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The ILR Cornell Sports Business Society

Fall 2013

Sports, Inc. Volume 6, Issue 1

ILR Cornell Sports Business Society

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Sports, Inc. Volume 6, Issue 1

Description

The ILR Cornell Sports Business Society magazine is a semester publication titled *Sports, Inc.* This publication serves as a space for our membership to publish and feature in-depth research and well-thought out ideas to advance the world of sport. The magazine can be found in the Office of Student Services and is distributed to alumni who come visit us on campus. Issues are reproduced here with permission of the ILR Cornell Sports Business Society.

Keywords

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Disciplines

Benefits and Compensation | Civil Rights and Discrimination | Collective Bargaining | Dispute Resolution and Arbitration | Entertainment, Arts, and Sports Law | Labor and Employment Law | Labor Economics | Unions

Publisher

ILR Cornell Sports Business Society

Comments

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Sports, Inc.



**The State of
Baseball as
Commissioner
Selig Readies to
Step Down**

Featuring:

The Spiral of Silence - 14
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The Cornell ILR Sports Business Society

Advancing the world of sports.

From the Editor:

As the world of sports continues to change, so too does our semesterly publication, *Sports Inc.* In this edition you will find a variety of different pieces, spanning all the way from ethics in sports, to the predictive value of the NFL Combine, to entrepreneurial efforts by our peers here on campus. We are extremely excited to have a large number of first-time contributors to *Sports, Inc.* this semester, and look forward to watching them develop their own voice starting over the course of the next few pages. If you have any questions, comments, or general feedback, we would love to hear from you. Feel free to reach me by email at gmc74@cornell.edu. Thank you for your continued support of Sports, Inc. and the ILR Sports Business Society. Enjoy the writing!

- Gabe Cassillo



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Advancing the world of sports is something easier said than done, and yet it is an objective that we, as the ILR Sports Business Society, pursue. Reaching that next level takes effort, determination and talent.

Considering Cornell's resources and those of the Ivy Sports Collaborative, it is an objective we are confident we can reach. Our ambitions reflect the achievements of our alumni, from established industry leaders to rising stars.

Content generation continues to be a core competency of the organization. Whether through *Sports Inc.*, Internet radio or our blog, we're creating constant opportunities for members to refine their communication skills and demonstrate their analytical acumen.

In addition to engaging members around events and content, the Society is emphasizing club operations and involving members in these areas like never before.

We continue to have good relations with the ILR Office of Career Services, making resources and workshops available to members ranging from résumé and networking training sessions to LinkedIn seminars and internship opportunities.

In addition to managing our funds, the organization's Finance division recently coordinated an internal consulting project inspired by the NBA's Team Marketing and Business Operations branch.

With approximately a dozen students participating seeking to find best practices, we were able to develop a deeper perspective on how to proceed with our fiscal operations and were able to create a foundation for similar future projects in other areas.

Our mission is to become the premier student-run sports business organization in the United States. One of the keys to reaching this goal is the careful integration with our influential alumni network.

This fall, we hosted more alumni for speaker sessions than any other semester in our group's history. These events serve as the perfect platform for students to learn from and network with industry leaders.

Our alumni have been more than happy to become involved with ILRSBS. Not only does this provide a forum for our alumni to engage with an eager student body, but allows us to facilitate connection with other Cornellians in the world sports.

We are fortunate enough to have a diverse and extensive alumni network that is willing to support our group. Yet, we hope to add value to their own career advancement by connecting them with the rest of the Cornell community.

During this year's Ivy Sports Symposium at Harvard Law School, Cornell will have the most executives serving on panels and the most student attendees. We hope that *Big Red* takes on a new meaning when people think about Cornellians in the world of sports.

Every day, we strive to develop innovative solutions that serve our students' and alumni's passion for sports business. Cornell has a prominent role in the industry; through the advancement of the ILR Sports Business Society, we hope to continue and grow this impact in future years.



Rookie Wage Scale Levels the Playing Field

Taylor Kosakoff '16

Would you pay a rookie more than a veteran who has been in the league for eight to ten years? If you were one of the worst teams in the National Football League, would you devote a large amount of your money to an unproven player with no professional football experience? Before the Collective Bargaining Agreement of 2011, this was standard procedure in the NFL.

In 2011, the Collective Bargaining Agreement introduced the Rookie Wage Scale, which reformed the salaries for drafted players and transformed draft-day strategy for NFL teams. No longer were the worst teams from the previous season, like the Indianapolis Colts, Washington Redskins, Seattle Seahawks and San Francisco 49ers, compelled to sign big name quarterbacks and other top draft picks to long-term and expensive contracts. As a result, these teams were able to draft

talented rookies to affordable contracts, thus, instantly upgrading the talent on their rosters.

The Rookie Wage Scale enables teams to sign draft picks to four-year contracts with a non-negotiable fifth year option for first round draft picks. The fifth year option for the top ten picks in each draft is equal to the average of the top ten salaries at that player's position.

For example, the Carolina



Photo courtesy of Word Press

Robert Griffin III led the Washington Redskins to a 10-6 record, first place in their division, and a playoff berth in his first year in the NFL. What will he do for an encore?

Panthers selected their franchise quarterback, Cam Newton, as the first overall pick in the 2011 draft. If Cam Newton signed with the Panthers for a fifth year, his salary would be the average of the top-ten quarterback salaries in the NFL.

This new system has also reduced the likelihood of rookie holdouts due to an established pay scale for top draft picks. Wide receiver Michael Crabtree, who was the tenth pick by the San Francisco 49ers in the 2009

NFL draft, held out of his training camp for sixty-seven days. Crabtree even considered sitting out the entire 2009-2010 season and re-entering the 2010 draft, before signing a six-year, \$32 million contract with the 49ers. In the past,

rookie holdouts were a major problem for NFL teams, as new players tried negotiating mega-contract deals.

The Rookie Wage Scale system is working as a reliable solution for weaker teams to become instantly competitive. The immediate impact of the revised pay scale was on full display following the 2012 NFL Draft.

As a result of a talented draft class, four rookie quarterbacks led their teams to the playoffs, while many veteran quarterbacks with much higher salaries sat at home watching them play on television. Before drafting Andrew Luck with the first overall draft pick in the 2012 draft, the Indianapolis Colts suffered through a dreadful season with a 2-14 record in 2011. After signing Andrew Luck to a rookie contract of four years for about \$22.1 million dollar, the Colts improved to 11-5 and advanced to the playoffs.

Robert Griffin III was picked right after Luck in the 2012 draft and was signed by the Washington Redskins

to a 4 year, \$21.1 million dollar contract according to the Rookie Wage Scale. The Redskins improved from a 5-11 record in 2011 to a 10-6 record in 2012 and qualified for the playoffs behind their new rookie quarterback.

Quarterback Russell Wilson was picked in the third round as the seventy-fifth pick in the 2012 draft, and signed a four year, \$3 million dollar contract with the Seattle Seahawks. Under Wilson's leadership, the Seahawks won four more games to improve to 11-5.

Colin Kaepernick, who was drafted as the thirty-sixth pick in the second round of the 2011 draft, signed a four year \$5.1 million dollar contract with the San Francisco 49ers. Although San Francisco's record dropped from 13-3 in 2011 to 11-4-1 in 2012 with Kaepernick taking over at mid-season, the young quarterback led his team to the Super Bowl.

The trend of rookie quarterbacks leading their teams to success is due in large part to the Rookie Wage Scale; however, this new system also prevents teams from digging themselves into a long-term hole by drafting players who do not meet their expectations after signing large, long-term contracts.

Some examples of this include the Houston Texans signing their top draft pick, quarterback David Carr, to a seven year, \$46.2 million dollar contract in 2002 and the Oakland Raiders signing quarterback JaMarcus Russell to a six year, \$61 million dollar contract in 2007.

David Carr and JaMarcus Russell, both number one overall draft picks in their respective drafts, were projected as star players destined to propel their teams to extended playoff runs, but neither improved their teams at all. David Carr produced sub-par results during his tenure as



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

Andrew Luck has lived up to the hype since being selected as the number one pick in the 2012 NFL draft. An added bonus: he's affordable giving the Colts an opportunity for sustained success.

Texans quarterback between 2002 and 2006. The Texans records during this period were 4-12, 5-11, 7-9, 2-14, and 6-10 respectively before Carr was released.

Similarly, in Oakland, Russell lasted from 2007-2009, where the team had records of 4-12, 5-11, and 5-11 respectively. In 2010, the Raiders released Russell and actually improved to an 8-8 record. Both the Texans and Raiders dug long-term holes for themselves and were not able to improve their teams with their top drafts picks

More recent examples include Matthew Stafford and Sam Bradford. The Lions in 2009 and the Rams in 2010, respectively, drafted these talented college quarterbacks in the years preceding the new Collective Bargaining

Agreement. Both received hefty contracts limiting their teams' maneuverability to surround their young superstars with effective supporting casts. Consequently, neither team has achieved meaningful success on the gridiron.

With the introduction of the Rookie Wage Scale, not only is drafting rookie quarterbacks proving to be cheap and effective, but it may also change the mindset of NFL teams to think about choosing young players to lead them, instead of signing veterans to exorbitant contracts. The 2012 Super Bowl involved two quarterbacks who best exemplify the contrast in personnel management.

Colin Kaepernick was in the second year of his four year, \$5.1 million dollar contract for the San Francisco 49ers, while

Joe Flacco was concluding his five year rookie contract of \$30 million dollars with the Baltimore Ravens. Flacco received his rookie contract in 2008, three years before the new Collective Bargaining Agreement became effective.

Although the Baltimore Ravens ended up winning the Super Bowl over Kaepernick's 49ers, the after effects will

have significant long-term ramifications. Joe Flacco signed the largest quarterback contract in NFL history, a 6 year, \$120.6 million dollar deal, while Kaepernick continues with the talented Super Bowl runner-ups on a comparably cheap contract.

The effect of signing Joe Flacco to a mega-contract is that the 2012 Baltimore Ravens

“The long-term implications of the Collective Bargaining Agreement will continue to change the competitive landscape of the NFL .”



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

PERHAPS THE BEST bargain of all is Russell Wilson. The Seahawks QB will make just three million dollars over the next four years. Wilson finished fourth last year in passer ratings for NFL quarterbacks with a 100.0 rating.

Super Bowl Champions were forced to gut their roster to fit within the NFL salary cap. The team lost eight starters from offensive and defensive positions, forcing them to sign less-heralded, less-expensive players to fill their roster. Flacco's deal consumed a large portion of the Ravens' long-term salary cap, resulting in players leaving to find better contracts or being released because the Ravens could no longer afford them.

Conversely, the San Francisco 49ers were able to improve their team, as

their quarterback's cost effective salary provided flexibility to sign new players. Ironically, the 49ers were able to improve by trading for one of the Ravens' star wide receivers, Anquan Boldin.

Looking down the road to the 2014 NFL Draft, poor performing teams such as the Jacksonville Jaguars, Oakland Raiders, and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers will be in prime position to continue to take advantage of the benefits of the Rookie Wage Scale. As of right now, the top three ranked college players for next year's draft

are quarterback Teddy Bridgewater from Louisville, quarterback Marcus Mariota from Oregon, and defensive end Jadeveon Clowney from South Carolina.

If picked among the first three picks, each of these players will receive a four-year contract for at least \$20 million dollars. As a defensive end, Clowney's contract would be less than half of defensive end Mario Williams' six year, \$54 million dollar contract, as the number one overall pick in 2006. Williams' contract had more guaranteed money with \$26.5 million dollars in his rookie contract than Clowney will probably receive overall. This difference in salaries from may propel some of the currently worst performing teams in the NFL to immediate success, as it did for the Colts, Redskins, Seahawks and 49ers.

The long-term implications of the new Collective Bargaining Agreement will continue change the competitive landscape of the NFL. Instead of investing heavily in rookie contracts, teams can now afford relatively modest salaries for young superstars, thus leaving themselves with flexibility to afford capable veterans to fit under the salary cap. The ability to sign multiple players to surround these talented rookies can transform a losing team into a competitive one in relatively short order.

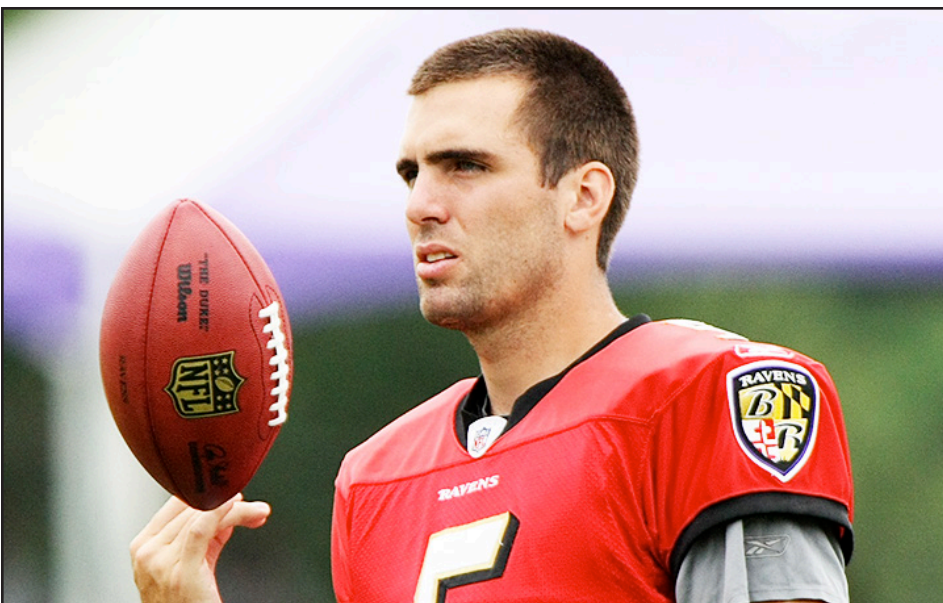


Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

JOE FLACCO may have won a super bowl, but will his new contract hamstring the Ravens for years to come?

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The Sports Oracle of Ithaca

Jason Lefkovitz '17

Sports analysts and fans alike are seemingly always playing the role of clairvoyant. For instance, in one perusal of espn.com, a reader could plausibly encounter in quick succession, Bill Simmons's picks for the NFL games of the week, Chad Ford's Mock 2014 NBA draft, and a Sweet Spot article pondering the potential destinations of notable players during the MLB offseason.

In the midst of this prophetic spirit, why not take things to another level? We could push the temporal bounds of sports prognostication by predicting changes in the professional sports landscape that could fully materialize in 3-5 years...a decade...four score and seven years... hold on! Right on cue, I'm starting to see something...

Baseball is a sport that is constantly resisting change of any kind, even though it is plagued by many glaring inconsistencies and inequalities. For example, it is still the only sport that lacks completely standardized field dimensions; as outfield fences from field to field differ in their distances from home plate, their shapes, and their heights. Other successfully implemented changes to the sport have been enacted only after the painfully slow decay of MLB's reactionary tendencies in certain areas.

Specifically, the division of MLB into the American and National Leagues

provides especially ample opportunity for inconsistent playing rules and standards. And at the crossroads of these two leagues lies a colossal vortex of obstinacy. For example, between 1998 and 2012, the National League consisted of 16 teams while the American League consisted of only 14. As a result, one division in the former (the NL Central) sported six teams while a division in the latter (the AL West) consisted of only four.

Therefore, a team in the NL Central would have to outcompete five other teams to win the division and clinch a playoff spot while an AL West team was only



Photo courtesy of Keith Allison

BOSTON RED SOX'S Designated Hitter, David Ortiz, is a nine-time All-Star, three-time World Series Champion, and currently ranks 45th on the MLB all time home run list. Ortiz is also the all time leader for hits by a DH with 1,689.

required to outperform three other teams to do so. It took a mind-boggling 14-year span to execute the very simple solution of moving one team (which turned out to be the Houston Astros) from the NL Central to the AL West to even the playing field.

to their offensive prowess, even if they exhibit subpar defensive capabilities. Meanwhile, National League teams are unable to enjoy the luxury of inserting these kinds of big bats into their lineups and thus don't spend money on them.

Although this extra purchasing power could theoretically compel National League teams to spend more money on pitching than American League teams, the DH rule in reality does not seem to yield such interleague differences in payroll allocation. In 2013, six of the top ten most expensive starting rotations and five of the top ten priciest bullpens were actually owned by American League teams.

Nevertheless, the differences in roster composition create inequalities that become especially relevant during interleague play, where the home team enjoys a significant advantage over the away team. If an American League team is the home team, it is able to utilize a player like David Ortiz, while the visiting National League team often inserts an offensively inferior utility player into the batting order to fill the void. On the other hand, if an interleague game is played in a National League ballpark,

“The National League’s implementation of the DH rule is *in the cards*.”

Undoubtedly the most apparent inconsistency between the two leagues is the American League's designated hitter rule, which was implemented in 1973. While a pitcher bats for a team in a National League ballpark, a designated hitter (DH) hits in the place of a pitcher in an American League ballpark and does not have any defensive obligations. Because of this rule, American League and National League rosters are constructed somewhat differently.

Designated hitters, like David Ortiz of the Boston Red Sox, could be valuable players on American League teams due



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

YAO MING, pictured above, was the flag bearer for China at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Ming was the first overall pick in the 2002 NBA Draft and played in the NBA for eight years. He is the most prominent Chinese basketball player in NBA history.

where all hitters must also play defense, the visiting American League team often suffers a huge disadvantage because it may be unable to enjoy the vital offensive capabilities of its defensively flawed DH.

These home field advantages also manifest themselves in the most important interleague games – the World Series. From 1980-2012, “the home team [had] won 62 percent of World Series games... and the team with home-field advantage has won 25 of the 32 World Series” in that time span.

The aforementioned realignment of the two leagues into six equally sized divisions of five teams each is very significant in this context. Since there are now an odd number of teams in each league,

interleague play now occurs all season long to ensure that every team in each league always has an opponent.

As a result, the glaring inequalities due to the DH rule are now visible every day of the MLB season, as Major League teams playing interleague games struggle to adjust their lineups to compete with the unfairly advantaged home team. Managers who voice their vehement opposition to these unjust

inconsistencies, like former Detroit Tigers’ manager Jim Leyland has done in the past, will be reminded of such inequalities at pretty much every juncture in the season – from Opening Day, to the so-called “dog days of August,” to the late-September playoff races.

There are two possible means of resolving this issue – either an abolition of the DH rule in the American League or the implementation of the DH rule in the National League. The latter seems to be the more likely course of action, for while both yield the desired standardization of rules, only the former would result in the unemployment of a whole class of offensively prolific but defensively deficient players.

However, considering MLB’s historical resistance to change, we should not expect to see designated hitters slugging nightly homers in National League ballparks any time soon. On a more encouraging note, some important baseball people believe that the much-needed change is imminent.

In a 2012 Tom Verducci article, an “Influential Baseball Source,” he said he “would be shocked if 10 years from now there’s not a DH in both leagues.” I, an experienced sports soothsayer, second this notion: the National League’s implementation of the DH rule is in the cards.

Since I am not the only self-proclaimed sports prophet to make this prediction, I would like to distinguish myself from my peers by offering a prediction that is relatively less documented and less clearly written in the stars. Let us turn our attention from the baseball diamond to the basketball hard-court in order to assess another interesting sports development that could be brewing in another part of the world. In the wake of the full-blown globalization of the



NBA, China has emerged as a major market for both the game of basketball and the league. According to the Chinese Basketball Association, approximately 300 million people in China play basketball. At the 2008 Beijing Games, the legendary Chinese former NBA player, Yao Ming, not a table tennis player or an Olympic diver, was exalted as flag bearer for the host country.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, Chinese basketball fans love the NBA and adore American-born players. In fact, many top players, including Kobe Bryant and LeBron James, have embarked on basketball tours in China in hopes of increasing their global market-reach.

Despite the popularity of professional American basketball in China, Yao Ming has been the only successful Chinese player in the NBA. Besides "Chairman Yao," the only other noteworthy NBA player of Asian descent is the Taiwanese-American, Houston Rockets point guard, Jeremy Lin. Perhaps the NBA is primed for a drastic metamorphosis of its racial complexion.

China has a tendency to exceed expectations in the production of athletic

talent. In order to bring athletic pride to the country, China, in its authoritarian ways, has taken radical measures to achieve its goal. For instance, Chinese toddlers exhibiting extraordinary athletic aptitude are often sent to training schools at a young age where they are brutally molded into Olympic-caliber athletes.

This evokes the image of that notorious picture of a Chinese gymnastics trainer mercilessly standing on the legs of one of his little pupils.

Due to such inhumane procedures, China continues to broaden the scope of its athletic success, seemingly becoming relevant in a new sport at every Olympics. The success of the Chinese swimming team at the 2012 London Games is a prime example.

Sun Yang shocked the field by becoming the first male Chinese swimmer to win an Olympic gold medal, as he won gold medals in the 400m freestyle and the 1500m freestyle races (he also won silver in the 200m freestyle).

Ye Shiwen, a Chinese female swimmer who won gold medals in both the 400m and 200m Individual Medley, actually swam a faster final 50m split in the 400m IM than Ryan Lochte, the

male gold medal winner in the event. Considering the great popularity of basketball, and specifically the NBA, in China, it is plausible that the torturous Chinese training facilities will be focusing on basketball when preparing the next cohort of young aspiring Olympians. Perhaps the next wave of NBA All-Stars is being molded in Beijing and Shanghai gyms as you read this article.

Wait a second! My *crystal ball* is displaying a bold vision for the future: in due time, Chinese basketball players will account for an increasingly significant percentage of the NBA player population. Hold on! The vision includes an eyebrow-raising corollary: at some point, the best player in the NBA will be Chinese...

Two sports predictions, including an especially bold one, along with a steady diet of fortune-telling platitudes written in italics: an interesting day's work for any fortune-teller! Now it's time to prepare an eternity's supply of popcorn, sit back, and watch it all unfold.

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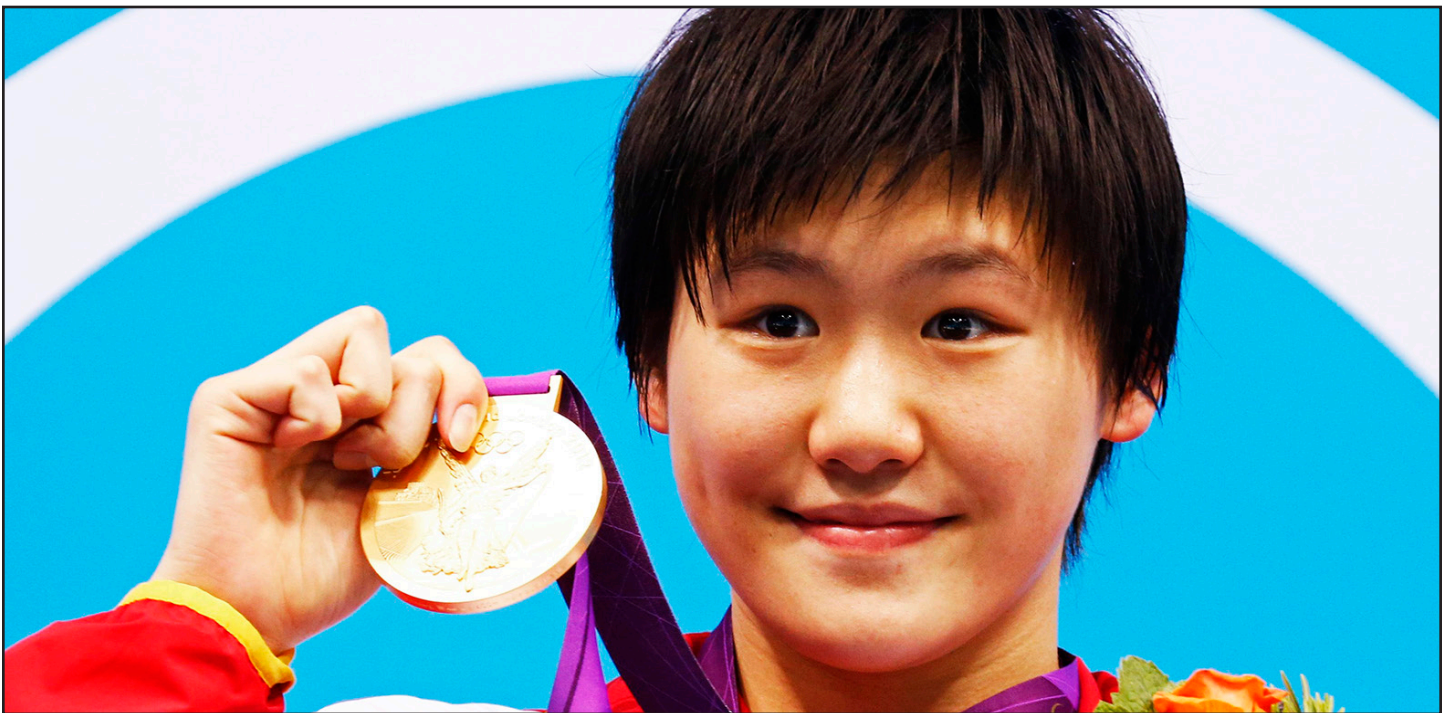


Photo courtesy of the Daily Mail

GOLD MEDALING IN two events at the 2012 London Olympics, Ye Shiwen swam a 50m split in the 400 IM that was faster than Ryan Lochte's gold medal-winning time.

The Role of the Long-Term Contract

David Wechsler '17

As the size of baseball contracts continues to grow, baseball executives are being forced to determine whether doling out long-term, nine-figure contracts is worth the risk. After all, two such contracts to high profile players are becoming increasingly easy to criticize. Alex Rodriguez signed a 10-year extension with the Yankees at age 32 following his 2007 MVP season.

However, Rodriguez has not produced nearly as much as the Yankees would have hoped and still has four years remaining on his current deal. The lack of production comes amidst a pending steroid suspension that could potentially cut his career short.

Angels' 1B/DH Albert

Pujols similarly signed a 10-year contract with the Angels two seasons ago at age 32. While the Angels were hoping to pay "The Machine," instead they have eight more years and \$200 million left to pay for a player in his mid- 30's who has seen a decline in production each of the past four seasons.

However, there has to be some reason clubs commit so much in both years and money to star players. While most teams would want to pursue team-friendly deals, players and their agents often get in the way.

Furthermore, a team like the Yankees may think a player will be very successful for them for a few years and since most high-profile free agents want long-term security, the team must either choose between a lack of production and long-term risk. Nevertheless, having a better idea of when and why these deals work would be prudent of General Managers before making such large investments.



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

Robbinson Cano might be the next nine-figure contract. Cano batted .314 with a .383 on-base-percentage in just over 600 at bats. But is he worth the millions when he's past his prime?

This article examines the 10 largest contracts in MLB history for both pitchers and position players with an aim to see where big money should be best spent in baseball going forward. Additionally, both the pitchers and position players' contracts will be broken down by age to see whether it makes sense to sign players already in their prime to contracts that will last well into their 30s.

The contracts will be evaluated by calculating the collective average Wins Above Replacement (WAR) per season of both the pitchers and the position players. Fangraphs

defines a player's WAR as the number of wins a team would lose if they had to replace that player with a minor leaguer. Furthermore, over the past four years one WAR has been worth between 4 and 5 million dollars on the free agent market.

Referring to the graph below, when looking at the 10 largest contracts given out to position players a few things pop out. Namely, the average length of these contracts is 9.1 years and the average worth exceeds \$200 million. Furthermore, the average WAR per season of these players is 3.94. So, on average, players

Player Type	Likely WAR
Scrub	0-1 WAR
Role Player	1-2 WAR
Solid Player	2-3 WAR
Good Player	3-4 WAR
All Star	4-5 WAR
Superstar	5-6 WAR
MVP	6+ WAR

Player	Total Years	Worth (\$)	Annual Average Worth (\$)	Average WAR	Average Age in Contract
Alex Rodriguez	10	275,000,000	27,500,000	3.6	36.5
Alex Rodriguez	10	252,000,000	25,200,000	8.07	29.5
Albert Pujols	10	240,000,000	24,000,000	3.25	36.5
Prince Fielder	9	214,000,000	23,777,000	3.3	32
Derek Jeter	10	189,000,000	18,900,000	4.11	31.5
Joe Mauer	8	184,000,000	23,000,000	3.77	31.5
Mark Teixeira	8	180,000,000	22,500,000	3.26	32.5
Matt Kemp	8	160,000,000	20,000,000	1.45	30.5
Manny Ramirez	8	160,000,000	20,000,000	4.59	32.5
Troy Tulowitzki	10	157,750,000	15,775,500	3.97	30.5
AVERAGE:	9.1	201,675,000	22,162,088	3.94	32.35

Player	Total Years	Worth (\$)	Annual Average Worth (\$)	Average WAR	Average Age in Contract
Felix Hernandez	7	175,000,000	25,000,000	5.2	30
C.C. Sabathia	7	161,000,000	23,000,000	4.42	31
Zach Greinke	6	147,000,000	24,500,000	3.9	31.5
Cole Hamels	6	144,000,000	24,000,000	4.6	30.5
Johan Santana	6	143,000,000	23,833,000	2.53	31.5
Matt Cain	6	127,500,000	21,666,000	3.15	27.5
Barry Zito	7	126,000,000	21,000,000	0.43	32
Mike Hampton	8	121,000,000	15,125,000	0.5	31.5
Cliff Lee	5	120,000,000	24,000,000	6.8	34
Justin Verlander	5	80,000,000	16,000,000	3.96	28
AVERAGE:	6.3	134,450,000	21,341,270	3.55	30.75

are signed to huge contracts and produce at a level just below that of an all-star.

The graph to the right shows the same information for pitchers. While the average WAR for the 10 largest contracts given out to pitchers is quite similar to that of position players (3.94 vs. 3.55), there are a few differences in these contracts.

For example, the average length of these contracts for pitchers is 6.3 years, 2.8 years fewer than the contracts for position players. Furthermore, the average worth of these contracts is a bit under \$135 million, more than \$65 million less than those for position players.

So what does this mean? Well, for starters it appears that the highest paid pitchers and highest paid position players are producing at a very similar rate. (A rate, by the way, that is in range of a “good player” but not an “all-star”.) However, it should be noted that pitchers are being signed for less money. Does this mean, therefore, that teams are getting more bang for their buck when signing big-time free agent pitchers?

In short, yes and no. While the largest pitching contracts contain noticeably less money than those for position players, the annual average worth of these contracts is actually quite similar. Instead, the important statistic to look at is that pitchers are being signed, on average, for 2.8 years fewer than position players.

This means that unlike position players, pitchers are rarely signed to long-term

deals into their late 30’s. Historically, this makes sense because hitters are thought to be more apt to play into old age than pitchers. However, that thought seems to be changing as we enter the post steroid era. As seen in the examples of Rodriguez and Pujols, it is becoming increasingly difficult to gauge how hitters will perform in their mid-to-late 30s.

While both position players and pitchers signed into their mid-to-late 30s have similar WARs compared to their younger counter parts, this is only because many of these contracts have yet to mature into their later years. Position players like Mark Teixeira, Albert Pujols and Alex Rodriguez all have four or more years left on their contracts and will be playing past the age of 36.

Combine this with the fact that each of these players has experienced a constant decline in production for the past three years, seeing an increase in WAR in the remaining years of their contracts seems highly unlikely. While a player like Troy Tulowitzki has performed well thus far in his contract, he is only 3 years into a 10-year deal.

Especially considering his proneness to injury, it is highly plausible that when he reaches the latter part of his contract, he too will be well past his prime and experiencing a decline in production.

As for pitchers, Johan Santana, Barry Zito, Mike Hampton and Cliff Lee were all signed to long-term deals past the age

of 34. Santana, Zito and Hampton ALL struggled in their old age, with Zito and Hampton actually performing no better than replacements (each had average WARs below 1). Lee, however, can be thought of as the exception, not the rule, as he continues to dominate into his later years. His average 6.8 WAR per season during his current contract is the highest of any of the 10 highest paid pitchers.

In comparison, Matt Cain and Justin Verlander were signed to big contracts at ages 25 and 26 that take them through – but not past – their primes. Therefore, these contracts are a lot less risky than the ones that sign pitchers who will spend many years of their contract pitching with either diminishing velocity or a weakened arsenal of pitches.

There are also psychological factors that affect how much a player will produce after signing a big contract. Many people point to the added pressure that falls on players after they sign mega contracts as a reason for poor performance. Combined with the argument that players tend to perform better when they are “playing for a contract”, giving out long-term contracts to older players seems even riskier. An easy way to support this notion is by looking at the two World Series teams this year and the general direction baseball seems to be heading in.

The Boston Red Sox, after failing miserably with their roster filled with huge, long-term contracts, gutted their roster completely and fielded a starting lineup in 2013 that had only one player signed to deal longer than three years.

The St. Louis Cardinals similarly let Albert Pujols, the face of their franchise, walk instead of inking him to a long-term

“A word of advice to GM’s: its not worth it.”

deal two seasons ago. With the exception of Yadier Molina, none of the Cardinal starters are signed past 2017. Each team's lineup is largely made up of young talent and proven veterans with contracts that are relatively short.

Furthermore, the youthful Cardinals starting rotation shows the direction that baseball seems to be headed in, especially considering a similar prototype of young pitching has led the San Francisco Giants to two of the last four World Series championships.

As baseball columnist John Harper points out, "The consensus among baseball people is that young arms are more valuable than ever, in part because pitching is dominating the game in rather dramatic fashion since drug-testing has reduced run-scoring". Harper continues by talking about how now that teams have the money to do so, locking up their young pitchers to long contracts early on is becoming increasingly popular.

While it seems tempting to go out and pay big money for an MVP-caliber player, general managers should be wary of how many years of sustained production the player has left given their age. Furthermore, only Manny Ramirez, Derek Jeter and Alex Rodriguez (in his first mega-deal) produced

average WARs in their contract years at All-Star levels.

For pitchers, only C.C. Sabathia and Cliff Lee have been successful throughout their contracts, while the jury is still out on some pitchers just entering the first few years of their contracts. If you combine these two groups, out of the largest 20 contracts given out to pitchers and position players, more than 50% of those contracts paid/pay significant money to players who don't produce at an All-Star level.

So instead of signing free agents coming off monster years to long-term deals that will cover the player long past his peak production, general managers should instead focus their energy into signing their young, rising stars to long-term extensions that will cover the players entire prime but not go further. So what does that mean for this offseason?

Right off the bat, Robinson Cano comes to mind. Coming off a year in which he hit .314 with 25+ HR and 110+ RBI, the Yankees premier slugger is set to test free agency. The rumors so far are that he wants to sign a 10-year deal worth upwards of \$300 Million.

A word of advice to the GMs: It's not worth it. Cano will be 31 next season and while he is clearly in the middle of his prime, five years from



Photo courtesy of MLBblogs.com

MATT CAIN signed a long-term deal, but is he really worth the money? Cain may have thrown a perfect game in 2012, but he failed to pitch consistently this season.

now he will be 36 and seeing a decline in production. As history has shown us, having a 36 year old signed for five more years rarely works out.

An interesting player to look out for this offseason is Clayton Kershaw. Kershaw, at age 25, had one of the most dominating seasons for a starting pitcher in recent memory with an ERA below 2.00. This was no fluke. Kershaw has now produced Cy Young caliber numbers each of his past 3 seasons. The catch is that he is still under contract and has yet to become a free

agent in his career. If I were in the Dodgers front office, I would try to lock him up to a big-time contract that goes through his prime before he can even smell free agency.

Another pair of players to keep an eye on is Jose Fernandez and Bryce Harper. Both talents are extremely young and have very limited experience in the big leagues. However, the tools are there and both of these guys are considered to be future superstars with Hall of Fame ceilings.

Harper already holds the record for signing bonus as a drafted player. Even so, super-agent Scott Boras apparently has a 12-year extension in mind for his young client. While there is definitely risk involved in signing such inexperienced players to long term deals, it will be interesting to watch what each team will do with their young phenoms and if they end up setting a precedent that the rest of baseball will follow.

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Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

THE LATEST EXAMPLE of long-term contract abominations is Albert Pujols, who the Angel's agreed to pay \$24,000,000 a year to despite him being way past his prime.

Sports Ethics and the Spiral of Silence

Dan Cappetta '15

The Spiral of Silence is a phenomenon that describes situations in which one dominant view eventually drowns out the expression of minority views. The premise behind this idea is that individuals who have uncommon opinions, or have opinions that they perceive to be uncommon, will fear ostracism from the majority. Longing to be accepted by others, they either remain silent in regards to their minority view, or align themselves with the majority view (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

As more and more people fall under the impression that they should conform to the popular opinion, the effects will be felt on the societal level, leading to the suppression of independent thinking and the construction of a society that lacks a diversity of ideas.

While the Spiral of Silence has historically been studied on the societal level that I have just described, it is possible that the effects of this communication theory can be felt within a specific entity, such as a business organization. The area in which the Spiral of Silence is most applicable is ethics. Ethics are defined as “an accepted set of rules,” parts of which are “covered by legal stipulations” (Schnebel & Bienert, 2004, p. 203).

In recent years, we have seen an

influx of unethical—and illegal, for that matter—business practices, such as the Enron scandal, and Bernie Madoff’s Ponzi scheme. This questionable decision-making is not unique to the world of corporate finance.

The sports industry is rather cutthroat. Each individual organization’s success is measured depending on how they fare against other comparable organizations. It doesn’t matter how hard they are trying, or how fair they are being: if they aren’t doing better than the rest of their competition, they are losing. This attitude of being better than the rest clouds the judgment of some individuals, and causes some organizations to cut ethical corners.

Athletes want to do well for themselves, so that they can prove their worth and make as much money as possible. Coaches, managers, and executives want to make sure that their team is thriving, performing better than others, and thus securing their jobs and their salaries. If the athletes perform, the coaches and the managers look good, the executives look great, and the organization succeeds.

The common goal here is organizational success, which keeps everyone happy and earning money. However, within this chain of selfish thinking lies the problem. Each individual is looking out for himself. He doesn’t care how he wins; he just wants to ensure that he does so.

I will look at the issues of performance-enhancing drug (PED) use in Major League Baseball (MLB), and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) recruiting violations as examples of unethical decision-making in sports.

My hypothesis is that the Spiral of Silence plays a key role in maintaining unethical practices within individual sports organizations and governing sports organizations. Despite the fact that some individuals may think PED use or recruiting violations are wrong, they may feel that they will be ostracized for speaking out, as they know the value that winning holds to so many people within the organization.

Ostracism, in this case, can be in the form of demotion or firing. The risk is not worth the reward to many individuals, and so they remain silent, or align themselves with the opinion that winning comes first, at any cost.

In recognizing that the Spiral of Silence may impact sports organizations, individuals within these organizations may be made aware of the suppression of the minority views that they may hold. With this awareness could come a sense of resistance of the Spiral, thus minimizing its power in the sports industry.

Review of Literature

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann published her development of the Spiral of Silence for the first time in 1974. She stated that the basis of this phenomenon stemmed from the social nature of human beings. Each individual, according to her findings, found being accepted by others to be more significant than his own judgment.

The Spiral of Silence, therefore, creates public opinion, since a majority of individuals feel this way—that fitting in is more important than thinking for oneself. Coupled with this fear of isolation is “doubt about one’s own capacity for judgment,” which further perpetuates the Spiral (p. 43).

Noelle-Neumann forms, and provides support for, a series of five hypotheses that lead us to believe that the Spiral of Silence has a great deal of power in forming public opinion. She found that those with opinions that were thought to be minority opinions were less likely to speak out—the main premise of the Spiral.

Another finding, which is less talked about, is that individuals’ projections of where public opinion might shift in the



Photo courtesy of doyouremember.com

BARRY BONDS is the picture of the “Steriod Era” in Major League Baseball. Was his use of PEDs a product of the spiral of silence?

future played a significant role in willingness to publicly express one's views. This conclusion highlights a significant point: one's projections of majority view are just as important as one's perceptions of current majority view.

The effects that the Spiral of Silence has on individuals are changing with the times. Scheufele and Moy (2000) take an in-depth look at how the Spiral has been used in the past, and how it will be used in the future in their article published in 2000. The theory is still relevant, they conclude, but further research should be done in order to assess cultural contexts.

Certain "cultural settings" are less accepting of speaking out, they say, which is a main issue that has gone unexplored. This cultural sensitivity may be seen as an issue in the context of sports in which I am examining, thus magnifying the effect that the Spiral has on individuals within.

By labeling sports organizations and their commitment to winning as a "culture," it insinuates that the culture grows with each affected individual, thus compounding the issue. As each individual buys into the culture that is being formed, a tradition of turning the other cheek on the immoral practices that might take place is reinforced.

Salmon and Glynn (2010) wrote about the modern-day conception of the Spiral of Silence, and did a thorough analysis of contemporary applications of the theory. A relevant and intriguing point was that of the "psychological community," in which individuals with a minority view can begin to understand that there are others with similar thoughts.

In a corporate setting, this principle of reaching out through technology could be used to prevent the censoring

of ideas due to the Spiral of Silence. Individuals could be encouraged to send in anonymous comments—either on a communal computer or via some sort of "suggestion box"—alerting executives of unethical practices, since they need not be worried about potential consequences. This could be a first step in giving

“How far are we willing to go for clean competition.”

those in charge the opportunity to do right by their organization and take action.

By generating a trend of doing right, it could also give individuals the idea that in the future, speaking out might be common and even applauded. As previously mentioned, this perception of the future could influence people's likelihood of speaking out.

Scandals in Sports

In recent years, there have been quite a few high profile scandals within my context of interest: sports organizations. These scandals stem from practices that stray from conventional ethical business standards. By putting success first, individuals and organizations are often blinded, causing them to act immorally and display a lack of integrity. We will look at two recent scandals: PED use among MLB athletes, and recruiting violations by NCAA organizations.

"The Mitchell Report" is the most notable compilation of evidence of illegal use of PEDs by professional baseball players. Written as an extensive report to Commissioner Bud Selig in 2007, U.S. Senator, lawyer, and businessman George Mitchell and DLA

Piper Law Firm shed light on the many questions about PED use in the MLB that had previously gone unaddressed.

Based on months of investigation, the report cites upwards of eighty individual players to hold accountable for trying to give themselves an illegal leg up. The report also points out that coaches, teammates, team doctors and trainers, and executives of individual organizations were all well aware of this PED use, and did not take steps to address the issue.

One section of the paper is subtitled "Unreported Incidents." This section is the clearest indicator of the Spiral of Silence negatively impacting sports within a given organization. Mitchell goes into detail about a number of incidents, spanning over three pages. One specific example is that of Chuck Hawke, a clubhouse attendant, who found "syringes and vials that were hidden in an Oakley sunglasses bag," as he was unpacking a player's luggage (p. 110).

The attendant alerted his supervisor, but was told to put the materials back where he'd found them, and not report the matter to anyone else. A few years later, a clubhouse manager of the Minnesota Twins, found used drug paraphernalia in the opposing team's locker room. He reported the incident to the Manager of his team, who told him it was none of his business, and instructed him to "dispose of the syringe, and to be careful doing so" (p. 110).

The latest incident described was that of a Detroit Tigers employee, who found a locked toiletry bag, opened the bag, and discovered steroids inside. He did not report the incident because "he could not remember who the bag belonged to" (p. 111). These employees all knew of the illegal practices that they were

witnessing, but were shut down by their superiors, or muted by fear of isolation. The superiors that instructed them to keep quiet were also likely doing so due to that same fear, all caused by the Spiral.

However, Del Cid cites in his 2007 article that the MLB itself, as an overarching entity, made significant efforts to stop PED use. The Mitchell Report was one of those steps, hoping to gain a better understanding of the extent to which PED use was a problem, and to elucidate any unknowns. The MLB has published lists of banned substances for clarity. They have doled out increasingly harsh penalties for violations, showing that they are trying to do right by the game and its fans. However, this same sentiment of "doing right" is not necessarily felt within specific organizations.

Del Cid also touches on the negative effects that steroids have on the human body, and poses the question of "How far are we willing to go for clean competition?" Koch's 2002 article puts it in perspective: we must go to any length necessary, or else the sport will be diluted with immorality, dishonesty, and self-destructiveness.

As athletes are enabled by the censorship of minority opinion, they set poor examples for our youth by taking PEDs. The use of these substances is even beginning to extend beyond just athletics. PED use is being linked more and more frequently to pressures regarding not just athletics, but also academics, and physical



appearance. If not for the sake of the game of baseball, this problem with PEDs must be addressed for the health of our youth.

Another concern regarding ethics in sports is that of recruiting practices in the NCAA. Dixon et al., examines the issue of recruiting violations in their 2003 qualitative study. The study used a variety of research methods, the most useful being surveys and interviews.

In talking to several Division I coaches, they declared that there are major flaws in the system, primarily regarding the financial resources available to schools and offered to athletes, as well as academic standards that are set. If these flaws are seen as hindrances to organizations, they will simply look for ways to get around them. What is most troubling is that most of the individuals interviewed believed that there were ways to correct these flaws.

Unlike the MLB, change has not started at the top. The NCAA has failed to take action and come up with possible solutions. Dixon and his colleagues suggest that harsher punishments on teams failing to abide by recruiting terms could be an important first step, similar to the MLB's harsh punishments on individual franchises. This simple enforcement of rules set forth by the NCAA could send a message that questionable ethical decisions will not be tolerated, regardless of on-court success, financial income, or popularity of a program.

The flaws in the NCAA's system create a competitive imbalance. Eckard likened the NCAA and its football program to that of an economic cartel in

his 1998 article. Competition to win over athletes during the recruiting process, he points out, leads to a blatant disregard of rules and stipulations that are in place to level the playing field, thus sacrificing the fairness of the system.

Members of the NCAA will "collude" to exercise joint monopsony power over football's main input, the players (p. 347).

Essentially, Eckard is saying that there is really one buyer of top talent: the NCAA.

"The driving factor behind the spiral of silence is fear."

It is virtually impossible to make it into the NFL without having played for an NCAA-governed team, so any prospect that has these professional aspirations

is going to commit to one of those teams. Further, we must look at the NCAA as an overseer of organizational action. The NCAA has created a stratified system that is great for television ratings and merchandise sales, but poor for competition and the integrity of the sport.

By failing to create an effective system, and enforcing the guidelines that this system may lay out, the NCAA is widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Eckard provides statistical evidence showing that big programs remain successful, and historically unsuccessful programs have no way to gain ground. With the success of intercollegiate sports at stake, no one of power will speak out, as they fear being scolded from within the organization.

Discussion & Conclusion

We find that the Spiral may very well be a contributing factor that is causing ethics to fall by the wayside, while business success remains

priority number one. In formulating a relationship between the Spiral of Silence and these unethical practices that we have discussed, we must first refer back to our understanding of business ethics.

In 2004, in the wake of the Enron scandal, Schnebel and Bienert wrote an article on business ethics. The temptations of cutting corners to get to the top often override doing things the right way. The authors state that ethics are "a prerequisite to conduct business" (p. 203). This notion would lead one to believe that organizations participating in unethical practices would simply be forbidden from operating, but this has not been the case in sports.

The driving factor behind the Spiral of Silence is fear. Fear of isolation causes individuals to fall silent when they believe that their views are not appreciated by many. Eventually, they may conform to the majority beliefs.

In the context of an individual organization, say an MLB team, some individuals conform. Take an athletic trainer, for example, who may disagree with the use of PEDs. What would be easier for the organization: to fire the trainer, or to change the culture of an entire locker room? Undoubtedly, the former.

Suppressing your views, even if a player or employee is not directly involved in the unethical practices, could be the difference between a long and successful career and unemployment. Alerting higher powers could be seen as "tattle-tailing," resulting in a loss of respect in the clubhouse.

The point being, even if you know something is wrong, it is not necessarily easy to stand up for what is right without consequence. One may begin to doubt one's own judgment. The potential consequence—whether it is a loss of respect, a demotion, or firing—is isolation, which is to be avoided

at all costs.

These pressures to remain silent, which we now understand exist, propagate to form bigger ones. Professionals may take PEDs to pad their team win, but they fail to realize that they are not only hurting themselves and disregarding the integrity of the game—they are also setting a poor example for our youth. Executives that let this happen are equally guilty, as they remain silent in fear of isolation.

In the context of the NCAA's shortcomings, the unfairness is far-reaching. The participating schools are stuck in a cycle of failure. The athletes educational options are now limited on the grounds that they want to compete at the highest level. The all-powerful hierarchy of the league prevents change, and teams are left to cheat and steal—which is kept under wraps within each organization because of the "everyone else is doing it" mentality, and the censorship of the ideas of those who might object to this mentality.

In either scenario, the problems develop due to individuals keeping quiet because they are looking to maintain their own social standing, while improving the situations of their organization, regardless of morality. When infractions occur, punishments are directed at individuals, rather than organizations.

If instead, organizations were punished for the actions of individuals, they would most likely take preventative action. For example, instead of suspending an MLB player for 80 games for PED use, how about the team forfeits a number of games? I believe that this type of practice would cause organizations to ensure that the Spiral of Silence was eliminated, and that their business was run cleanly.

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Thoughts on the NFL Combine:



Photo courtesy of NFL.com

JACOBY FORD, pictured above, is currently a wide receiver for the Oakland Raiders. After four years at Clemson, Ford ran a 4.28 second 40-yard dash at the 2010 NFL Combine, behind only first place finisher Chris Johnson's 4.24.

A necessary evil or a total waste of time?

Zohere Tabrez '16

Being an NFL player is a job. You have a salary, norms that you must follow in the workplace, and like any position you apply for, there is an interview process prior to being admitted.

Every year over 300 college football players are invited to Indianapolis for the NFL combine where they are put through a series of conditioning drills. Throughout the whole process, coaches and general managers surround these athletes and are frantically scribbling notes trying to evaluate the players every step of the way. And this is not just for coaches and GMs. The media gushes over these players, looking for the next sexy player.

However, has anyone taken the time to stop and ask, does the combine actually tell us

something? Let's have a look.

Without a doubt, the most covered portion of the Combine is the 40-yard dash. For those unaware, it simply measures the speed of which an NFL player can run 40 yards. Bill Polian, former GM of the Indianapolis Colts was asked what the most important part of the combine was to him. He replied, "No. 1, the 40 times. If you are a believer in speed — and I am, and was — the 40 times are very important."

But let's really take a look at these times. To the right is a table of the fastest 40-yard dash times for wide receivers in the past 9 years and the number of yards each of these players has amassed in the NFL.

Not too impressive, right? Except for Desean Jackson and to some extent Darrius Heyward-Bey, each receiver has had awful numbers in both yardage and touchdowns. The table on the following page is similar, but instead, focuses on the most productive receivers in terms of total yardage and touchdowns for each of those years.

When plotted in a scatter plot you can better see that the

receivers from each year with the most yardage had slower 40 times (red dots) yet had far superior career numbers in terms of yardage.

What does all this information tell us? It shows that the combine does not give us enough information to confidently predict the on-field success of players, especially wide receivers and the 40-yard dash. In fact, it seems that maybe GMs should consider

Name	Year	40-Yard Dash Times	NFL Yards	Touchdowns
Carlos Francis	2004	4.33	0	0
Jerome Mathis	2005	4.26	80	1
Chad Jackson	2006	4.32	171	3
Yamon Figurs	2007	4.30	103	1
Desean Jackson	2008	4.35	5,395	28
Darrius Heyward-Bey	2009	4.25	2,621	12
Trindon Holliday	2010	4.21	17	0
Edmond Gates	2011	4.31	365	0
Stephen Hill	2012	4.28	569	4
Marquise Goodwin	2013	4.27	(Projected) 65	(Projected) 2

taking a second look, and maybe even avoid players who run the fastest 40s. Just for some perspective, the slowest 40-yard dash time in this graph is 4.63 seconds, however, this belongs to the most decorated player in the list, Larry Fitzgerald, a likely Hall of Famer.

Not convinced? Okay, let's take a quick look at another position, defensive tackles. Defensive tackles need to overpower 300-pound men every play in order to get to the quarterback. To do this, a player needs quite a lot of upper body strength. So how does the combine test it? It puts these player through a series of bench-presses where each player must lift a certain amount of weight for as many "reps" as possible. However, it seems that the reps each player has does not translate to success on the field. In order to be brief, instead of looking at the pure numbers, let's examine career accolades. Here is a list of each combine's leader in reps at the defensive tackle position from 2006-2009: Broderick Bunkley, Demarcus Tyler, Trevor Laws, Terrance Taylor, and Jeffrey Owens. So out of that list, how many are still playing? One. Only Broderick Bunkley is on an NFL team. The rest are free agents and one is currently playing in the AFL.

Despite what the data says, it has not deterred coaches from falling in love with players at the combine. In 2012 the hottest name in Indianapolis at the time was defensive tackle, Dontari Poe. He ran the fastest time among 40-yard dash times and had 44 reps, the most among all defensive tackles and eight more reps than the second best tackle. Poe shot up draft boards and instead of going at his projected borderline late first round, early second round pick, he went at the 11th pick of the draft to the Kansas City Chiefs. This decision has not paid off as after one year later; many experts have pegged Poe to be a bust.

After all of this evidence, why do coaches and GMs insist on flocking to

Name	Year	40-Yard Dash Times	NFL Yards	Touchdowns
Larry Fitzgerald	2004	4.63	10,835	81
Roddy White	2005	4.47	8,854	52
Greg Jennings	2006	4.48	6,823	55
Calvin Johnson	2007	4.32	8,328	60
Jordy Nelson	2008	4.51	3,802	33
Mike Wallace	2009	4.33	4,399	33
Demaryius Thomas	2010	4.38	2,878	21
AJ Green	2011	4.50	3,026	23
Justin Blackmon	2012	4.46	1,249	6
Deandre Hopkins	2013	4.41	(Projected) 951	(Projected) 5

Indianapolis every April and putting these athletes through a myriad of drills?

It's a lesson you will learn on the first day of any management class. There are three models of decision-making: rational, bounded rationality, and intuition. Through the combine, the front office of every NFL team is making their best effort to go through the rational model. They want any little piece of information they can get so they can make a decision based on complete and unbiased information.

Not just that, but the front office also believes that some information is better than none. Going to the combine gives coaches and general managers a better sense of comfort because they will feel like they've done everything possible to assess a player come draft day. They also have the chance to interview the players and get a better sense of whom the player is, beyond what he does on the football field.

Now you may be wondering, if the combine does not work, then what can GMs and coaches use to evaluate players? There are many tools that GMs have such as: interviews with players, interviews with players' college coaches, and game tape. A new method that has started to sprout up is measuring endurance rather than specific physical measurable. For example, Alfred Morris was the second leading

rusher of the 2012 NFL season.

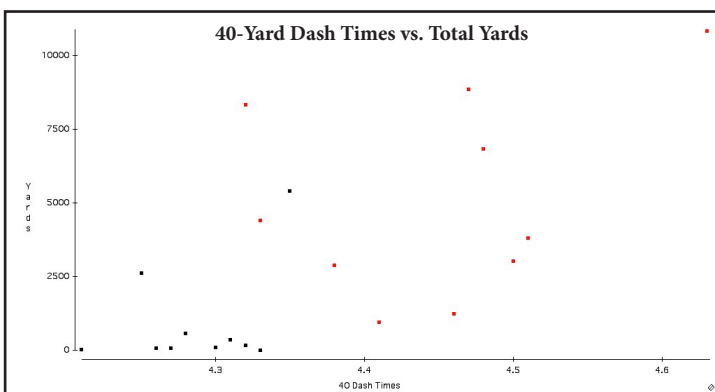
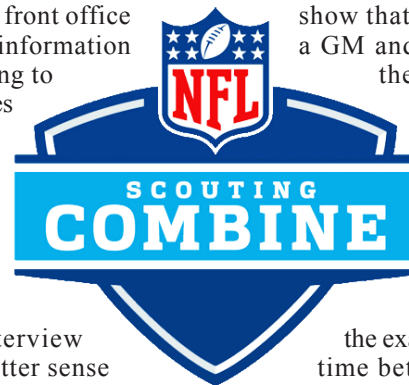
However, he was drafted in the 6th round of the NFL draft. His college coach was dumbfounded. Many passed on Morris because of his average 40-yard dash numbers. However, his coach argued that Morris' strength was not in speed but in repetition. He said, "It's not how fast the guy is the first time, it's how fast he is the 15th time. "While we would need a much larger sample to deduce whether this method is effective, it goes to show that there is much more for a GM and coach to rely on than the combine. That's why you, the fan, shouldn't either.

And I'm not saying to completely abandon the combine, because it can be useful. If you notice, each wide receiver in the example had a 40-yard dash time between 4 and 5 seconds.

If a receiver is running a 5.5 or 6 second 40-yard dash, that may be an indicator that he is not right for the NFL. Plus, interviews with these players can give you an indication if he is the right fit for the team. However, I am saying that there is so much to a player than a few numbers from a 3-day workout. I'm saying to not create your impression of a player *solely* from the combine.

Just know that when the media gushes every year that a player has run a 4.2 40-yard dash, it could mean he's a great Olympic athlete, but he certainly isn't automatically qualified to be an NFL player.

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The Network: The Founding & Continuing Story of BRSN

Alexander Gimenez '15

When I arrived on campus over two years ago, I had no idea that my passion for baseball and interest in broadcasting would intersect with my coursework in the ILR School and lead to the start of a student-run sports network. In its first few months of existence, Big Red Sports Network has brought coverage of many Cornell Sports teams to people across the country and has started to gain a presence on Cornell's campus by telling the story of the student athletes, their coaches, and the long history of the Big Red that goes along with it.

I came in to Cornell with a blank canvas. Having played high school baseball in Miami, FL, I was coming from a background of 40+ hours a week in practice alone. With my playing career behind me, I had newly-discovered free time to put towards doing something else. I knew I wanted to remain involved in the game, and broadcasting had always been a big interest of mine. As a result, Cornell At Bat became my "something else."

The plan was to broadcast Big Red baseball games through Slope Media Group, and I laid out a small 9-game coverage schedule for the season. I had no idea what to expect, and was prepared to broadcast for the worst team in the Ivy League, as Cornell had finished last in the previous season. Cornell went from worst to first in just one season.

A few months later, I had the opportunity of broadcasting for the Big Red during the NCAA Regional at UNC Chapel Hill. It was a great experience, and one that opened our eyes to the possibility of taking Big Red athletic broadcasting to the next level. We realized that the background was in place to expand the program for the following season. Parents and alumni were soaking up the coverage, my partner and friend, Jesse Sherman '15 and I had become more polished in the booth, and we had established a connection with the players and coaches that we wanted to take advantage of moving forward.

Expansion led us to an increase in staff from two to twelve members. We branched off to become our own University-funded organization and purchased equipment,

found a stronger feed for the game, and created our own website. Our coverage ramped up to include a 23-game broadcast schedule, weekly radio show with appearances by the players and coaches, articles published on the team almost daily, and a strong social media presence. We averaged over 50 listeners at any given point during a live broadcast with over 500 hits per double header. It quickly became evident that we had a model for success that could be applied to other sports, and the conversation for expansion began once again.

The idea of a centralized student sports network first came to me through conversations with friends and colleagues at Slope Media, in the fall of 2012. It was evident that student run sports coverage at the University was disjointed at best, and if there was a way to combine resources and establish connection with teams, we could make a difference.

The idea was just something we tossed around casually, and went to the back of my mind until the President and CEO

of the YES Network, Tracy Dolgin '81, came to speak to the ILR Sports Business Society. Tracy is exceptionally charismatic, and I found his talk to be very interesting. It almost seemed like he was challenging me to do something more with the program, and the idea of a network resurfaced.

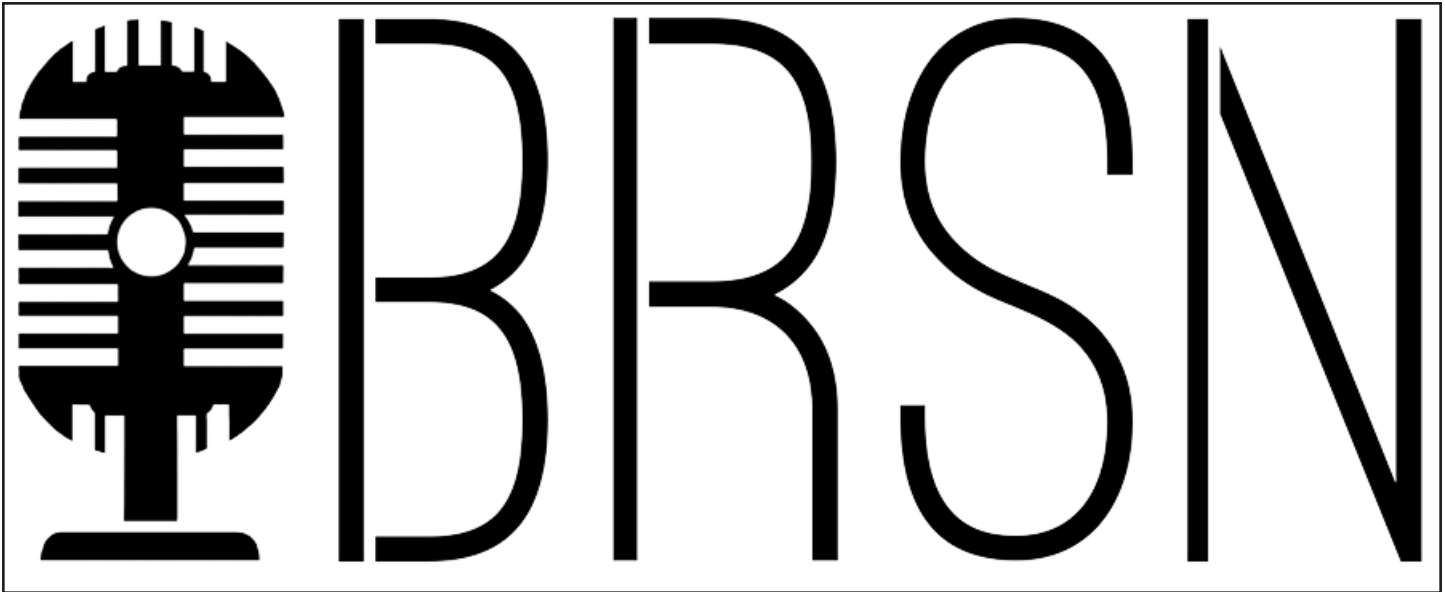
During his talk, I scribbled out a plan for what I would then dub as Cornell University Sports Network (CUSN). I immediately ran it by Jesse and he was quick to point out that CUS-N sounded like it belonged to Cornell regional rival Syracuse University, and thus the name Big Red Sports Network was born.

After further brainstorming, we were able to develop a model for BRSN. Despite conversations with the Cornell Review and Slope Media Group, the buzz died down and again the idea was put on the back burner until receiving some support from WVBR, Cornell's FM Rock Music Station.

The plan was simple: we would partner with WVBR and their new online sister station Cornell Radio to bring about our coverage of many Cornell sports. WVBR's general manager, Drew Endick '14 and Cornell Radio Director Kristi Krulcik '16 went all in, and thus Big Red Sports Network was born. The idea was to build a website that could house our content of 10 Big Red teams, while Cornell Radio would be the home of our broadcasts.

Growth happened quickly, thanks to





a dedicated staff of over 50 students and donations that allowed us to purchase more broadcasting equipment. We added 3 additional sports, bringing our total to 13, including four teams where we are the exclusive provider of play-by-play coverage (baseball, softball, Men's and Women's Soccer) and nine other sports including Football, Sprint Football, Men's and Women's Ice Hockey, Men's and Women's Basketball, Men's and Women's Lacrosse, and Volleyball.

In addition to broadcasting games, our network provides written coverage through our website www.bigredsportsnetwork.org. Our social media coverage provides updates of all things Big Red Sports, and we are expanding to find ways to increase campus culture around Cornell sports using events and giveaways to support campus unity.

In this regard, we have been

aided by the Athletic Marketing department at Cornell, which have partnered with us on projects such as the *Berman Blackout* event for Cornell Soccer and *Songs Stories and Sports: A Night with BRSN and Will Evans*. Additionally, we have been working on promotional and marketing endeavors with student athletes and Big Red teams to get people excited for the upcoming and ongoing seasons.

In the development of the program, we set out with a firm four-point mission: 1. To bring parents and alumni closer to the action through free coverage of their Cornell sports teams and athletes. 2. To provide students like ourselves with opportunities to learn and grow within the industry, and gain invaluable experience that could lead to job offers in the future. 3. To highlight the accomplishments and stories of the athletes themselves, who through their hard work

and dedication both on and off the field represent Cornell in a positive way, and 4. To raise campus culture and Cornell pride by changing the way students view Big Red Sports teams, and finding ways to get higher attendance and fans support for the teams.

I believe very strongly in all of these goals for our organization, because I have worked closely with these athletes, coaches, parents, alumni, administrators and students and can see how much people from all walks of life appreciate what we are doing.

The future for BRSN is very bright, and we have plans to roll out even more comprehensive projects this Spring, including a television show catered towards students on campus, radio talk shows, a BRSN Films documentary series, a BRSN cellphone app that keeps you up to date on all things Big Red athletics including our free broadcast coverage, live video streaming for games, and much more. With continued help and support, we will be able to find ways to bring about this coverage, and continue building for the future.

It is hard to wrap up what this network is capable of in one story, but I will try. A week before the Homecoming football game this season I sat down with a group of our staff to work on football coverage

for the year (a late edition to our coverage package) and what ensued was a comprehensive coverage plan for the Homecoming game itself.

The group of people in this room would never under any other circumstances have been working together on any other project: A varsity football player who had just transferred into Cornell from an Arizona community college, a freshman of Polish background just weeks into his college experience, two senior softball players with hopes of working in media someday, a transfer student from NYU who has published his own book, a transfer student from California with a love for the St. Louis Rams who had pledged to lead football coverage, an eclectic junior who has an eye for feature pieces, Jesse and myself.

Four different colleges at Cornell were represented in this meeting, as where all four years of students. To watch a 6 foot 230 pound linebacker get excited about a 5 foot 2 engineering major's idea, was a moment I will never forget. We built this for the people, to build community, and we look forward to seeing where BSRN will go next.

Alexander Gimenez is a junior in the ILR School. He can be reached at ajg322@cornell.edu.

“The future for BRSN is very bright, and we have plans to roll out even more comprehensive projects this Spring.”

Bud Selig: A Revolutionary Commissioner



Photo courtesy of Politico

BUD SELIG has presided over baseball for a period of unprecedented growth. In his tenure as commissioner he has expanded MLB's global market presence.

Karthik Sekharan '17

With MLB Commissioner Bud Selig set to retire at the end of his term in January 2015, the entire baseball community is getting ready to say goodbye to one of the most revolutionary commissioners that any professional sport has ever seen. With his radical reforms he has effectively “modernized the game and emboldened it as a social institution” (Miller).

This has earned Selig the respect of many important people in baseball including managers, owners, and the players themselves. Joe Girardi, current manager of the New York Yankees, believes that, “The game has grown under him tremendously,” and that, “He has made every effort to clean up the game.” Arizona Diamondbacks President and CEO Derrick Hall asserts that, “The Commissioner did an exemplary job and will be sorely missed in the role.”

Although there are many reforms that baseball fans were very privy to, including the implementation of Wild Card play, Interleague play, and replay after close calls, there are also many changes that Selig brought about that fans may not know of. These changes, including revenue sharing

and the increased globalization of the MLB, are what distinguish Selig as one of the premier commissioners in professional sports.

One of the most revolutionary changes that Selig has implemented involves drug testing. Many baseball players have resorted to using performance-enhancing drugs in order to improve their game. Not only do PEDs impose some serious health risks, they also make the game incredibly unfair to those who do not use drugs in order to better their game.

Bud Selig has made sure to put respecting the integrity of the game at the top of his priority list by enacting drug testing. In fact, Selig has implemented one of the toughest drug policies in professional sports.

According to Lance Pugmire of the *LA Times*, “Baseball conducted more than 5,000 blood and urine tests last year and has its own team of investigators to partner with law enforcement to pursue drug violation leads.” Additionally, “Baseball in the only [professional sport] to employ the sophisticated carbon isotope ratio test to identify synthetic testosterone in urine.”

With the implementation of drug testing, players are either refraining from

using PEDs, or being caught and suspended by the league. The most recent example of the latter is the BioGenesis scandal where multiple players were caught using PEDs and sentenced to suspensions of varying lengths.

Revenue sharing in baseball was implemented in 1996 at the beginning of Selig's regime and it has increased the competitive balance in baseball. MLB's revenue sharing means that teams must pay 31% of their net revenue to the MLB and then they redistribute the money equally amongst all 30 teams.

On top of this, a large chunk of MLB's central fund is allocated to every team depending upon their net revenue. This concept of sharing the revenue amongst all of the teams, in theory, increases parity and allows many teams to be competitive throughout many seasons instead of having a few teams be dominant for a long time span.

Over the last six seasons, only 39.6% of teams achieved back-to-back playoff appearances. This shows that different teams are making the playoffs each year, meaning that the league is staying competitive year-in and year-out. In comparison, the NFL has had 50% of their teams achieve back-to-back playoff appearances over the last six seasons.

Jayson Stark, of ESPN, points out that “Since 2004 only five baseball teams – the Yankees, Cardinals, Red Sox, Angels, and Phillies – have reached the playoffs five times or more.” In comparison, the NFL has had nine teams achieve this feat.

Every season, MLB has teams that no one expected to make the playoffs at the start of the season, but do in part due to competitive balance. Examples this year were the Pittsburgh Pirates, Cleveland Indians, and even the less-surprising Oakland Athletics. The Pirates had not made the playoffs in 21 years before making it in this season. They would be eliminated by the St. Louis Cardinals, but the season was a great success for a playoff-starved city. Selig has revolutionized the game of baseball by implementing revenue sharing and allowing all 30 teams in baseball to have the capital and resources they need in order to be competitive each season.

Before Bud Selig became commissioner, according to ESPN's Jayson Stark, “Baseball's idea of globalization was ‘Get a Free Taco Night’ on Cinco de Mayo.” Since his first year, Selig has implemented



Team	2005 Revenues (in millions)	2005 Revenue Sharing (in millions)	2005 Gross Revenue (in millions)	% of Revenue Sharing Per Team
NYN	\$264	\$76	\$340	24
BOS	\$201	\$52	\$253	17
NYM	\$180	\$24	\$204	8
SEA	\$173	\$25	\$198	8
CHC	\$170	\$32	\$202	10
PHI	\$167	\$(6)	\$161	-2
LAD	\$166	\$20	\$186	6
ATL	\$162	\$10	\$172	3
SFG	\$159	\$14	\$173	4
HOU	\$155	\$11	\$166	4
STL	\$151	\$19	\$170	6
SD	\$150	\$(6)	\$144	-2
BAL	\$148	\$(2)	\$146	-1
LAA	\$147	\$11	\$158	4
TEX	\$142	\$-	\$142	0
CLE	\$139	\$(6)	\$133	-2
ARI	\$136	\$(13)	\$123	-4
COL	\$132	\$(16)	\$116	-5
CHW	\$131	\$18	\$149	6
CIN	\$127	\$(16)	\$111	-5
DET	\$126	\$(25)	\$101	-8
OAK	\$116	\$(19)	\$97	-6
MIL	\$112	\$(24)	\$88	-8
TBR	\$110	\$(33)	\$77	-11
PIT	\$109	\$(25)	\$84	-8
TOR	\$107	\$(31)	\$76	-10
KCR	\$104	\$(30)	\$74	-10
FLA	\$103	\$(31)	\$72	-10
MIN	\$102	\$(22)	\$80	-7
WAS	\$80	\$(4)	\$76	-1
Total	\$4,269	\$312	\$4,272	



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

INTERLEAGUE PLAY was introduced under Bud Selig. His influence has helped to improve the game of baseball for both players and fans alike.

players have attracted a very diverse fan base and since this fan base has increased to many countries around the globe, Selig has thrown around the idea of having a true “World Series” in the sense that a team from the MLB would play a team from a different country (Stark).

Commissioner,” said Phillies President and CEO David Montgomery.

Selig has endured some tough times in baseball, including multiple drug scandals, but he has stayed confident in his abilities to lead and this is what makes him

“What will Selig’s legacy be once he leaves in January 2015?”

Although this is just an idea and is nowhere near being implemented, it is quite obvious that MLB has come quite a long way from “Get a Free Taco Night” on Cinco de Mayo.

So what will Selig’s legacy be once he leaves in January 2015? He will be known for all of his positive changes in the interest in bettering the game of baseball. His leadership ability is one to be rivaled with and on top of all that, he truly loved the game of baseball. “The combination of his leadership skills and love of our game make him an outstanding

a great Commissioner. All of the baseball community will sorely miss Bud Selig once he retires. He has put some revolutionary ideas in motion that have helped to modernize America’s pastime, and hopefully the new commissioner will expand upon his ideas in order to grow the game into a truly global enterprise.

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some pretty drastic changes in order to increase the globalization of baseball.

We’ve seen opening day in Tokyo and San Juan. We’ve seen the advent of the World Baseball Classic. We’ve even seen the opening of MLB offices in the Far East and Latin America. On top of all of that, it is unquestionable that the players themselves in the MLB are incredibly diverse.

There are players from

the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Japan, China, and the United States. In fact, 45% of current minor leaguers and over 28% of current major leaguers were not born in the United States. On opening day, there were 89 players representing the Dominican Republic, 63 players representing Venezuela, 17 players representing Canada, 15 players representing Cuba, and the list goes on.

The influence that these



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

THE ST. LOUIS CARDINALS, have shown other teams over the past decade that it takes a little bit of spending and a whole lot of talent in order to have sustained success. Their formula has helped them get to the playoffs four out of the last five years.

Does the Big Baseball Payroll Truly Payoff?

Lauren Mahaney '16

Baseball is no stranger to the mega contract. This year's 10 highest-paid players made approximately more per at-bat than the average U.S. citizen made in an entire year. Unlike other professional sports, Major League Baseball (MLB) has the unique advantage of not being limited by a salary cap.

This lack of salary control has allowed teams to buy instead of build championships. Don't believe it? Just look at the Yankee's payroll over the past 20 years. While according to the Associated Press, the Yankees have had the highest payroll in the MLB for the past 15 seasons straight, they are not alone in this quest to buy a better team.

The Biz of Baseball reports that MLB payrolls have grown a total of 49.8 percent from the end of the 1999 season to the end of the 2009 season.

This begs the questions: is a large payroll actually worth it?

The answer, it seems, is yes (most of the time). In four out of the past five seasons, at least three of the four teams competing in the National and American League Championship Series' have been amongst the top 10 teams with the highest payroll. But money is not the only way to build a ball-club that brings home the title.

Teams like the Oakland Athletics, Tampa

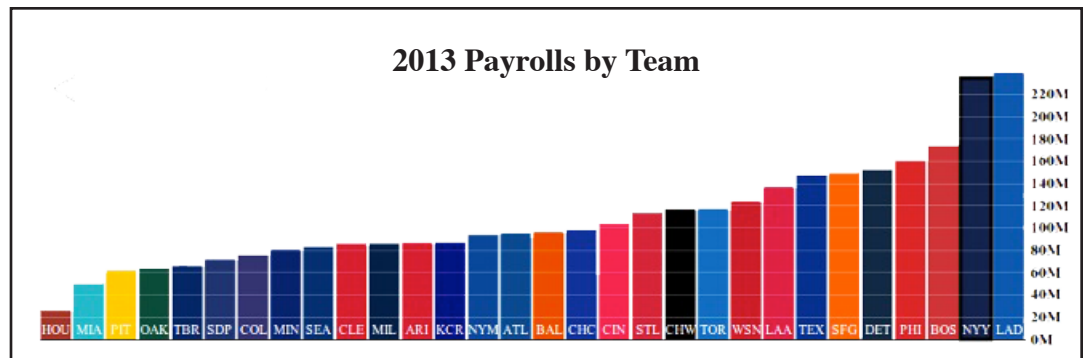
Bay Rays, and St. Louis Cardinals are the enigmas that originally confounded those

that believed money was the only way to win. While the Cardinals have recently expanded their payroll, this is a recently new development for a franchise that has finished almost every year in the bottom two-thirds on the payroll scale.

The question, therefore, is what is it about these teams that have allowed them to defy the big payroll stereotype? Ironically, the answer to this question was discussed (in part) in the popular book and later successful movie, *Moneyball*.

For those unfamiliar with the feature film or book, *Moneyball* is the tale of Oakland Athletics' manager Billy Beane, and his revolutionary system of statistics to determine which players would get the A's the most wins. The statistic that most mattered to Beane was on-base-percentage (OBP). Beane determined that if a player got on base more often, he was more likely

“66 percent of League Championship teams have also been top-10 payroll teams.”



Graph courtesy of Phil Roth

to score and the A's would be more likely to win the game.

By focusing on OBP, Beane was able to slash the A's payroll while not cutting down on their ability to win. Despite this, the A's have only recently seen this system pay off with playoff appearances in the last two years.

So how is it possible that with two opposing ideas surrounding payrolls that both systems have shown success? It's most likely the combination of these ideas and the use of them in moderation that is helping to catapult teams into the playoffs.

The Cardinals are the perfect example of this. They have made the playoffs four out of the last five years while being around 10th or so in terms of total payroll. They have found the *money* combination between a somewhat large payroll and the use of statistics that has helped them to reach the playoff 10 times, win four National League pennants, and



two World Series in the past 13 seasons.

While the Cardinals ultimately fell to the Red Sox in the World Series, they have clearly been successful in creating a winning formula that has consistently gotten them to the postseason throughout the last decade. Similarly, the Red Sox themselves have tried to use this system to continue to develop a championship pedigree.

The Red Sox finally broke the "Curse" in 2004 by combining their ability to support a large payroll with a focus on statistics under General Manager, Theo Epstein. This year was no different, as many of the players in Boston's lineup were not simply hitters, but instead productive players that know how to get on base and provide value in often-overlooked areas.

Despite small-market teams' relative success, it appears that most teams are still spending to get their squads into the playoffs. The League Championship series

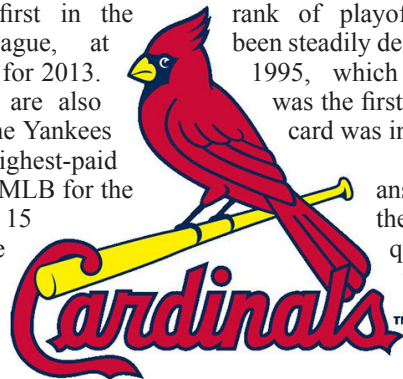
this season featured matchups between the Boston Red Sox and the Detroit Tigers in the American League and the Los Angeles Dodgers and the St. Louis Cardinals in the National League. All four of these teams are in the top 10 in highest payrolls in the league.

The Dodgers have the second highest payroll in the majors, the first in the National League, at \$216,597,577 for 2013. The Dodgers are also set to usurp the Yankees status as the highest-paid team in all of MLB for the first time in 15 seasons at the start of the 2014 season.

The Red Sox have the fourth highest payroll in the major leagues at \$150,655,500, a whopping 30 percent less than the Dodgers. Right behind the Red Sox in fifth place are the Tigers, with a payroll of \$148,414,500. The Cardinals round out baseball's final four with the 10th largest payroll of \$115,222,086.

While it may seem like a coincidence to some, according to data compiled from USA

Today and baseball-reference.com, what may have started out as a coincidence has clearly formed a pattern. Over the past 25 seasons, the four teams in the League Championship Series have been in the top ten of total payroll 66 percent of the time. This is especially interesting given that Sports Illustrated reports that the average payroll rank of playoff teams has been steadily decreasing since 1995, which coincidentally was the first year the wild card was introduced.



While the answer to the original question of whether big baseball payrolls pay off may not be so black and white, it seems pretty clear that within those shades of gray the teams that spend more money are having more success in the postseason. Seriously, at 66 percent over the last 25 years, who wouldn't take those odds...if you can afford it.

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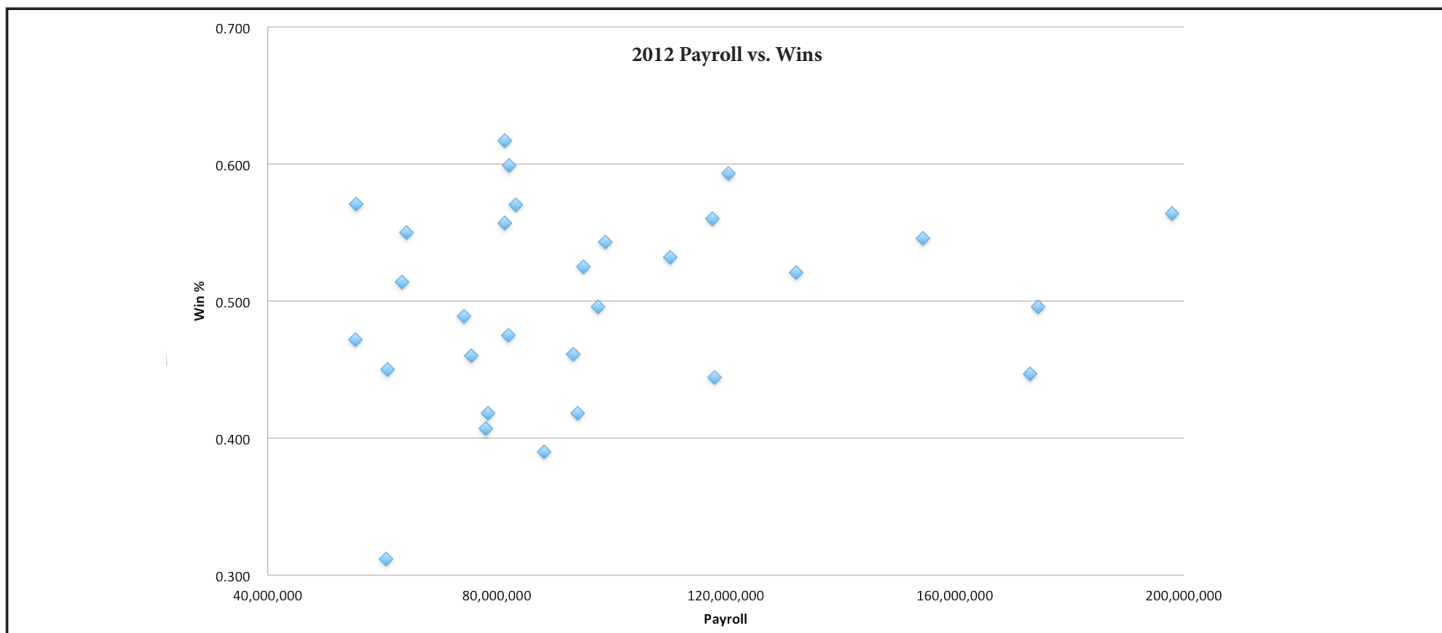


Photo courtesy of FanGraphs

TOP 10 TEAMS spent \$140 million with a winning percentage of .525 percent, the middle 10 teams spent around \$88 million with a .511 win percentage, and the bottom 10 teams spent \$66 million for a .464 win percentage.

America's Past its Time: *How Baseball is Losing its Next Generation*

Andrew Distler '15

It's no secret that baseball is declining in popularity. MLB playoff games continue to get crushed in the ratings by regular season NFL games, baseball's superstars are noticeably less visible in the public eye than athletes from other major sports, and the slow pace of baseball games has made the game less appealing to children with ever-decreasing attention spans.

Also, the participation in youth baseball has dropped severely over the past 10 to 20 years (according to a 2011 Matthew Futterman's Wall Street Journal article, youth participation has dropped 23% in the past ten years). All of these factors could potentially be detrimental for the future of Major League Baseball.

However, in order to fix any problem, you have to address the root issues.

Is Baseball Becoming a Rich Man's Game?

Part of the appeal baseball has always had was that it

could be played by anybody. Many fans connected with players, as they felt that they were everyday, average athletes. For example, Babe Ruth is widely

considered to be the greatest baseball player of all time, yet is often characterized as being overweight and out of shape,



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

A BRIGHT YOUNG star in MLB, Andrew McCutchen, is a product of MLB's RBI program. McCutchen is one of the great role models for all children dreaming of making it to the show.

and not looking particularly athletic.

This is different from even average athletes in basketball and football, as most NBA players are 6'5 or taller, and most NFL players look like athletic freaks of nature compared to an everyday person. But because baseball has always been viewed as a "common man's" game,

scouts have discovered several of the greatest baseball players from prior generations in more informal settings than they do today (more players who played 20 or 30 or more years

ago were discovered at their local high schools, rather than because of travel teams or "showcases").

However, times have changed, and baseball is no longer seen as the "common man's game" in fact, it has now become one of the most expensive sports to play in the country. Parents who have kids ages 9-12 will often spend more than \$4,000 on their baseball activities per year which include equipment, driving to practices and games, and hiring expensive private coaches.

What can be the most disheartening are the "elite" travel teams that allow kids as young as seven years old to compete. Anyone who has played or watched youth baseball knows that it is virtually impossible to tell who is truly special among a bunch of kids that young. Focusing more on developing skills and having fun is more important.

But in an age of specialization, where kids are pressured into sticking with one sport, (and oftentimes, one position in that sport) many parents feel that putting their

second or third grader on an expensive travel team will help further their future in the game.

Because baseball cannot do anything to change this culture of specialization, it must focus on what it can do to make the sport more appealing, especially to the lower economic class. The NBA has received significant praise for the way it markets itself in low-income areas, especially poor, urban ones. Sneaker and apparel companies also sponsor the AAU tournaments, such as the Nike Elite Youth Basketball League and the Adidas Super 64, in which many elite basketball players participate to get noticed (also several NBA players, including stars such as LeBron James, Carmelo Anthony, Dwight Howard, sponsor their own AAU team).

Many of the elite football clinics and camps are also sponsored, making it easier for kids who live below the poverty line to attend. An example of this is the B2G Elite

"Part of the appeal baseball has always had was that it could be played by anybody."

Football camp. Because it's sponsored by Adidas, it only costs around \$100, and includes lodging and food. In baseball, many scouts go to clinics or showcases to find players.

However, usually underprivileged kids don't attend clinics because they cannot afford to attend a baseball academy or to hire private coaches, who are regularly informed about clinic schedules and often have a personal network with scouts. An example is Perfect Game showcase, a series of baseball showcases that are popular among high school prospects. that costs upwards of \$500, but does not include hotel, food and travel expenses, so that cost will likely be much higher.

This model is radically different than how youth baseball was structured only a few decades ago. Until relatively recently, younger kids would mostly play baseball locally.

They would learn to play with their neighborhood friends, and then would join their local Little League team, and would eventually join their high school team. There were not as many expensive travel teams, which meant that scouts would really only focus on high school teams, which of course cost very little money for most students to join.

However, in today's world of youth baseball, the best players are skimmed out of their local leagues at young ages to play on these expensive travel teams, as many parents and coaches now view Little League as being "beneath" their kids. Not only does this dilute the level of talent in Little Leagues, but it also sends a message at a young age that baseball is only for people who can afford it.

For the kids who cannot afford to play on travel teams (some truly talented players get scholarships, but most do not) they will either continue to play baseball at a local (but diluted) level, but they will most likely give up baseball for basketball or football. Those sports not only have more cultural relevance among kids (more on that later), but they also give kids more of an opportunity to go to clinics or play on travel teams at a lower cost.

Is Baseball Too Slow?

Even for kids who can afford to play baseball at a high level, many of them do not stick with it for long. There are a few reasons for this. One is simply that many kids find baseball boring.

With the length of MLB games seemingly getting longer every year

(for example, Game 1 of the 2013 ALCS between the Tigers and Red Sox took three hours and twenty minutes—and ended with a 1-0 score), and kids wanting instant gratification, getting someone to watch a baseball game is now more difficult than ever.

According to a June 2013 Boston Globe article by Amalie Benjamin, the average baseball game is now almost three hours long, roughly 30 minutes longer than it was 40 years ago, and the highest it has ever been. While longer games create great drama for baseball fans, they can also discourage interest among casual or nonfans.

This dilemma is seen at the youth level too, as baseball, probably more than any other sport, involves a significant amount of patience and waiting. Therefore, even kids who are able to afford baseball academies and private coaches might prefer another sport that has less waiting. Because of the widespread use of the Internet and portable electronic devices, kids usually want constant stimulation and have trouble focusing on one thing for a long time.

Another way baseball is slow is in how long it can take a child to learn how to play the game. While the best athletes make the best players at the youngest levels, this changes by the time kids reach their teenage years.

In order to become a great baseball player, you need to dedicate years of practicing fundamentals, whether it be pitching, hitting, or fielding. Getting better at these skills takes incredible patience and discipline, two qualities that we will most likely see less of in the next generation of athletes. Of course, it would be silly to imply that one doesn't need patience and discipline to become successful in other sports.

But when you look at baseball and its two biggest rivals in the US, basketball and football, all three of these sports differ considerably when it comes to practicing and developing players. Youth basketball has shifted away from coaching and drills, and more towards AAU tournaments, where you get to play games the whole time, which kids consider more fun than doing drills. And due to the nature of football, you can be a spectacular athlete and not refined as a football player, and still have moderate success.

An example is New York Giants Defensive End Jason Pierre-Paul, who didn't even *start* playing football until his junior year of high school, yet was such a gifted athlete, that five years later, he became the Giants' first round draft pick while making first team all-pro in his second year. Think about that for a second. How often do you hear of an all-star baseball player who first learned the game six years ago?

Another example is Jimmy Graham, who only played one season of college football after playing four years of basketball at the University of Miami (and not having played football since high school), but is now considered by many to be the best tight end in the NFL. In baseball, it is impossible to just "jump in" and immediately become an average player, let alone an all-star. To become great in baseball, the only path is having a level of discipline and patience that seems to be diminishing in society as a whole.

Are Kids Exposed to Baseball?

One of the difficulties that Major League Baseball seems to have is marketing its star players. This was not a huge issue in the 1990s, as players such as Ken Griffey Jr. and Derek Jeter led a new wave of young players who were not only great talents, but were easily recognizable.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, almost every child, regardless of how much they knew about baseball, were exposed to the likes of Jeter, Griffey, Barry Bonds, Alex Rodriguez, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa. The home run races of 1998 and 2001 (even though they were PED-aided) revived baseball's popularity after the 1994 strike prematurely ended the season, but since then, baseball has had an extremely difficult time keeping up with basketball and football in popularity and cultural relevancy.

Can we definitively answer the question, how is baseball being introduced and exposed to the next generation of fans?

In today's MLB, exciting things are happening. Miguel Cabrera has recently won a triple crown and is quickly turning into one of the greatest hitters in history. Mike Trout is putting up numbers never



before seen by someone his age, while Clayton Kershaw has been dominating opposing hitters.

However, even with these feats, baseball's stars have fallen further out of the national public eye. While it seems that every decent NFL and NBA player has national TV ads running every day, we are not seeing the same from even the best baseball players. But more importantly, baseball players have become insignificant to the general public to the point that kids know less and less about baseball stars.

And for the people who do follow baseball, they are more likely to just focus on the team and players that they root for, and not much outside of that. Because of factors such as fantasy football and betting on spreads, the NFL has morphed itself into a league where an average fan will watch just about any NFL game on TV, even if the game involves teams that fan doesn't care about.

The NBA is widely considered to be a "player's league," where star players such as LeBron James and Kobe Bryant, and not the teams themselves,

are the reasons people watch and go to games. But what is truly telling about the modern sports marketing landscape is when an athlete in a sport other than baseball

gets much more publicity and notoriety for playing poorly.

In 2011, Tim Tebow became a national sensation, even though he was a very mediocre QB. Even though this obsession with Tebow had little to do with his actual football skills, it was still making money for the NFL, and gave it plenty of publicity among non-football

fans. When is the last time *any* MLB player, let alone a mediocre one, got nearly as much media coverage as Tim Tebow?

The only instance that even comes to mind is Alex Rodriguez's ongoing PED case, which is of course not the publicity that any league wants. But even among sports fans, baseball is becoming less relevant. Because baseball is becoming less and less culturally relevant in the United States, that means fewer kids are going to play it, or even be significantly exposed to it.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Since baseball's declining popularity is a combination of sociological, economic and psychological problems, there will be no easy fixes. While baseball could do a better job promoting its stars, some people are worried that they won't be marketable, as many of baseball's best players are from other countries (such as the Dominican Republic and Japan), and don't speak English as a first language.

While MLB could do more to speed up play, the amount of "live action" that goes on in a baseball game will always be less than at a basketball or football game. One

thing that MLB and its partners definitely could do is sponsor more youth leagues and clinics that are free or affordable, similar to what they have done in Latin American countries.

MLB does have RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities), which helps low-income kids play competitive baseball, but there are more



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

KEN GRIFFEY JR. was the epitome of cool and the face of baseball in the 1990s. Who is the face of the game today?

than just inner city kids who need to be exposed to the game. If baseball does not do a better job of giving access to the game to more lower-class children, baseball will be viewed as a "country club sport" such as tennis and golf, where unless you are a once-in-a-generation talent (i.e., Tiger Woods and Venus and Serena Williams), only people who can afford it will play.

Going off of that, baseball absolutely needs to address the discrepancy in public visibility of its sport compared to basketball and baseball. It would be easy to simply force baseball players to make more commercials, as it would better introduce them to the general public. However, unless baseball becomes more socially relevant (more people knowing about it, which can make kids more likely to play/watch it), that strategy probably would not do as much.

It would most likely take a huge effort by baseball to become as socially relevant as it was back in the 1950s. This would include increasing community outreach, player-fan interaction and just in general, showing kids how much fun baseball can be. One example of community outreach could be doing more Family Days, where families can get watch a game a discounted price.

Many minor league teams and some Major League teams

(such as the Washington Nationals and Tampa Bay Rays) do similar promotions that help get families to the ballpark, and more importantly, expose kids to baseball.

The last proposal that I will make is the revamping the youth baseball system. Too many kids are being skimmed out of their local little league programs to join expensive travel teams. At younger ages, I truly believe that focusing on fundamentals (such as proper pitching deliveries and batting stances) at an age where kids can are still growing will be more helpful for a child's development as a baseball player, especially as he or she rises through the ranks.

And finally, we need to realize that there are so many potential MLB players and fans all over the United States who cannot afford a baseball travel team or private coach, so baseball must find more ways to give support on a local level to lower-class kids who want to play baseball. While some of these measures might be expensive and time-consuming, it will be worth it if we want to next generation of sports fans to love and cherish baseball as we all do

Andrew Distler is a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences. He can be reached at abd76@cornell.edu.

CORNELL SPORTS BUSINESS SOCIETY

FALL 2013 ALUMNI SPEAKER SERIES :

events may be added or rescheduled; please stay connected with SBS for updates



Hussain Naqi '97 – SVP, Fan Engagement, Jacksonville Jaguars

• Tuesday, September 17th (Skype Chat)



“Business of Sports” Homecoming Panel – Sat., September 21st

Susan Schroeder '86 (VP, NBA); **Marc Cornstein '92** (Founder & Agent, Pinnacle Management); **Brian Tsao '06** (Sr. Director, New York Red Bulls); **Lauren Myers-Marion '97** (Sports HR Consultant)



Brian Friedman '95 – Chief Financial Officer, New York Jets

• Friday, September 27th



Michael Huyghue '83 – Inaugural UFL Commissioner

• Friday, October 4th



John Sergi '89– Chief Design Officer, Centerplate

• Wednesday, October 9th



Adam Raiken '02 – Vice President, Finance, MetLife Stadium

• Friday, October 11th



Becky Sendrow '02– Agent, Creative Artists Agency Sports

• Friday, October 18th



Tracy Dolgin '80 – President & CEO, YES Network

• Thursday, October 24th



Molly West '97 – Senior Director, Business Operations, ESPN

• Friday, October 25th



Andrew Daines '10 – Founder & CEO, PrePlay, Inc.

• Friday, November 1st



Mark Tatum '91 – EVP, Global Marketing Partnerships, NBA

• Friday, November 15th



2013 Ivy Sports Symposium – Friday, November 22nd

- Panelists include: **R. Manfred '80** (MLB); **A. Cohen '94** (Visa); **B. Kahn '03** (Qcue); **T. Jacobson '97** (NBA); **B. Moon '99** (Bloomberg Sports); **M. Hiltzik '94** (Hiltzik Strategies); **T. Grilk** (Boston Athletic Association); **T. Dolgin**; **J. Sergi**; **A. Daines**, and more Cornellians TBA



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WEEKLY MEETINGS:

TUESDAYS

4:30 PM

IVES 105

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[Reed Longo](#) (rdl64) or

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