Outrageous Salaries Essay, Research Paper

Today’s professional athletes make astronomical salaries and their only going one direction. Up. Every year we hear we hear about how a professional athlete just signed a contract worth a record (insert ridiculous amount here) million dollars. Then about the same time the very next year we hear about how another athlete is signing a new contract worth even more than the previous high. In fact, most professional sports minimum salaries are over $100,000 per year. These salaries are not at all reflective of these athletes economic importance. Professional athletes are making too much money in a society that s salaries and wages are traditionally based on the value of ones work.

Whose fault is it that these athletes make these huge salaries? According to Chris Butterfield it’s our fault (Big Money Pro Sports Create New Brand of Athlete). He’s right, it is our fault. We’re the ones who go to these sporting events and shell out the $50 a ticket, the $100 for the jacket, and the $20 for the hat of our favorite teams. We’re the ones who support these professional sporting teams, and in turn the players. The reason these ticket prices go up constantly are partly because they need to make more money to pay for our favorite stars, and partly because they know we’ll pay it. If we stopped supporting our favorite teams by not going to the games, by not buying the merchandise, and by not watching them on television, do you think the salaries would start to decline? You bet they would. Joe Football player isn’t going to get paid the $100 million dollar contract if the money isn’t there for him to be paid with.

Marshall Burrow points out that Michael Jordan makes an amazing 33 million dollars a year, not to mention another 40 million a year in endorsements (Do Sports Players get Paid too Much so Ticket Prices Go Up)! Burrow has even went as far as to brake Jordan’s salary down to the day. Michael Jordan makes $170,000 a day! Is anyone, much less an athlete, worth a $170,000 a day? Once again, Jordan’s salary is not reflective of his value to society. The president of the United States makes a somewhat modest $250,000 a year, and this basketball player practically brings that home each day. We should keep in mind that while sports are a business, that s not what they were originally intended for, as Burrow points out that, “They are just games, and games are supposed to be something we do for fun!”

Since Michael Jordan is arguably the most famous and the highest paid professional athlete of all time we will concentrate on him for a few more examples. According to Forbes magazine back in 1996 Michael Jordan made 31.3 million dollars in salary; slightly less than what he makes now (It’s a Whole New Ball Game). Jordan also brought home another 47 million in endorsements that year for a grand total of 78.3 million dollars that year. Not bad for playing some basketball, posing by a few hot dogs, and letting a few companies put his face by their product. In fact, according to Richard O’Brien and Hank Hersch (It’s a Whole New Ball Game), in that same 1996 season, Michael Jordan played 3,106 minutes of basketball and that equaled out to $160.97 per second. That is truly amazing. I don t even make that when I work 25 hours a week. Even more amazing was Mike Tyson’s earnings. Tyson made 281,000 dollars a second in a single match against Peter McNeeley. You cannot tell me that Mike Tyson, Michael Jordan, or any professional athlete is worth that kind of money. Not in a society that s salary is traditionally determined by the value of a persons work. Believe it or not signing a deal for millions of dollars can have a major downside as Gary Thorton points out (More Money can Mean More Problems). As soon as you sign that huge contract you go from being a young player with a lot of potential, to a high paid athlete who had better perform like one. When these athletes have a bad day, don’t think they aren’t let known about it. This happens because these professional athletes salaries are so public. Athletes always complain about their salaries being so public, and point out that the average Joe’s salaries aren’t in the Sunday’s paper, and that theirs shouldn’t be either. But I disagree. After all, in a sense, we’re the ones paying for it anyway.

Sometimes the franchise needs more money to acquire new players, but what if they don t have it? Well, all they have to do is ask a current player to restructure his contract to free up money to pay for the newly acquired player. But of course the current player has the option to refuse to have his contract restructured, even if it would be in the best interest of the team. Why would he do that? Simple, he feels he is entitled to that money. He feels he deserves it. A lot of professional athletes are somewhat greedy. This is why we see strikes and lockouts every year. Do these athletes really think that they are worth all this money? Apparently they do; because we see these holdouts every year in which both the owners and the players lose tons of money in hopes of getting a better deal so that they can make even more money in the future.

For those of you who didn’t know, the NBA is on strike this season. It seems that the owners and the players can’t seem get along. The two sides have been talking for months and still can’t work out a plan where both sides can make even more money than they already do to satisfy their greed. Well, about a month ago, a group decided they would organize a basketball game to be showed on the Showtime network that would feature dozens of locked out NBA stars. A great idea for all us die hard basketball fans who are dying with our hoops on every weekend, right? Well, then it was announced that some of the proceeds would go to charity and the rest would go to NBA players in financial need, with ticket prices ranging from $50-$1000 to the event. Needless to say that was laughed at, and the organizers have since announced that all of the proceeds would go to charity. After all, I’ve never heard of such a thing as an NBA player in need. The only thing they’re in need of is a reality check.

In staying with the greed aspect of sports, Wayne Barrett pointed out a couple of good points that I’d never thought of before(It’s a Whole New Ball Game):

For example, it was bad enough when all the New Year’s college bowl games were renamed after corporations that paid millions to have their emblems attached to these premier gridiron clashes, but it’s a real slap when a club owner takes a multi-million-dollar payoff to rename a venue that he doesn’t even own. Taxpayers built those arenas and stadiums. If the name is leased or sold to a corporation, the money should go back into the public coffers, not the franchise owners’ pockets.

Those are great points that I had never thought about before. I’d never actually realized that there was so much greed in the college game as well. Like the college bowl game, the Rose Bowl, is now going to be renamed AT&T Rose Bowl. Stadiums change their names all the time too. For instance, Syracuse University football stadium is now called the Carrier dome. Now Carrier (air conditioning) didn’t pay for the stadium, they pay the owner (or in this case the college) to put their name on the building. That’s not near as bad when a school does this as when a professional team does it, because as Barrett pointed out, it’s the owner who pockets that money, where it should be the city and the taxpayers who actually paid for the stadium who get it. Just another example of how greed and money play to big of a role in all of sports.

It was only a matter of time until a baseball players salary surpassed the $100,000,000 mark, and today it did. Kevin Brown became the highest paid player on December 12, 1998. Brown signed a seven year deal worth over $105 million dollars with the Los Angeles Dodgers. If that wasn’t enough, “the Dodgers will give the pitcher the use of a private plane 12 times per season to commute to Los Angeles from Brown’s home in Macon, Georgia.” according to ESPN.com (Brown Gets Big Bucks From Los Angleles). Now these players are not only getting over-paid but pampered as well .

Peter Euler pointed out that (Athletes’ Salaries Becoming Outrageous):

Athletes should all take a look at the 1997 Pittsburgh Pirates. They were a bunch of average players whose total salary was less than Albert Belle’s personal salary; yet, they were in the hunt for a playoff spot midway through the final week of the season, while Belle’s White Sox were not.

That alone proves that you do not need to spend outrageous amounts of money on a team per year to have success; and even if teams do spend a lot, they aren’t guaranteed of anything. Euler went on to say that “greed destroys sports,” and he’s right. Another thing that Euler said was that “Players and owners need to realize that contracts can’t get much bigger than they are currently.” But I don’t necessarily agree with that because I don’t see any indication of the rise in salaries slowing down. Even if there were more restrictions put on athletes salaries the owners and players would just find more loop holes and different ways of paying the players, such as personal planes or other ridiculous perks.

In closing, not only is greed ruining professional sports, but these professional athletes are making too much money in a society that s salaries and wages are traditionally based on the value of ones work. But that s just it. These athletes aren’t working. They don’t have jobs. No one is worth 15, 20, or 30 million dollars a year, much less an athlete. They get paid to play a game, and the salary that they make is not reflective of their contributions to society like the majority of the rest of the people.