Men’s basketball: the team to beat in PL

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Josh Sankes netted 17 points and Juan Pegues added 14 more as the Holy Cross men’s basketball team notched its most impressive victory of the season, 80-71 over reigning P.L. champion Navy. The win was the fifth straight for the Crusaders, who are off to a 13-4 start and remain undefeated at 4-0 in the league.

The Crusaders have been on a serious roll lately, with only a 66-61 set back to Sacred Heart in between 7 victories. HC has also won 8 of 10 games since the semester break, with the most impressive victory being a last second victory over the Fordham Rams in the Bronx, NY. Pat Whearty tipped exceptionally in the league games, with convincing victories in each of their first four games. HC opened the PL season with a victory at home against Colgate, 6& 55. Josh Sankes led the team with 17 points and 8 rebounds, while Sankes added 13 and 10 and Pegues chipped in with 8 and 7.

The Siders then beat Lehigh 70-60 in Pennsylvania, and beat Bucknell on the road even more convincingly, 69-45. Against Lehigh, Sankes and Sankes again led the way, with 17 and 16 points respectively. Brian Wilson played a solid game, with 12 points as well. Sankes had a brilliant game in his first start against Bucknell and led the squad with 18 points. The two other big guys also played well, as Whearty had 11 and Sankes 10.

Throughout the season, defense has been the key, as only 3 HC opponents have reached the 70 point mark. The Crusaders are also holding opponents to a 38% shooting percentage and just 61 points per game. Pegues, Meade and Curry have been the defensive catalysts. Meade leads the team with 33 steals, and Pegues is right behind with 27.

The Crusaders take on perennial PL powerhouse Lafayette, who is struggling at 0-3, in PA tonight. “When you are supposedly a good team, quote unquote, people get up to play you and that’s something these kids haven’t had happen in the four years they’ve been here,” Williard warned. “The confidence has to be there and it has to be based on reality.”

The longest work stoppage in the history of professional baseball ended the 1994 regular season fifty-two days early, forcing the cancellation of the World Series. The strike began because Bud Selig, the owner of the Milwaukee Brewers and baseball’s acting commissioner at the time, claimed that twelve to fourteen Major Leagues teams were losing money during the 1994 season. To assist poorer teams, the owners requested that the players agree to a salary cap, and put an end to salary arbitration. The players claimed that the problem was among owners and not an issue between the players and owners. When neither side would compromise, the players struck on August 12, 1994, creating baseball’s eighth work stoppage since 1972.

Despite all the sport’s renewed popularity and prosperity after the 1998 season - when Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa obliterated the single-season home run record and the Yankees won an unbelievable 125 games - the baseball business is about to self-destruct once again. When the current labor agreement between players and team owners expires in 2001, the only real leverage players have comes from their ability to go on strike, and we’ve likely to see another lengthy stoppage before the season’s future is resolved.

I agree with the players when they say team owners are largely to blame for Major League Baseball’s economic ills such as salary inflation, competitive imbalance, and the long-simmering animosity between the players and their employers. Fans, like myself, often complain about the outrageous salaries paid to star players, but we fail to notice that owners are the ones who feverishly outbid each other in their eagerness to offer these large contracts. Before the 1998 season it looked as though the superstar salaries had stabilized at a maximum of around $10 million a year. Then, in short order, free agents Bernie Williams, Mike Piazza, and Kevin Brown - free players, but in my opinion not among the game’s most exceptional - all signed new contracts in the $12 to $15 million range. Things began to go downhill from there, and concluded with the signings of Alex Rodriguez ($252 million contract) and Manny Ramirez ($160 million contract) this winter. Don’t get me wrong, I will be thrilled to see Manny Ramirez wear a Red Sox uniform, but $160 million? This is getting absurd.

The problem with these enormous sums isn’t necessarily their absolute size - we live in a time of capitalism, after all, and many baseball players still make less money than the Britney Spears and Brad Pitts of the world. What’s troubling is that only the deep-pocketed franchises like the Braves, Dodgers, and Yankees can afford major superstars’ salaries. We are stuck in an age where baseball teams that are able to spend vast amounts of money are contending for playoff spots. The others are cutting payrolls significantly and upsetting the competitive balance of the game. The owners with deep pockets continue to spend, while the less fortunate teams can’t compete and are therefore losing fan support. Smaller teams like the Kansas City Royals and the Pittsburgh Pirates can’t compete for such high-priced talent, and so the best they can offer their fans at the beginning of the season is that they’ll play hard and go down fighting. Every year some small-market team makes an inspirational run to get all of us sports writers and fans excited, but none of the smaller teams have won a World Series since the Minnesota Twins did it in 1991. A prime example of a once competitive but now a small market franchise is the Minnesota Twins.

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