

The Sports of Kings

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Being a horseracing aficionado, this writer knows that the title of my column has always pertained to it. They called it the 'Sport of Kings' because it was the super rich, especially royalty, that owned (and still do) most of the great racehorses. Nowadays all major professional sports, throughout the entire planet for that matter, have become wealthy beyond compare. Interestingly enough, that wealth now runs throughout, enriching the owners, the media, the merchandisers, and the players. In the old days, pre free agency, many Major League Baseball players had to find full time jobs during the off season to help support their families. Matter of fact, up until the 1960s, excepting the star players, a ballplayer from the winning team could earn more from his World Series share than from his yearly salary! In pro basketball and pro football, it was even worse for the player.

What cracks me up is how the entire 'yuppie so called sports journalist profession' just fall in line on this whole system of profits from professional sports. I mean, Lebron James just made a deal for over *60 million dollars* a year for four years. I am in no way singling him out for what he is able to earn. Imagine what the owners of his new team must be earning to be able to pay him that? All the way down the line, the owners, media, merchandisers and of course the players are making fortunes! Who pays for it? Duh, we do, you and me Joe and Joan Fan. I mean, for a working stiff with a kid or two, going live to a pro game is like being held up. In most cases, a good box seat in even a moderate part of the stadium is going to cost well over \$100, maybe in New York or LA, \$200... and that's PER PERSON! With the parking and the programs and hot dogs and drinks (check out what they get for all these things. Outrageous!) you are looking at on the low end, at about \$400 to \$500 for one game! Even if you refuse to go to a game in person, your cable bill reflects how much is paid out to cover these sports via the airwaves.

Isn't it time for we working stiffs, who make up over 90% of sports fans, to just say 'Enough'? Isn't it time that we challenge the corporate sports empire? Why must we have private ownership of professional sports teams? Why do our cities have to fork over all kinds of funding and tax breaks to keep teams? We should have each city *owning* its teams, and running things *nonprofit*. Ditto for the cable provider... should be owned *nonprofit* by the locality AKA the community. Now, as is with the NFL, there should be a ceiling on how much each team can spend on payroll. With a more level playing field, perhaps the competition would be greater with much more parity. You look at the NBA now, and anyone with half a brain knows that only a mere handful of teams have any chance of winning a championship. Ditto for Major League Baseball, where many writers and fans already know what handful of teams, at only the *halfway point* of this season, even have a chance of making it to the playoffs. Ridiculous!

Now to the players. If men like Lebron James and Giancarlo Stanton from the LA Lakers and NY Yankees respectively, wish to earn mega millions per year, maybe they should 'Do the

right thing'. Sorry, but to this writer just forming a foundation and kicking in 5% of earnings is not the answer. I don't know much about Stanton, but LeBron James comes from the poor side of Akron, Ohio. If he is now earning close to \$100 million a year, from salary and endorsements, and at the current top rate of 37% that his accountant probably has him at, for purposes of argument he is perhaps paying 25% in federal income tax. That translates into, again for purposes of argument, LeBron keeping \$75 million. Good for him. Now how about LeBron making it also good for his Akron community? Imagine if he was willing to take 20 % of his \$75 million, or \$15 million each year, and go out and buy up foreclosed housing in his hometown? Then he seeks out families that are 'under the gun' financially as renters, and gives them the homes (at a tremendous tax write off to him)...or at least allows them to pay off the home over 50 years? Their payments would be so low, and they would own and not rent. The only caveat is that they cannot sell the home until half of what they own LeBron is paid back. Something like that; or, he can just be a true humanitarian and *buy* them the home? Now factor this with all the top earning stars of pro sports doing the same thing in their hometowns etc, Matter of fact, these stars could use the 'bully pulpit' to get their owners to provide *matching funds* for this philanthropy. Then perhaps, being a *fan* would mean something to all of us.

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Philip A Farruggio is a son and grandson of Brooklyn , NYC longshoremen. He has been a free lance columnist since 2001, with over 400 of his work posted on sites like Global Research, Greenville Post, Off Guardian, Consortium News, Information Clearing House, Nation of Change, World News Trust, Op Ed News, Dissident Voice, Activist Post, Sleuth Journal, Truthout and many others. His blog can be read in full on World News Trust, whereupon he writes a great deal on the need to cut military spending drastically and send the savings back to save our cities. Philip has a internet interview show, 'It's the Empire... Stupid' with producer Chuck Gregory, and can be reached at paf1222@bellsouth.net.



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