

Activities and Discussion Questions



Inning 9

9.1 Major and Minor Differences

The minor leagues were once known as “the bush leagues” because most of the teams were located in small cities and farm towns – in “the bushes.” Big league ballclubs were the teams of big city America – “major league cities.”

But here’s something to think about. Maybe the major league/minor league distinction is economic as well as geographic.

Try This Exercise:

Go to the web site for the Major League Baseball team of your choice, and then go to the web site for the Northern League’s St. Paul Saints, <http://spsaints.com>, and compare the two. Now go to the web site for minor league baseball, <http://www.minorleaguebaseball.com>.

Questions:

- What generalizations can you make about the cities and towns where many of the minor league teams are located?
- How does the minor league marketing approach differ from the major league marketing approach?
- Are they competing for the same customers? Describe the “fan base” for each.
- Could it be that major league franchises are now the teams of affluent, upper middle class, professional America, while minor league clubs have become the teams of middle class and working class America? What do you think?





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9.2 Does Anyone Still Have a Favorite Player?

The emotional distance between players and fans seems wider now than it once was. Gone is the happy illusion that the lives of professional athletes bear even a faint resemblance to the lives of those who pay to watch them play.

Questions:

What do you think? Is there really a greater emotional distance between fans and players than there used to be? Why or why not? What does economics have to do with it?



Photograph by Leslie Jones , Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department

Babe Ruth and young fans, 1930s





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9.3 Is It about Money or Respect?

Superstars will sometimes admit that they make more money than they can spend. Yet during contract negotiations, they hold out for even more.

"It's not about money," they say. "It's about respect."

Question:

What do you think? Is it about money or about respect?

Question:

How might a team be affected if a superstar signs a long-term contract and then other players come along in a few years and sign contracts that are almost as big, or even bigger?





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Post-Game Interview

Time to revisit the questions we examined in our Warm-up Activity/Pre-Game Interview:

- What do you think about the salaries professional athletes earn, and why do you think professional athletes earn as much as they do?
- What do you think about the price of tickets to professional sporting events?
- How has “big money” affected professional team sports?
- What is the most urgent economic issue facing professional team sports?

Respond to the questions again, and then go back and take another look at your original responses. Any changes in how you feel or what you think?

