

# A LINE ON SPORTS

By ELBURT MILLER



It is, you conclude, a lucky break for the sports types of Pittsburg Cincinnati, Philadelphia and Kansas City that they got their stadium under way before the economic drive. Since the market has done its gainer and the business backslide has begun, serious problems will confront those communities with arenas in the planning stage. They can't seem to get the cash together for the dome stadium in Buffalo, where the football owner happily would settle for something without a roof.

New Orleans and Seattle are stymied and the Anaheim of pro football Foxboro, Mass., which has volunteered to give refuge to the Boston Patriots, must float a loan for the stadium it is planning. In Montreal, how many people will buy bonds for such a venture is conjectural. Those with money to invest today have a pretty open field. In Montreal, grave doubt exists that the Expos will come up with the dome stadium the city promised. It was hoped the stadium would be built as an Olympic Games facility, but the cost is so excessive - upward of 60 million dollars - that less extravagant arrangements doubtless will be made.

Since sports has burgeoned as little more than a big financial game, you can't help but be sensitive to the effects on it by today's economy. You note the crashing of Penn Central and you have an image of people stranded at the Yonkers Station. It may not occur to you that Penn Central has controlling interest in Madison Square Garden, which owns the Knicks and the Rangers, also holds 34 percent of the stock in Roosevelt Raceway. In the reshuffling of Penn Central Officers, Willis Reed will probably emerge as the new chairman.

The owner of the Cleveland Indians readily admits that he has lost his slacks on Wall Street. He has serious doubts about his ability to retain the team. If he doesn't, chances are good the Indians may migrate to Dallas or Fort Worth if they can get there ahead of Oakland. I suggest the time in the dusty part we are learning to fly. The first time up, the instructor remarked, "This is the emergency exit, if anything goes wrong you go first if you can't beat me to the door."

The owner of the San Diego Rockets already has defaulted on payments to bondholders who bankrolled the indoor stadium in that community. The group that bought the Oakland hockey franchise and the Boston Celtics has landed in heavy financial trouble and has already lost the hockey club. A proprietor of the Los Angeles Stars, a contractor took such a butchering in the economic slump that he all but gave away the team to a man who volunteered to be responsible for its debts. The sum was estimated at \$300,000, a large bargain for a club that could gain parity next year with those in the NBA. The team has been shifted to Salt Lake City. New Orleans in the ABA was returned to the league toward the end of last season for lack of capital and a group in Houston granted an NBA franchise for 3.7 million dollars, passed in lieu of coming up with the down payment. And, of course, the Seattle baseball ownership fled for cover under losses, operational and otherwise and relinquished the team to Milwaukee.

The negative trend in commerce is bound to have an effect on sports, first at the ownership level and later at the box office. The upshot will be that the price of franchises will decline. To delay this eventuality, football will doubtless drop its new rule demanding that one partner own 51 percent or more of a club. Since it isn't easy today to persuade partners to put up that much, football will condescend to sell smaller percentages. It may even sell to a railroad, if it can find the money.

## VA QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Editor's Note: Veterans and their families are asking thousands of questions concerning the benefits their Government provides for them through the Veterans Administration. Below are some representative queries. Additional information may be obtained at any VA office.

Q--I returned from Vietnam recently, and was separated from active duty after serving 21 months. As I plan to apply to the VA for educational assistance to attend college, could you tell me how many months of entitlement I will

have? A--You will have 36 calendar months of entitlement. Any veteran with an other than dishonorable discharge who has served at least 18 months on active duty is entitled to the maximum entitlement.

Q--I am a World War II veteran with service-connected 20 per cent disability. The VA doctor who examined me recently said I must be hospitalized for this condition for about six weeks. I have no disability income insurance, and my employer does not have a sick plan.

What can I do to provide for my family while I am hospitalized?

A--Any veteran who is hospitalized by VA for a service-connected condition for 21 days or more is automatically rated 100 per cent disabled, and receives compensation at that rate from date of his admission. In your case, you should make sure that proof of your marriage and birth certificates for your children are in your VA records.

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