

# THE PRESSBOX

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## NL News



## Free Agency Numbers to Remember

Another free agent season has come and gone. I hope everyone has filled their Christmas stocking with free agents. Many players changed uniforms again this year.

When you get a chance, please take a minute to thank Mark and the terrific job he did in handling the process for us all. This is Mark's third year running free agency, and he did another outstanding job. It is a truly tough task to take on. Mark has generously taken time out of his busy schedule to make sure that this is a fun and exciting time for all of us. All of you deserve credit for that as well for making this a smooth process. THANKS MARK!

Kevin has already recapped some of the major comings and goings. I will take a look at some of the important numbers that were generated from this year's free agency.

- 41,613,000**-Most amount spent by any team (Florida).
- 18,206,000**-Highest contract amount spent on one player-Mussina (Bloomington).
- 6,750,000**-Highest salary per year given to a player-J. Giambi (Minnesota).
- 5,245,000**-Lowest amount spent by a team (Metropolis).
- 5,010,000**-Highest one year contract-W. Clark (North Georgia).
- 1,290,566**-Lowest amount in a team's bank account after FA (Toledo).
- 15**-Most number of FA's signed by a team (Box City and Gem City).
- 5**-Least number of FA's signed by a team (Bloomington).
- 5**-Highest number of years given to a player-D'Amico (Minnesota).

## Trades

1. **Minnesota** sends their 2002 #1 pick and Slocumb to **Box City** for Kevin Tapani.
2. **Minnesota** sends David Segui to **Ocala** for Dan Miceli and Mark McLemore.
3. **St Croix** acquires Luis Alicea and Doug Jones from **Ocala** in exchange for Nelson Cruz, Luis Lopez and \$328,000.
4. **Fleetwood** acquires Shannon Stewart and James Mouton from **Ocala** in exchange for Adam Eaton.
5. **Bloomington** traded Pedro Martinez to **Cook County** for Kevin Appier, Gabe Kapler, David Ortiz, Jaret Wright, Dan Reichert, Matt LeCroy. (All player contracts are paid in the deal.)
6. **Bloomington** trades Greg Maddux to **Brooklyn** for Ruben Mateo, Jeff Weaver, Brooklyn's 2001 1st Round Draft pick, Brooklyn's 2002 1st Round Draft pick and \$3,500,000. (All contracts are considered paid by the teams who traded the players.)
7. **Toledo** sends Curt Schilling and Charlie Hayes to **Andover** for Jeff Suppan, #2 pick, #3 pick, ND \$1.5M.
8. **Box City** trades Paul O'Neill to **Brooklyn** for Larue and 500K, with O'Neill considered paid by BC.
9. **Bloomington** traded Greg Swindell to **Minnesota** for Mark McLemore.
10. **Minnesota** sends Joe Mays to **Racine** for Racine's 3rd round pick.
11. **Brooklyn** sends Ramon Martinez (P) to **Metropolis** for \$500,000.
12. **Fleetwood** trades Royce Clayton and Wally Joyner to **Racine** for Antonio Osuna and \$250K All contracts assumed by new teams.
13. **Columbus** sends 750K to **Box City** for Travis Lee.

## Salary System

There has been a lot of discussion about PAID contract when involving trades. There, of course, is a good side and a bad side. Kevin and I would like to open up the discussion about a new salary system. The salary system proposal is a subject that we believe is vital to prevent these types of paid contract problems in the future. It is a subject we believe will eliminate the need for PAID contracts, as we see in many of our trades nowadays. Our current system is a bit out dated. The paid contracts have to go in our view and in many of your views also. If not, we will soon get to the point where half the players in the league at a given time will be paid. On the flip side, if we ban allowing teams to pay contracts, we will essentially be preventing trades, as very few teams have much disposable income after free agency. Kevin, sent an e-mail to everyone earlier to jump-start the discussion.

We are open to other ideas. Our intent in raising the point is to get all of us thinking. There is no guarantee our proposal or any other would pass. I know we are more than willing to discuss this in more detail. Feel free to share any specific thoughts or ideas you have with us.

What we are talking about is modifying our salary structure to mirror "real life". Rather than paying our players in one lump sum upon their signing, we might want to consider a

system, which involves a year-by year payment plan. By adopting this type of realistic salary structure, issues such as the PD contract and future cash considerations become completely moot. IF you trade for a player, you inherit all future payments due under the remainder of the contract. It's as simple as that.

For now, we will continue to allow deals to be completed with contracts pre-paid. EFFECTIVE WITH ALL DEALS THAT TAKE PLACE AFTER FREE AGENCY, any time a deal is made where a player is obtained with his contract "pre-paid", the player will be "tagged" with the "PD" label. What this means, without exception, is that if a player who has a "PD" designation is dealt again, there will be no salary reimbursement required to the trading team, because this team did not pay the player to begin with.

There is a system employed by the Winter BRASS league, which would serve as the model that we will propose in the near future. The idea is sound, we believe, and the practice has served that league well for about a year. There are still some potential problems with this system. 1) The system is new and only has about one year under its belt. 2) There is not safety net for letting a team spend way past its limits in future years to "win this year" and then bail out on the league. Kevin and I have discussed ways to prevent this, including making it MANDATORY that a team have at LEAST 10 million dollars MORE at any given time than is necessary to cover the next year's salaries on his team, taking into account the additional 35 million each team gets. This is just one idea, but it is with the intent of preventing an owner from going "nuts".

I will include an Excel sheet of the current rosters in BRASS and how the new rosters might look like if a system like this is adopted. My team is the Meridian Trojans and is in the Silver League, Iron Division. You will find what my payroll is for this year and the next 3 years out. The rosters are similar except that they show 4 years of signings instead of the current total contract in BRASSball.

Corey and Mark have also come up with a salary system which they believe would help to eliminate the need for PAID contracts and make the salary structure more realistic. Corey and Mark both play in the sister BRASS league and have some reservations about the current BRASS salary structure. I'm sure Corey and Mark will have more to say on this subject and go into detail about their system proposal. I know they are talking about submitting it to the BRASS winter league soon.

Their system is based more on the ML system. Essentially you get a player for the first 3-4 years he has a card real cheap. Then the player enters "arbitration" and serious decisions start to be made. Under their system you don't give multi year contracts to young players. Once the player gets a card you have to start paying him major league money. MO contracts go away. Minor leaguers are actual minor league players. Under their system FA's and excellent younger players (26-29) make the serious cash (as they do in real life). One of the goals in our system is to make crappy, filler players like Mike Oquist and such cheaper. 35M under their system, appears to work, but they believe they need some more analysis of their numbers. They also agree the "future payments" money should be locked away and unable to be spent so build in a safety net. It makes accounting a bit more tricky, but that's the problem in any system.

Below is a salary system that has been devised by both Corey and Mark. They feel now that BRASS has modeled its payment structure on a year-by-year model that it may be time to consider a salary system that also mirrors MLB in respects. They were guided by four goals. 1) Make younger players cheaper and available. 2) Make good young players (aged 27-29) and good veteran free agents appropriately pricey. 3) Lower the cost of average to lower level free agents. And 4) make yearly decisions for managers more challenging and intriguing. Below is their proposal.

Our system begins with the player's first appearance in the Majors. From then on he progresses through his career. But it is not card based, it is year based. So if a player comes up, gets a card, and then falls apart in the subsequent season you still have to pay the player a 2<sup>nd</sup> year salary to retain rights to him (250K). Again, the desire is to force the manager to deal with his roster on a yearly basis.

At first glance our system admittedly seems to favor keeping good players around on your team forever. However, consider a player's first appearance is usually a washout. Also, if you look closely your yearly payments to a player can become pricey if that player isn't quite a star player. To reiterate, Corey and I want to make your yearly decisions more challenging. This also leads into our 3<sup>rd</sup> goal: to make average or below skilled players cheaper by removing them from RFA status. We feel the league is better served by making these types of players UFA's from the point their manager deems they are not quite good enough to merit an arbitrary deal. We also think that by giving these players UFA status they will go for a cheaper rate. As the Free Agency conductor for Brassball, I have come to the following conclusion on RFAs. A) They are either very good and are worthy of the large offers they get to woo them away from their current owner or B) they are not real good and in order for an owner to actually pry him away he has to overpay for the player's services. The bidding on these subpar players then turns into a strange mix of overpriced bids and normal bids that are simply easy matches for the manager with matching rights. Corey and I want to reserve RFA status for the truly excellent young players that deserve to be salivated over.

Some of what we have proposed may seem confusing. We hope it is not. We tried to come up with something that was challenging at one level, yet easy enough to apply as it could fit on one page of paper (as we have done).

Please share your comments with us and the league. We feel this could take Brass to a new level in realism. We also think it could make Brass all that more challenging. Please look over the notes section below. It outlines what happens to current contracts and where those players would fall in this new system.

Thank you for your consideration.

**SOME NOTES:**

- Σ All bids on players who are RFA's in the 6<sup>th</sup> year MUST be for at least 1yr 2M.
- Σ ONLY contracts GENERATED via free agency can be extended.

- Σ RFA compensation value still determined in the current manner.
- Σ All players on a contract are now eligible for play, thus eliminating MO-1,2,3 deals and MTM contracts.
- Σ Wherever it says “or release him”, this means the player goes to UFA status.
- Σ No player who has 2 years or more of experience can be drafted. FA determines where all veterans end up.
- Σ 35M yearly allocation remains. AM contract amounts remain the same.
- Σ Contract decisions for the next season will need to be made on or before February 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **CURRENT DEALS:**

- Σ All FA deals stay as is.
- Σ All players CURRENTLY on a MO deal will then be entering their 2<sup>nd</sup> year.
- Σ All players on their initial ML deals are converted to the new system. Hence, a player on a (3,A4) would be entering his 4<sup>th</sup> season under the new system. A 2,A4 will be entering their 3<sup>rd</sup>. A player currently on the 4<sup>th</sup> year or greater of his initial deal- (4,A5) or (5,A8) for example- would be “grand-fathered” in and allowed to go to their normal RFA status at the end. But as mentioned in an above point, only contracts generated by FA can be extended.

### **SALARY SYSTEM**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Card: Sign player for 200K or release him.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Year: Sign player for 250K or release him.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Year: Sign player for 300K or release him.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Year: The Manager has a choice of the following.
  - A) Sign player for 1M or release him.
  - B) Buyout of arbitration Option A (Team RETAINS matching rights at end of contract)
    - 1) 4yr 12M (3M/year)
    - 2) 5yr 16.25M (3.25M/year)
  - C) Buyout of arbitration Option B (Team DOES NOT retain matching rights at end of contract)
    - 1) 4yr 7M (1.75M/year)
    - 2) 5yr 10M (2M/year)
    - 3) 6yr 13.5M (2.25M/year)
- 5<sup>th</sup> Year: The manager has the choice of the following.
  - A) Sign player for 1.5M or release him.
  - B) Buyout of arbitration (Team DOES NOT retain matching rights at end of contract)
    - 1) 4yr 12M (3M/year)
    - 2) 5yr 16.25M (3.25M/year)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Year: ARBITRATION. The manager’s options proceed in the order below.
  - A) Offer the player arbitration or release him.

- B) If offered arbitration, the player is GUARANTEED a 2M contract for the upcoming season.
- C) Manager determines what form arbitration takes. He can allow him to become a RFA and have his value decided by other league managers via bidding. Other option is to give him a deal as outlined by pay schedule below. Manager will not have matching rights after completion of below deals.
  - 1) 2yr 10M (5M/year)
  - 2) 3yr 16.5M (5.5M/year)
  - 3) 4yr 24M (6M/year)
- D) If no bids for the player from the RFA status described in section C, the player gets his 2M and the manager has no rights to him upon completion of the 6<sup>th</sup> year.

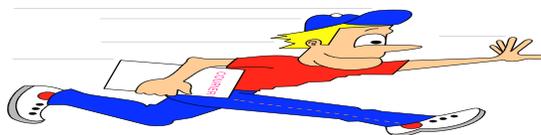
As we have several months before the next rule change ballot, there is ample time to discuss the pros and cons of the subject matter. I think many of you will find that one or the other is a truly realistic method, and will only serve to make our league that much better. There may be even a method where we mold the 2 proposals together. I hope that you will take the time to look over the proposals or create a new one for submission.

## Around the Horn

Remember to e-mail your 30 man protected roster by January 25<sup>th</sup> to the draft conductor, Corey Weisser. A fine of \$1,000,000 is incurred for being late, with \$250,000 being added for each additional late day. The draft will be held Saturday February 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 A.M. **Eastern** time. Corey will come out with more details concerning the draft and the manner in which it will be conducted as the time comes closer.

You may draft an unprotected player from another team during The Draft. If you do, you must pay his owner \$50,000 and reimburse him for the money remaining on his contract. To figure contract reimbursement, determine the average salary per season, and multiply that by the number of years remaining in the deal. (an exception to the above exists where the unprotected player is marked with a “pd” after his contract string. This player’s salary has been paid by a previous organization, and thus, if left off his current team’s 30-man protected roster, he can be selected for the \$50,000, with no reimbursement for his “remaining” salary necessary. You must e-mail a report of the contracts of all players you selected in the Draft to your LD no later than five days after the completion of the Draft.

## Upcoming Deadlines



**Jan. 25** - your 30-man protected list due to Draft Conductor (Corey Weisser).

**Feb. 1** - 30-man protected lists sent out by Draft Conductor (Corey Weisser).