

Time for pro sports to rein in huge salaries

Whenever something in this country seems out of control, an intelligent person or a group steps forth to find a method to relieve the situation before it gets too far beyond comprehension. With the latest announcement that the Houston Astros have settled on a salary of \$18 million for pitcher Roger Clemens to play this 2005 baseball season, hasn't the time come for someone to say, "Enough is enough"?

The seven-time Cy Young winner, who is 42-years-old, came out of retirement a year ago, for a mere \$3.5 million, to play one last season before his friends and relatives in Houston, his home town. Clemens, it should also be noted, has asked the Astros for \$22 million for next season.

According to the latest payroll statistics, George W. Bush, the President of the United States — this vastly populated, sports oriented, wealthiest country in the Western Hemisphere — was inaugurated last week for a job that pays only about \$250,000 a year.

Now, all that Bush — who was a managing partner of the Texas Rangers baseball team before becoming governor of his Lone Star state — has to do for his take home pay, is manage the affairs and make policy for over 295 million citizens of this country. Not a bad job, if you are a politician.

Also being a veteran, with a wife and two kids, Bush, who was in the Texas National Guard, gets a pension at the end of his second term. But even then, the president's salary and pension will never reach \$18 million — even if he lives beyond the age of former presidents Ronald Reagan or Gerald Ford who is 91.

In signing for his salary, Clemens surpassed the one year salary of Las Vegas Greg Maddux, which was \$14.75 million in 2003 with the Atlanta Braves. Pedro Martinez took home \$17.5 million last season, the final year of his contract with the Boston Red Sox.

A few years back, the critics of the upward spiraling salaries of major league base-



SPORTS PACE

By Huel Washington

ball thought the ten-year, \$250 million contract given to Alex Rodriguez by the Texas Rangers would cause some of the other owners to call a halt to these astronomical salaries for baseball players.

Instead of a halting the high salaries for a sport that was once the nation's number one pastime, with George Steinbrenner leading the way, the whole thing has gone in reverse. Instead of stopping, it's spreading.

Baseball has a salary cap for each team. If a team exceeds the cap, there is a luxury tax that owners have to pay the league. Over the past three years, the New York Yankees, owned by Steinbrenner, has had to pay luxury taxes amounting to over \$10 million. The Yankees owner is a billionaire, if not a trillionaire — and winning is the only

thing that he cares about — not some little old luxury tax.

The Rangers former managing partner, who now occupies the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C., has a year-round job and has his actions are not only scrutinized by his co-workers and staff, but by almost all of the countries that belong to the United Nations. And if his stuff isn't working, uproar will occur from the Congress of the country and the citizens who will be calling for his job. He came close to losing the job on November 2, 2004.

So, no one can blame pro ball player Clemens for asking and getting such a monumental contract, but does his performance on the mound compare anywhere near the kind of things that a president of the United States has to do during his four to eight years

in office?

Clemens salary is only the most recent example of the unrealistic salaries being given to athletes who play in their respective sports. There have been many others, and some rookies even make more than the president.

When the Philadelphia Eagles wanted Jevone Kearse, a defensive terror with the Tennessee Titans, they gave him an eight year contract for \$66 million and a signing bonus of \$16 million.

Commissioner Bud Selig has asked some of the baseball owners to be reasonable when going into the free agency pool and signing players from the list.

Some have been understanding; but some, like the New York Mets new general manager Joe Garcia, who went after and landed his fellow Dominican, Martinez, are

handing out contracts that the players can't resist.

The average citizen doesn't know what the commander-in chief of the country receives as a salary. Neither do many of the athletes. Many people think he gets at least a million a year. Well, he doesn't, and apparently, is not even asking for raise. He should. With one of the most responsible jobs on the planet, his pay is less than that of a pro baseball, football, or basketball player.

When Babe Ruth was paid \$100,000 a year before leaving the Yankees, he was told that he made more than President Herbert Hoover, Ruth said, "How many homers did he hit last year?"

Where the escalating sports salaries go from here, no one knows. Who will say, "No more?" Only time will tell, but it's time to say, "That's it!"

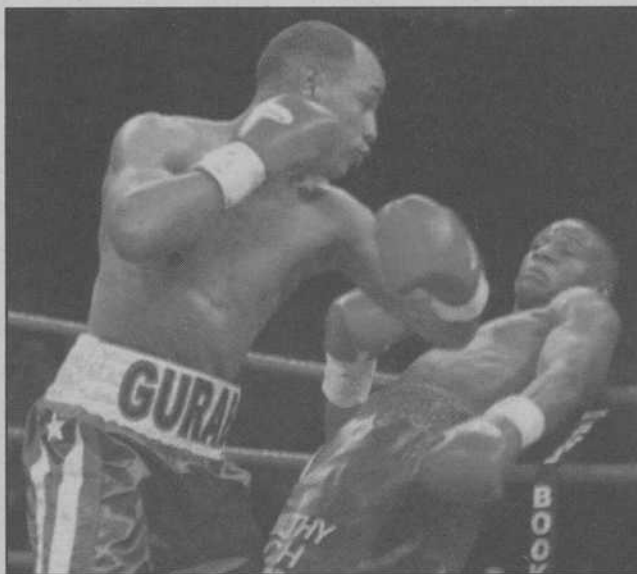
Mayweather stops Bruseles in eight

MIAMI (AP) — Floyd Mayweather Jr. took a step toward a title in a third weight class by stopping Henry Bruseles with 55 seconds left in the eighth round Saturday night.

Mayweather, former WBC super featherweight and lightweight champion, pursuing a crown in the 140-pound class, was never in trouble as his quick combinations frustrated Bruseles in the scheduled 12-round bout at American Airlines Arena.

While Mayweather set the tone in the fight with his speed, he used an impressive power-punching display in the eighth to send Bruseles to the canvas, with a left-right combination to the head.

The Puerto Rican Bruseles (21-3-1, 13 KOs) got to his



Floyd Mayweather, Jr., avoids a punch from Puerto Rico's Henry Bruseles during the first round of their WBC super lightweight eliminator match at the American Airlines Arena in Miami, Saturday.

feet but Mayweather (33-0, 22 KOs) was ready with a left foot but Mayweather (33-0, 22 KOs) was ready with a left foot but Mayweather (33-0, 22 KOs) was ready with a left

canvas but again beat the 10-count.

However, Bruseles' trainer Evangelista Cotto stepped into the ring and instructed referee Jorge Alonso to stop the fight.

"I took my time and listened to my corner," Mayweather said. "I knew I would wear him down."

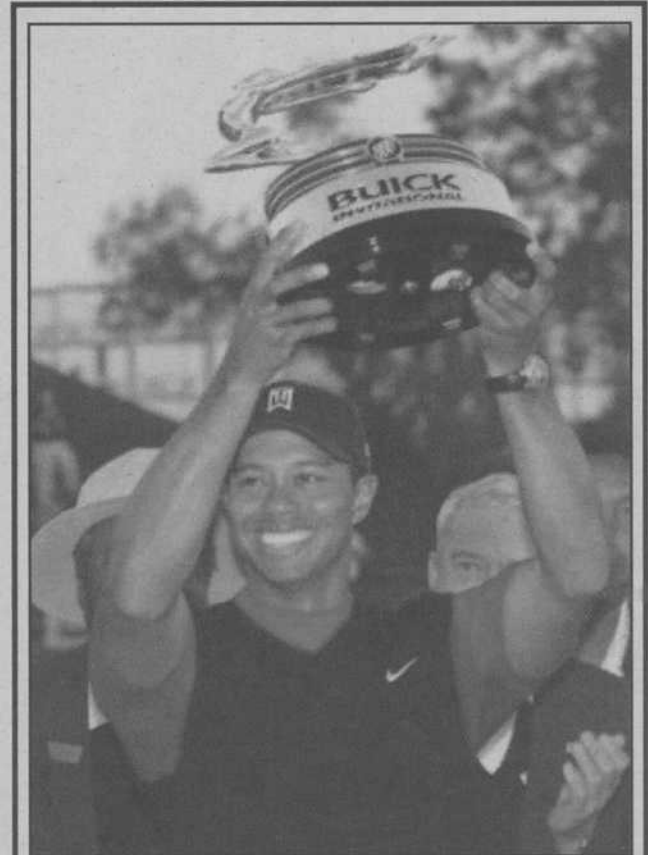
The 27-year-old Mayweather, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was effective early with a lead left jab. Bruseles, also, had no answers for Mayweather's quick rights and left hooks to the head.

Midway through the bout, when he felt comfortable fighting at close range, Mayweather connected with right uppercuts.

As he chased Mayweather, Bruseles managed to land sporadic rights to the head, but not strong enough to change the bout's course.

"I knew it would be an easy fight," Mayweather said. "It was a good workout."

With the victory, Mayweather now sets his sights on the winner of Arturo Gatti's WBC title defense against James Leija next Saturday. Mayweather is expected to fight the winner in May.



TIGER ROARS AGAIN

Tiger Woods raises the trophy after winning the Buick Invitational at Torrey Pines golf club in San Diego, California, Sunday. Woods won with 16 under-par, shooting four under-par in the last round.

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Lewis denies report on Klitschko fight

LONDON (AP) — Former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis denied a published report that said he'll end his retirement to fight Vitali Klitschko in November. The London tabloid the *Sunday Mirror* quoted Lewis as saying, "I'm making a comeback later this year. The money is up to 21 million pounds (\$39.3 million) right now and I simply can't turn that much cash down. "I need the money just like everyone else and it's just too good to turn down."

But later Sunday, Lewis released a statement saying he was not making a comeback.

"I want to reiterate what I said when I retired in February 2004, that I was fortunate to leave the sport on my own terms, and that I will be one of the few heavyweight champions in history to retire on top and stay retired," he said.

Lewis, 39, retired Feb. 6 with a 41-2-1 record. Klitschko assumed the title April 24 when he beat Corrie Sanders.