

# HAS BASEBALL STRUCK OUT?

By W.G. Ramirez

Many say it can and will. Others laugh, even scoff at the thought.

The question still remains though: Can Major League Baseball actually survive the NBA swarm and even maintain its status alongside the NFL?

The boys of summer have seemed to lost their glitz and glamour, while the guys tearing down hoops and swatting jumpers into the fourth row have laid claim to the attention that fans are giving.

The monsters that grunt and snarl on the gridiron will always maintain its appeal. Its only right to be awake on Sundays, tranced by the action on the tube. Some are just excited fans, others are hoping to collect their parlay tickets. As stated before, *football*, will always maintain its appeal.

But Baseball, could it be slowly diminishing into oblivion?

When marketing a professional sports league these days, there must be one major factor kept in consideration - kids.

Everywhere you go now, kids are walking, talking and wearing Michael Jordan and/or Charles Barkley. And as for those two, it'll soon be time to make room for the O'Neals, the Mournings,

the Johnsons, and even the Webbers.

Have you noticed the commercials, "I Love This Game!!!" They've even got Kermit the Frog dancin' around with "Happy feet, he's got those happy feet..."

What does Baseball have to compete with every child's favorite little frog, which Webster's defines as a web-footed amphibian, Harry Carey and the Cubbies?

Its funny, I must laugh, as I sit and write this commentary, Pepsi's commercial with Shaquille O'Neal just popped up on the screen. You know the one, with the little kid in awe of his monster-sized idol - "Don't even think about it!"

Surveys that have been taken recently prove that the most recognizable athletes are basketball players. I think even "His



Charles Barkley (l) and Michael Jordan are idols for many kids these days.



Shaquille O'Neal and Alonzo Mourning's popularity is rapidly growing across the country.



## COMMENTARY

Aimess" is even in shellshock sometimes. In his latest video, which includes footage from the Summer Olympics in '92, Jordan is seen strolling through Europe when he stops to admire the side of an enormous building. And although the scene is

set across the street, you can feel the anxiety that M.J. felt at the site of his silhouette splattered across a different country.

Is that the game of baseball lasts too long? Is the whole apple pie image a bit too wholesome for America anymore?

Hey, people in Colorado and Florida are eating it up. Major league attendance is extremely high, but it isn't as if there are going to be another 20 teams on the way. And even in the cities that are hungry for a professional team, how many realize that basketball is much more marketable than baseball these days.

The All-Star Game,

baseball's mid-summer highlight, drew 22.3 million viewers, last Tuesday, July 13, in the only game of the season that the fans across the country vote on the starters. The game was the #2 watched show last week, but then again, it may also be only one of eight baseball games that even seven are in October, and its not even assured that the World Series is going to last seven games.

Last month, June 30th to be exact, 8 million people tuned in to watch NBA Commissioner

David Stern present 64 aspiring NBA players, whom had just been drafted by, almost every team in the league. Now, let's look at the facts: 1. The NBA Draft is televised on cable TV, a luxury that not every household can enjoy. The All-Star Game - CBS. 2. Maybe, maybe 10 percent of The All-Star Game's viewers would be understandable, but 35%? And finally, 3. Well actually the first two are good enough for me, I don't need a third.

Bottom line is, during this time of the summer, people are anxious to watch NBA Commissioner (See Struck Out, Page 19)

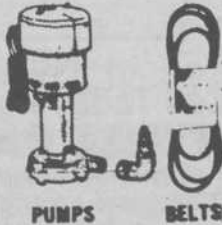
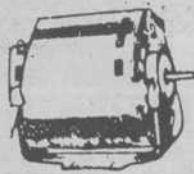
## DETROIT'S TIGER STADIUM

During a home game this year against Cleveland



A picture is worth....

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# BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF L.V. WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING YOUTH PROGRAM

The Lied Memorial Unit of the Boys & Girls Club of Las Vegas recently received a National Honor Award for Program Excellence from the Boys & Girls Clubs of America commending their "SMART Sports" Program.

SMART Sports capitalizes on kids' interest in sports programs, and links this with substance abuse prevention. The key to SMART Sports is that every club member

must attend a one-half hour "SMART Moves" (substance abuse prevention) session immediately before playing a league game. The children sign a "contract" stating their commitment to the drug-free program, and their attendance in the class serves as their "ticket" to participate in the sports.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Las Vegas is a non-profit, charitable



organization supported by contribution from the community that provides a "Positive Place for Kids" to spend constructive time during their non-school hours. Five clubhouses offer programs in each of the following areas: Personal/Educational Development, Cultural Enrichment, Health/Physical Education, Social Recreation, Citizenship/Leadership Development and Environmental Edu-

cation, as well as prevention programs to help combat substance abuse, gangs and teen pregnancy. All programs are facility-based, offered daily, year round, in the evenings, after-school and during the summer.

Fees are only \$2 per year at four of the five clubs. For more information call 367-CLUB