \$118 million from tourist taxes, the state would earmark \$122 million from sales taxes. A 4% ticket surcharge and parking surcharge would raise another \$76 million. As part of the deal, the club would also change its name to the Miami Marlins.

**New Twins stadium proposals** "Minnesotans for Major League Baseball" proposed a \$300 million park to be financed half by Twins' owner Carl Pohlad, half by taxes on stadium-related economic activity (everything from construction materials to player salaries to concessions and parking). Another group, "New Ballpark Inc.," hopes to raise \$100 million towards a new park through a stock offering. The Twins may need to make a deal soon: another proposal calls for converting the Metrodome into a football-only stadium to keep the Vikings from leaving town.

**Yankees develop yet another revenue stream.** Parent company YankeeNets has announced a marketing alliance with Manchester United, the world's most valuable soccer team. The organizations will share marketing information, sell one another's licensed goods and develop joint sponsorship and promotional programs.

**Cardinals looking for new park – on either side of the Mississippi.** The Cardinals' first choice is a \$370 million stadium in downtown St. Louis, for which they've offered to contribute \$100 million – but they've warned that unless a deal is struck this year, they will pursue "parallel backup planning" with Illinois interests for a park in or near East St. Louis.

**Giants' new park proving a sound investment.** Upon moving to privately-funded Pacific Bell Park, the Giants more than doubled their total revenues, from \$75 million in 1999 to \$160 million in 2000. Owner Peter Magowan reported that the club exceeded its own revenue forecasts by 7.5%, and turned a profit even after contributing \$20 million to pay down the stadium debt.

### Sixth Annual Business of Baseball Committee Survey

This year's survey asked members to predict how the upcoming labor negotiations will play out. Thanks to the 30 participants: **Marshall Adesman, Leon Battista, Alex Boyd, Gene Carney, Frank Cunliffe, Bill Felber, Eugene Freedman, Greg Gajus, Bill Gilbert, Jahn Hakes, Michael Hauptert, Jeff Houck, Don Hunt, Rodney Johnson, Rich Klein, John Lewis, Brian Marshall, John Matthew, Paul Matthew, Andy McCue, Peter Oldytowski, Mark Pankin, Doug Pappas, John Pastier, Anthony Salazar, Richard Sheehan, Terry Sloope, Harry Swanson, Gerry Wachs, and Mike Webber.**

1. Before the owners can submit their opening offer for the new CBA, they must agree among themselves on a revenue sharing plan. When will this happen?
  - A. Before Opening Day – 2 vote (Hakes, Salazar)
  - B. Before Memorial Day – 0 votes
  - C. Before the All-Star Break – 3 votes (Cunliffe, Hunt, Webber)
  - D. Before Labor Day – 4 votes (Johnson, Lewis, Pappas, Sloope)
  - E. After Labor Day – 21 votes (everyone else)

**Marshall:** “I think there will end up being just enough owners to prevent an agreement on the concept of revenue sharing. Instead the owners will waste all summer bargaining with themselves, rather than with the players. The other problem for revenue sharing will that some perceived small market team, like Oakland, will win 95 games, giving the opponents of revenue sharing ammunition against it.”

**McCue:** “This is the issue that the rich lose on and that the poor have to win. It’s real (unlike Alex Rodriguez’ salary), and thus they will fight long and hard.

**Sheehan:** “Gut reaction: you should have an alternative, ‘When hell freezes over.’ Frankly, I cannot see Selig and Steinbrenner agreeing on this any time this millennium. Their own economic self interests are simply too far apart and neither appears willing to sacrifice personal gain for the sake of the league.”

2. The owners’ Blue Ribbon Economic Panel called for sharing of up to 50% of local revenues. What percentage of local revenues will be shared if and when the owners’ revenue sharing plan is fully phased in? [**Average: 24%**]
 

0%:	Hauptert, Marshall
8%:	Swanson
10%:	Battista, Carney, Cunliffe, Wachs
15%:	Boyd
20%:	Houck, Pankin, Sloope
20-25%:	Adesman
<25%:	Hakes
25%	Felber, Klein, Pastier, Salazar
30%:	Gajus, Hunt
33%:	Freedman, J. Matthew, P. Matthew, McCue, Pappas, Webber
35%:	Johnson
40%:	Gilbert, Lewis, Oldytowski, Sheehan

**Pankin:** “Owners who paid a lot and/or have large market teams are not going to part with

much of their revenue. How would you like to sign A-Rod and then give up a significant portion of the money you were counting on to pay him?"

3. When will the owners make their first contract offer to the players?
  - A. Before Opening Day – 2 votes (Battista, Houck)
  - B. Before Memorial Day – 1 vote (Hakes)
  - C. Before the All-Star break – 1 vote (Oldytowski)
  - D. Before Labor Day – 5 votes (Adesman, Cunliffe, Hunt, Salazar, Webber)
  - E. After Labor Day – 20 votes (everyone else except Andy McCue (see below))

**McCue:** "Doesn't matter. It won't be realistic. It will be designed to buy time and put the players on the defensive with the public while the owners solve their internal problems."

4. Which of the following proposals will be part of the owners' first offer?
  - A. Hard salary cap – **10 votes** (Battista, Boyd, Felber, Gajus, Houck, Klein, Marshall, P. Matthew, Oldytowski, Pankin)
  - B. Steep luxury tax (marginal rate of over 50%) – **5 votes** (Boyd, Hunt, Johnson, Pankin, Pappas)
  - C. Blue Ribbon Panel recommendation: 50% on payrolls over \$84 million – **15 votes** (Adesman, Cunliffe, Freedman, Gilbert, Hakes, Hauptert, Houck, Lewis, J. Matthew, Oldytowski, Salazar, Sheehan, Sloope, Wachs, Webber)
  - D. Blue Ribbon Panel recommendation: minimum payroll of \$40 million, to be enforced through withholding of revenue-sharing money – **15 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Boyd, Carney, Cunliffe, Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes, Lewis, J. Matthew, P. Matthew, Pappas, Swanson, Wachs, Webber)
  - E. Weaker minimum payroll requirement: lower amount, or weaker enforcement – 6 votes (Freedman, Hunt, Marshall, Pastier, Sheehan, Sloope)
  - F. Blue Ribbon Panel recommendation: overhaul of amateur draft – **20 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Boyd, Carney, Cunliffe, Freedman, Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes, Hauptert, Lewis, Marshall, J. Matthew, P. Matthew, Oldytowski, Pappas, Pastier, Sloope, Wachs, Webber)
  - G. Blue Ribbon Panel recommendation: "competitive balance draft" entitling eight teams with the worst records to pick one player from each of the playoff teams – **11 votes** (Adesman, Boyd, Freedman, Hakes, Hauptert, Hunt, Johnson, Oldytowski, Pappas, Sloope, Wachs)
  - H. Elimination of salary arbitration – **20 votes** (Boyd, Carney, Felber, Freedman, Gajus, Hakes, Hauptert, Hunt, Johnson, Klein, Lewis, Marshall, J. Matthew, P. Matthew, Oldytowski, Pastier, Sheehan, Sloope, Wachs, Webber)
  - I. Elimination of two to four teams through industry contraction – **2 votes** (Boyd, Pastier)
  - J. Other:
    - Freedman:** Hard cap on amateur draft bonuses; in return for an end to arbitration, free agency after five years, and to top 25% of service time for those with 4+ seasons
    - Hauptert:** Elimination of arbitration in return for shorter time to free agency
    - Sheehan:** Extending the draft worldwide

5. When will the next CBA be signed?

- A. Before the end of the 2001 season – **0 votes**
- B. Before spring training 2002 – **1 vote** (Carney)
- C. Before Opening Day 2002 – **10.5 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Freedman, Gilbert, Johnson, J. Matthew, Oldytowski, Salazar, Sheehan, Wachs, Webber)
- D. Before Memorial Day 2002 – **2.5 votes** (Cunliffe, Pankin, Wachs)
- E. Before 2002 All-Star Game – **7 votes** (Hauptert, Houck, Hunt, Klein, P. Matthew, McCue, Swanson)
- F. Before Labor Day 2002 – **2 votes** (Gajus, Marshall)
- G. After Labor Day 2002 – **7 votes** (Boyd, Felber, Hakes, Lewis, Pappas, Pastier, Sloope)

**Paul Matthew:** “If they were smart they would sign it before spring training but I think both sides are going to get ugly.”

- 6. Will there be a labor stoppage before the next CBA is signed?
  - A. No – **3 votes** (Carney, J. Matthew, McCue)
  - B. Yes – lockout which ends during spring training 2002 – **7 votes** (Adesman, Freedman, Gilbert, Johnson, Oldytowski, Salazar, Sheehan)
  - C. Yes – spring training lockout which extends into 2002 regular season – **7 votes** (Cunliffe, Gajus, Hunt, Klein, P. Matthew, Swanson, Webber)
  - D. Yes – 2002 regular season lockout – **0.5 votes** (Pankin)
  - E. Yes – 2002 regular season strike – **1.5 votes** (Houck, Pankin)
  - F. No agreement will be reached before the end of the 2002 regular season, but MLB and the MLBPA will have traded no-strike and no-lockout pledges to ensure that the 2002 season is played while they continue to negotiate – **10 votes** (Battista, Boyd, Felber, Hakes, Lewis, Marshall, Pappas, Pastier, Sloope, Wachs)
  - G. Other: **Hauptert:** Player walkout before end of 2001 season

**Hauptert:** “Either the owners will cave in quickly and it will look much like the current one, or it will be a long strike and the owners will essentially restructure the game, leading the players to sue them in court for restraint of trade. However, to cause the owners to capitulate missing a second World Series TV payout will probably result in the return of the game sometime in early summer of 2002, as the owners realize that making a few million a year is a lot better than losing tens of millions a year.”

**Sheehan:** “If there is a labor stoppage, I expect it to be of relatively short duration. Regardless of the owners’ propoganda, most have done well over the past few years – and reading between the lines of the Blue Ribbon Panel’s numbers should make that abundantly clear. Most would be much worse off financially with a labor stoppage, both short term and long term.”

**Webber:** “I wouldn’t be surprised if Opening Day was after Memorial Day.”

- 7. *What will the next CBA look like?*
  - A. What percentage of local revenues will the owners share among themselves? (See response to Question 2, above.)
  - B. Will there be a hard salary cap?
    - Yes: **3 votes** (Boyd, P. Matthew, Swanson)
    - No: **25 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Carney, Cunliffe, Felber, Freedman, Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes,

Hauptert, Houck, Hunt, Johnson, Klein, Lewis, Marshall, J. Matthew, McCue, Oldytowski, Pankin, Pappas, Pastier, Sheehan, Sloope, Webber)

- C. Will there be a luxury tax? If so, what will it look like?  
 None: **4 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Boyd, Cunliffe)  
 Yes, but unsure of details: **3 votes** (Johnson, McCue, Webber)  
 Yes with details provided: **18 votes** (see below)  
 Carney – Luxury tax steeper than 1996-99 incarnation  
 Freedman -- Tax on payrolls 25% above median  
 Gajus – 50% tax on payrolls above \$90 million  
 Gilbert – Tax on payrolls above \$84 million  
 Hakes, P. Matthew – 50% on payrolls above \$84 million  
 Houck – Up to 25% on payrolls over unspecified amount  
 Hunt – 40% tax on payrolls above \$80 million  
 Klein – Small percentage of total payroll  
 Lewis, Sloope – 50% on payrolls above \$80 million  
 Marshall – 20% on payrolls above \$90 million  
 J. Matthew, Pankin, Swanson – Minor variation on the 1996-99 version  
 Oldytowski – 50% on payrolls above \$96 million  
 Pappas – 50% on payrolls above \$84 million, indexed to rate of payroll increase  
 Pastier – “Soft, with a high threshold and low rates”  
 Sheehan – Tax on payrolls over a certain amount, escalating over time
- D. Will there be a minimum team payroll? If so, what will it be and how will it be enforced?  
 No: **5 votes** (Adesman, Boyd, Johnson, Marshall, Pankin, Sloope)  
 Yes, amount uncertain: **4 votes** (Hakes, Klein, J. Matthew, Webber)  
 Yes, with specifics: **17 votes** (see below; average is **\$34.4 million**)  
 \$20 million – Felber  
 \$20 million, enforced through distribution of revenue sharing money – Sheehan  
 \$25 million, with unspent money contributed to revenue-sharing fund – McCue  
 \$30 million average over 3 years – Gajus  
 \$30 million with weak enforcement – Hunt, Swanson  
 \$30 million, enforced through distribution of revenue sharing money – Pastier  
 \$35 million – Houck  
 \$40 million – Carney, Cunliffe, P. Matthew  
 \$40 million, enforced by withholding revenue sharing money – Gilbert, Lewis, Pappas  
 \$40-\$45 million, indexed for inflation and enforced through Commissioner’s office – Battista  
 \$48 million, enforced by withholding revenue sharing money – Oldytowski  
 Minimum of 75% of all shared revenue funds received; if not spent on salaries, distributed to the MLBPA – Freedman
- Pankin:** “This is a terrible idea, and I think even the players will realize it is.”
- E. Will the rules governing free agency remain the same?  
 Yes: **20 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Carney, Felber, Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes, Houck, Hunt, Klein, Marshall, J. Matthew, McCue, Pankin, Pappas, Pastier, Sheehan, Sloope, Swanson, Webber)  
 No: **8 votes** (Boyd, Cunliffe, Freedman, Hauptert, Johnson, Lewis, P. Matthew, Oldytowski)  
 P. Matthew: A free agent’s existing team will be able to offer him more money than any other team  
 Oldytowski: Free agency after four years
- F. Will the rules governing arbitration remain essentially the same?  
 Yes: **17 votes** (Battista, Cunliffe, Felber, Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes, Houck, Klein, J. Matthew, McCue,

- Pankin, Pappas, Pastier, Sheehan, Sloope, Swanson, Webber)  
 No (unspecified): **4 votes** (Boyd, Carney, Hunt, Johnson)  
 No with specifics: **7 votes**  
 Adesman – Arbitrator will be allowed to choose a midpoint between two proposals  
 Freedman – Arbitration eliminated except for players with 4 years' service time  
 Hauptert – Arbitration eliminated in return for free agency after three years  
 Lewis – Arbitration replaced by statistical pay-for-performance scale; free agency after 5 years  
 Marshall – "Super Two" category will be eliminated  
 P. Matthew – Rules changed to reflect salary cap  
 Oldytowski – Arbitration eliminated in return for free agency after four years
- G. Will the rules governing the amateur draft be overhauled to reduce draftees' leverage?  
 Yes: **26 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Boyd, Carney, Cunliffe, Freedman, Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes, Hauptert, Houck, Hunt, Johnson, Klein, Lewis, Marshall, J. Matthew, P. Matthew, Oldytowski, Pankin, Pappas, Pastier, Sheehan, Sloope, Swanson, Webber). Respondents identified caps on signing bonuses and internationalization of the draft as the likeliest changes. As **Mark Pankin** summarized, "the owners need to get something out of the negotiations, and the draftees aren't in the union yet."  
 No: **1 vote** (McCue: "The owners will focus on other issues and use this as a bargaining chip.")
- H. What will the minimum salary, now \$200,000, rise to in the first year of the new CBA? [**Average: \$260,000**]  
 \$208,000 - Johnson  
 \$220,000 - Pastier  
 \$225,000 - Battista, Carney, Felber, Freedman, Hunt, Sheehan, Sloope  
 \$240,000 – Adesman  
 \$250,000 – Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes, Hauptert, J. Matthew, P. Matthew, Oldytowski, Pappas, Swanson  
 \$275,000 – Marshall  
 \$300,000 – Boyd, Cunliffe, Lewis, McCue, Pankin  
 \$350,000 – Webber  
 \$400,000 – Houck
- I. Will any teams be eliminated?  
 Yes: **1 vote** (Swanson)  
 Maybe: **1 vote** (Pastier -- "perhaps two – Montreal and Minnesota")  
 No: **21 votes** (Adesman, Battista, Boyd, Carney, Cunliffe, Felber, Freedman, Gajus, Gilbert, Hakes, Hauptert, Johnson, Klein, Lewis, Marshall, J. Matthew, P. Matthew, Pankin, Pappas, Sheehan, Webber)  
**Gilbert:** "Not right away."
- J. What other significant provisions will it contain?  
**Battista:** Greater share of postseason revenue for players  
**Boyd:** Trading deadline moved back to June 15  
**Freedman:** Rotating interleague play, expansion and realignment in 2004  
**Oldytowski:** Teams allowed to trade draft picks, relocation, expansion by 2006  
**Pankin:** Easier to relocate

*BONUS QUESTION: Testifying before Congress last November, Bud Selig said, "At the start of spring training, there no longer exists hope and faith for the fans of more than half of our 30 clubs." Let's test this statement. Name the sixteen clubs ("more then half") LEAST likely to make the playoffs in 2001. You may name more than 16, but to be valid, a ballot must list at least 16 teams.*

Only five teams received no votes from the 22 respondents who submitted valid ballots, while just four were named on every ballot. The totals:

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0 votes:	Atlanta, Chicago White Sox, New York Yankees, St. Louis, San Francisco
1 vote:	Boston, New York Mets, Oakland
2 votes:	Cleveland
8 votes:	Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Seattle, Texas
9 votes:	Arizona
11 votes:	Houston
14 votes:	Colorado
15 votes:	Toronto
19 votes:	Minnesota
20 votes:	Anaheim, Detroit, Florida, San Diego
21 votes:	Kansas City, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Tampa Bay
22 votes:	Baltimore, Chicago Cubs, Montreal, Philadelphia

**Pankin:** "What a stupid statement on Selig's part. If the only reason to be a fan is because your team has a good shot of making the playoffs, then the AL would have shrunk to 3 teams sometime in the 1950s, and the Cubs, Pirates and Phillies would have folded by 1960."

**Pastier:** "I suggest you forward the question to Mr. Selig and see how well he does with his own prognostications – and also see if he names his daughter's team."

**Sloope:** "And did you hear the uncontrollable laughter coming from the players when Selig said there *would* be significant changes in the economic structure of baseball?"

### The View from Japan, by Yoshihiro Koda

After the 2000 baseball season, more Japanese star players have signed with North American clubs. Ichiro Suzuki will start his career in America with Seattle, while Tsuyoshi Shinjo will join the New York Mets. More players hope to follow them. Kazuhisa Ishii, regarded as one of Japan's best southpaws, has demanded a trade to a MLB club after the 2001 season as the price of renewing his contract for 2001. Looking at these situations, some Japanese baseball fans are concerned that the Japanese leagues may become a kind of minor league.

I share this concern. But I like watching how Japanese players perform in America, too. I'm fortunate to live in an era in which we Japanese fans can watch live North American games as long as TV stations broadcast it. In addition, a stronger Japanese currency and cheaper airfare makes it easier for us to visit American stadiums. We can enjoy American-style baseball games which include Japanese players, while also experiencing another atmosphere and culture. It's fun.

And it must be natural for athletes to want to challenge the best. The opportunity to play in MLB, the most-skilled baseball league in the world, must motivate players to improve themselves. I believe that even after the Japanese leagues lose some star players, the potential to play in America will produce exciting games in the Japanese leagues.

I wonder this logic can apply to clubs, too. In a previous *View from Japan*, I proposed including the Japanese league champions in the American postseason series. Such a plan would allow American and Japanese clubs to play one another. Just as the introduction of free agency made it easier for individual Japanese players to join an American club, I think the possibility of playing American clubs would motivate Japanese clubs to play better, too.

Direct competition with American clubs could also enhance the "major league" status of the Japanese Central and Pacific Leagues. This might encourage more Japanese stars to stay at home, hoping to beat MLB clubs as a member of a Japanese team rather than competing in MLB as an individual player.

I read that MLB has proposed the World Cup Tournament involving national teams. This may be easier than playing a championship series across the Pacific Ocean, with all the jet lag that would entail. But since the 2000 MLB season opened with a two-game series in Tokyo, even this obstacle may yet be overcome.

### New Addresses

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