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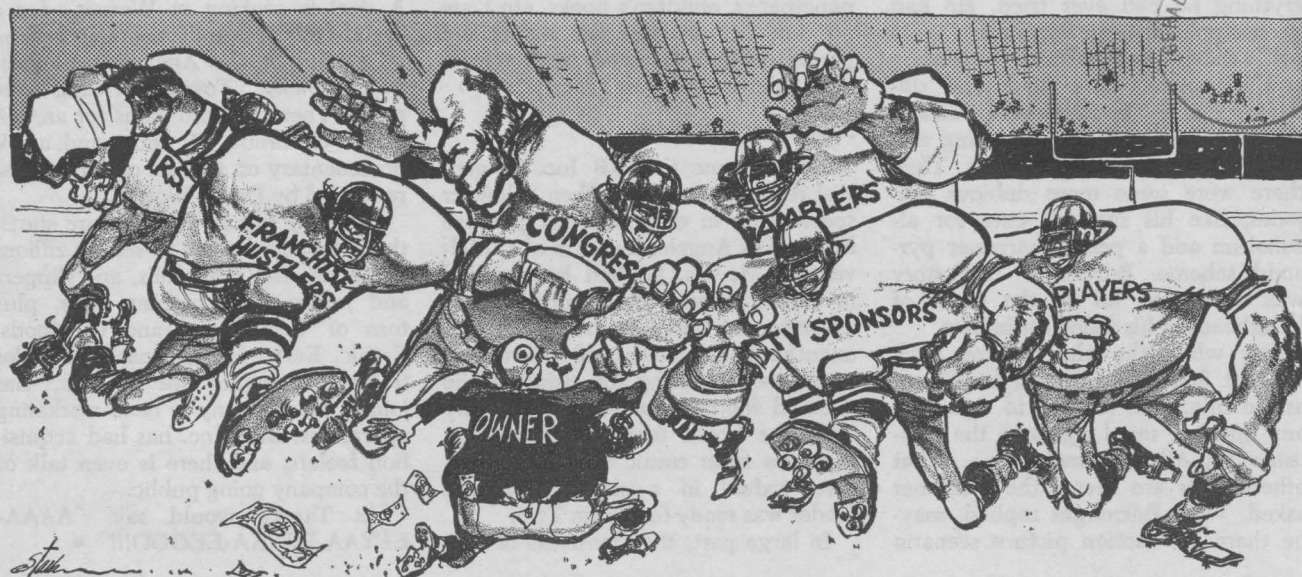
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The Sports Boom Is Going Bust...

... and so are a lot of the owners who brought you tax-supported stadiums, overpaid athletes, saturated TV coverage and astronomical ticket prices.

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LITTLE 5-foot 2-inch Fran Monaco sat shaking his head in his cramped office surrounded by football gear and explained in a halting voice how his Jacksonville Sharks football team—his first love—had eaten him alive. In one season, the 48-year-old Florida businessman seems to have lost every cent he made in the last 22 years on his medical laboratory business and running a supper club. "Before, I had a good reputation," said Monaco, wincing. "I paid my debts."

But no more. Thanks to his beloved Sharks, for which he paid the new World Football League \$650,000 last year, Monaco now has total liabilities of around \$1.8 million.

Monaco said sadly: "This is like a nightmare."

Little Fran Monaco has company. A growing number of owners and promoters are learning that the easy days are over for the sports boom, which created scores of new teams, fostered more than a score of new arenas and stadiums costing over \$1 billion (see box, p. 26) and saturated television with "spectaculars" like the wrist wrestling championship.

Teams are folding in football, basketball and tennis—to name a few—and some sports insiders now insist that the recession will eat up entire leagues. Two candidates: the World Football and World Hockey outfits. Beyond question, the in word in sports today is shrinkage.

The sports boom is ending with a bang and a lot of whimpers:

Veteran builder and sports mogul Robert Schmertz lost around \$1 million operating the World Football League's New York Stars' franchise last year. Besides, he recently gave away 50% of his Boston Celtics basketball team to settle a \$3.7-million suit. That must really hurt, since the stock of his Leisure Technology retirement home company has collapsed, and he has just been indicted for bribery in connection with a realty deal. But he's hoping the public will help him out by buying the WFL team, now known as the Charlotte, N.C. Hornets, for \$100 a share.

Sambo's Restaurants' Sam Battistone Jr. and friends are likely to lose about \$1 million operating the National Basketball Association's New Orleans Jazz this season. Last year he and his friends paid \$6.2 million for the privilege (and franchise). Battistone and other partners stand to lose another \$1 million on the WFL Hawaiians. Poor Sam! He jumped from his frying pans into a fire.

Some even think that sports troubles may have been one factor that led investment counselor Charles W. Call Jr. to shoot and kill his wife, a son and then himself last month in New Jersey. According to one organizer, Sean Downey, Call was committed to investing \$600,000 in the

World Baseball Association, a new league that is supposed to challenge the two entrenched leagues.

There are even rumors that Jack Kent Cooke, chairman of Tele-Prompter and the biggest sports mogul of all, wants to sell out. That's doubly significant, because Cooke's timing is usually as impeccable as his wardrobe. He entered sports in the Fifties, later going to Los Angeles from Canada, where he owned a string of radio stations. For around \$20 million invested over the years, he got a slew of sports franchises, including basketball's Los Angeles Lakers, and built the 18,000-seat Forum. His rumored asking price: \$90 million. But as the boys on Seventh Avenue say, "Wait; he'll take less."

What happened to pro sports isn't very surprising. All boom businesses are started by the truly shrewd, then inevitably become saturated by the misguided souls who can't resist getting in on a good thing. And, of course, sports is especially attractive to investors. It makes instant celebrities out of unknowns—like the son of a rich man or perhaps the anonymous executive referred to as "what's-his-name, the toilet-seat king."

Sports isn't dying; it is merely shrinking to a more healthy size. America's love of sports assures ever more sports revenues. But those bigger dollars will continue to be stretched to the breaking point by

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WHETHER YOU PLAY OR PAY, SPORTS ARE BIGGER THAN EVER

Just try to find an empty tennis court—or buy a ticket to a major football game. Even soccer is growing. Americans are on an athletic binge, both as participants and as spectators.

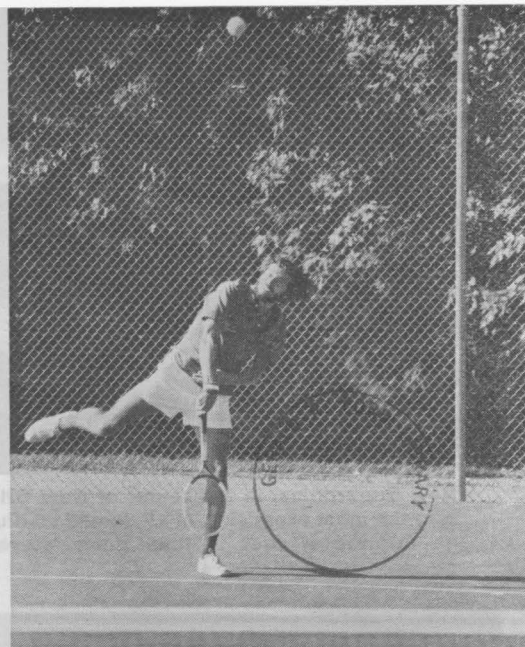
There's a double-barreled boom in sports in this country.

The biggest is in personal participation. Americans in record numbers are turning to some form of physical activity for recreation.

Fastest-growing sport of all is tennis, which, like golf, can be played by people of nearly all ages. Soccer is spreading fast among the young. But today's amateur athletes are gamely taking up everything from jogging and hiking to mountain climbing and hang gliding.

There's a boom in spectator sports as well. Even the "armchair athletes" who prefer to watch rather than take part are being swept up in this mounting enthusiasm. More people than ever are paying to watch organized sporting events—despite constantly rising admission prices in economically hard times.

Professional sports leagues, once confined to baseball and football, now operate nationwide in hockey, basketball, soccer and tennis. Professional lacrosse is played indoors along the Atlantic seaboard and a professional volleyball league has re-



USNBWR

Shorn of its country-club image, tennis is now the fastest-growing participant sport.

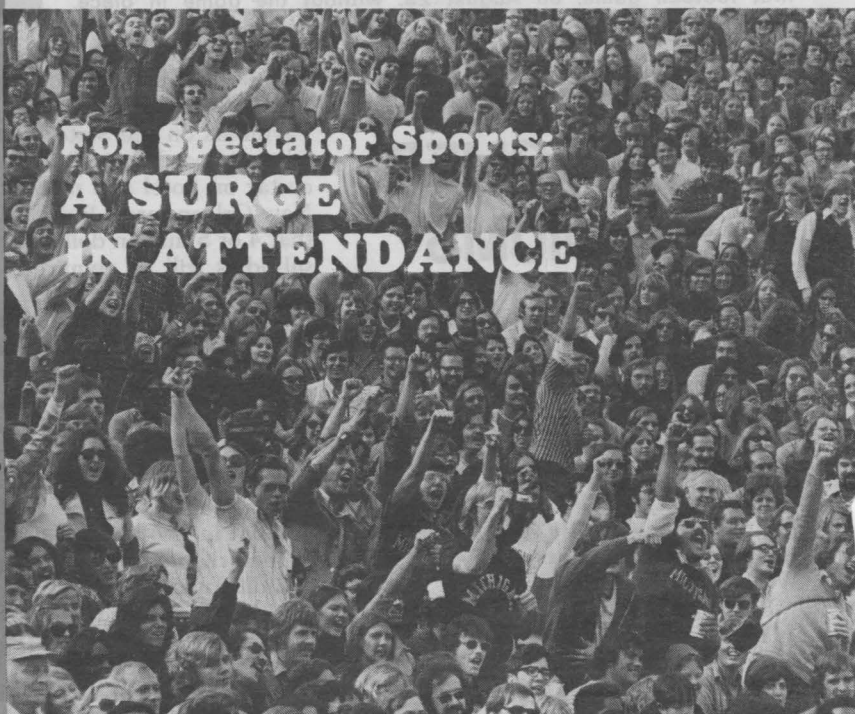
cently been established in the West. Since 1965 the number of major-league teams in professional sports has jumped from 57 to 173. Additionally, touring golf, bowling and tennis professionals crisscross the country the year round for weekly tournaments.

With so much more going on, it's only natural that attendance has risen. A turnstile count of 12 varied sports, amateur and professional, shows 273.2 mil-

Spectators at Major Sports Events

Thoroughbred racing	1965	40,737,000	UP 20%
	1974	48,824,000	
Auto racing	1965	39,000,000	UP 22%
	1974	47,500,000	
College football	1965	24,683,000	UP 27%
	1974	31,235,000	
Major-league baseball	1965	23,437,000	UP 31%
	1974	30,630,000	
Harness racing	1965	26,899,000	UP 11%
	1974	29,976,000	
College basketball	1965	16,384,000	UP 50%
	1974	24,630,000	
Greyhound racing	1965	10,865,000	UP 50%
	1974	16,274,000	
Professional hockey	1965	2,823,000	UP 325%
	1974	12,006,000	
Minor-league baseball	1965	10,194,000	UP 8%
	1974	11,032,000	
Professional football	1965	6,956,000	UP 47%
	1974	10,236,000*	
Professional basketball	1965	2,356,000	UP 249%
	1974	8,229,000	
Professional boxing	1965	1,743,000	UP 53%
	1974	2,675,000	

*National Football League



TOTAL FOR THESE EVENTS

IN 1965:

206,077,000

TOTAL FOR THESE EVENTS

IN 1974:

273,247,000

UP 33%

Source: Triangle Publications

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It was his 27th birthday and Ernie Holmes, defensive tackle for the Pittsburgh Steelers, was picking up the meat for his party. Not at the supermarket or butcher's, though. Holmes was personally slaughtering a calf at his father's farm outside Houston. "I gave him a forearm lift," says Holmes, describing his barnyard battle with the beast. "That knocked him into the fence. Then I put a full nelson on him." Finally Holmes dropped the animal with a high-powered rifle. "Forty-five minutes later," he says, "we had the calf skinned and dried."

The National Football League is full of quarterbacks who have been shown no more mercy. Not to mention running backs and offensive linemen. Playing with a raw violence that is rare even when judged by the bare-knuckle standards of his sport, Ernie Holmes knows how to slaughter an offense.

On most teams his performance—and personality—would make Holmes famous. Not on the Steelers. With Pittsburgh, he is not even the best-known defensive lineman. There are three reasons: Fellow Tackle "Mean" Joe Greene and Ends L.C. Greenwood and Dwight White, each a prototype of menace at his position and a striking figure off the field. Greenwood, 29, is a brutal tackler, although he says he hates contact and would rather not be known as a football player. Greene, 29, after a season of tossing linemen and runners around like rag dolls, goes home to cultivate his vegetable garden. As for White, 26, it is hard to know exactly what he will do at any time. "There's no question that I'm schizoid," he says. "I might be three or four people. I know I can be evil."

These are the men who make up the meanest front four in football, a half ton of trouble for any offense. Moving like a

COVER STORY

HALF A TON OF TROUBLE

band of marauding behemoths (average size 6 ft. 4 in., 260 lbs.), they smother runners at the line of scrimmage, flatten passers, and send offensive linemen into disarray. "There are some great lines in the league," says Washington Redskins Head Coach George Allen, architect of one himself, "but the edge has to go to Pittsburgh. They put fear in the heart of a passer."

They do more than that. Dumping quarterbacks a league-leading 40 times last season was only the beginning of the front four's contribution to the Steelers. They set the tone for the entire defense, and it was the defense that carried the 42-year-old Pittsburgh franchise to its first Super Bowl championship last year. The creation of patient, low-key Head Coach Chuck Noll, who drafted all but two of the starting defensive players, and Steeler Founder and Owner Art Rooney, who gave Noll the backing he needed to build slowly over the past six years, the defense is the cornerstone of Pittsburgh's leadership in the N.F.L. When Pittsburgh defeated Minnesota 16-6 in the Super Bowl, the defense limited the Vikings to 17 yds. rushing. Minnesota Running Back Chuck Foreman spoke for the league when he pleaded with the Steeler front four: "C'mon, you mothers, give us a yard."

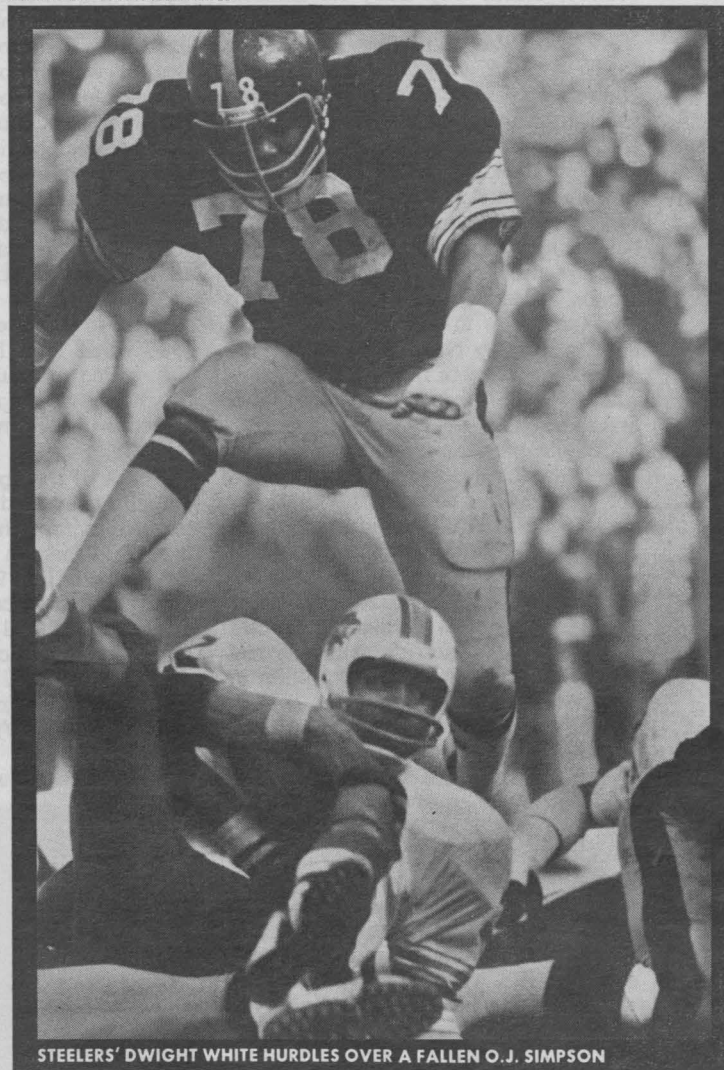
Before this season ends, that call may well be heard again. Going into last weekend's game against the stumbling New York Jets, the Steelers were riding an eight-game winning streak and an overall won-lost record of 9-1. That was good enough to put them in first place in the Central Division of the American Con-

ference, the toughest division in the N.F.L. Their biggest conference obstacle on the way to the Super Bowl is a likely playoff showdown with the rugged Oakland Raiders. If the Steelers survive that, they will probably face either the Vikings or the Los Angeles Rams in the Super Bowl next month in Miami.

A Super Bowl in Florida will be the natural conclusion for a sunny N.F.L. season. Despite, or perhaps because of, the collapse of the rival World Football League, the N.F.L. this fall is registering a jump in attendance (averaging 56,000 per game) and an increase in TV ratings. And why not? Some 40% of the games are being won by 7 points or less, not to mention a rash of sudden-death thrillers.

It is ironic that four of the key protagonists of this season should be Charles Edward ("Joe") Greene, Dwight Lynn White, Ernest Lee Holmes and L.C. Henderson Greenwood. Though

KLUETMEIER—SPORTS ILLUSTRATED



STEELERS' DWIGHT WHITE HURDLES OVER A FALLEN O.J. SIMPSON

front fours have been well publicized in pro football—the Rams "Fearsome Foursome" and the Vikings "Purple People Eaters" during the past decade—quarterbacks and running backs still remain the celebrities of the sport. Certainly the action along the line of scrimmage gets only passing attention from TV cameras and fans. But this trench warfare is as fierce as anything in sport. Grunting and cursing, players club, ram and pound each other in two- and three-second rumbles that begin anew with every play.

Until about 15 years ago, the defensive linemen's primary objective was to come out of the rumble stopping the run. No longer. Faced with increasingly sophisticated passing attacks, the

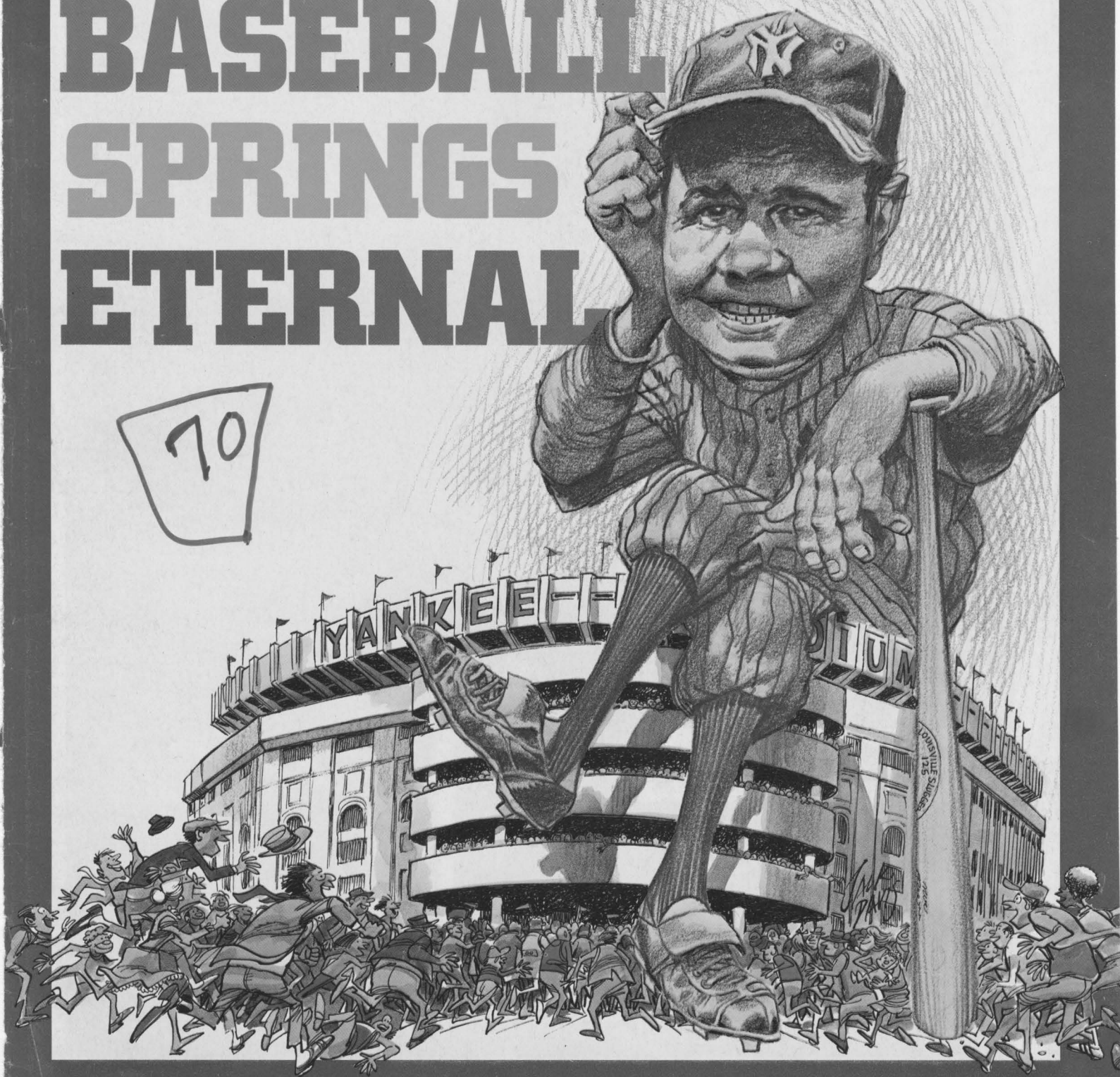
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APRIL 26, 1976

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TIME

BASEBALL SPRINGS ETERNAL



It's a goddam good game," says Yankee President Gabe Paul, "to survive what's been done to it." What is being done to baseball and by whom is a matter of substantial contention, but the first half of Gabe Paul's statement has been resoundingly endorsed in the past few days.

► In New York, hallowed old Yankee Stadium, the house that Ruth built, reopened in plushly refurbished form, its dedication presided over by Mayor Abraham Beame. It was 53 years from Babe to Abe, but the difference in what

ready as late as December 1975 to blow the Windy City looked solid as a line-drive double—all because the greatest promoter baseball has ever known was back in action.

► In Atlanta, the Braves' new owner, a tough-minded, salty-tongued communications czar and yachtsman named Ted Turner, signed up the game's most sought-after right arm in a reported \$1 million deal engineered by—of all people—a fan who took the negotiating authority upon himself. With one stroke of the pen, the moribund Braves had a bright new look. The signee was a handsome, 30-year-old, bubble-gum-chewing pitcher named Andy Messer-

domiciled in these weatherproof bubbles never have to worry about slipping in the rain, losing fly balls in the smog, getting grass stains on their pants or suffering other terrestrial indignities.

But even if undomed, the new Yankee Stadium has more character than those sterile, round, modular units that have sprung up across the sports landscape like mushrooms in a glen. It is basically the same looming, irregularly laid-out structure whose vast inner space Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle roamed heroically. Only it is clean, shiny and for the first time comfortable. The "Telescreen" on the scoreboard that was to flash messages like "Charge!" to the crowd was not working, and some box-seat spectators complained that their view of home plate was blocked by the dugout roof. But the ugly poles that screened the vision of generations of fans have been removed, and the seats are now wide enough—22 in. instead of 18—to accommodate America's middle-age spread. This bow to our hippy culture reduced the stadium's capacity from 65,010 to 54,028.

The distinctive, swag façade that



ON APRIL 18, 1923, THE BABE WARMED HIS HOUSE WITH ITS FIRST HOME RUN EVER

a community will lavish on its sports team could be measured in light-years. Trembling at the thought that its Yankees might leave town forever, the stone-broke metropolis ponied up an estimated \$100 million to provide the likes of 6,900 parking spaces and an electronic scoreboard for the fans, expansive lavender-carpeted dressing rooms for the players and a plush lounge, featuring overstuffed chairs in the shape of fielders' gloves, for the owner's guests.

► In Chicago, Peg-Legged Bill Veeck (see box page 76), dressed as a Revolutionary soldier and playing a fife, stumped triumphantly across the 100% natural turf he has restored to Comiskey Park. Marching to Veeck's tune were White Sox fans in unheard-of numbers. There were 40,318 in the flesh at opening day (compared with 20,202 last year), season-ticket sales were up more than 40%, and a franchise that had been

smith, a free spirit and free agent whose victorious legal battle against baseball's "reserve clause" was reshaping the entire sport.

Little wonder then that turnstiles clicked like castanets as combined major league opening-day attendance figures hit an alltime high. Baseball '76, which for weeks had seemed unlikely to get launched at all, was off to a rocketing start. The long legal arguments over the rights of spring, at least for the moment, proved no contest for the game's own rites of spring.

The grandest new blossom of baseball's most stimulating April ever was Yankee Stadium, a glowing renovation of the most famous, nostalgia-imbued house of sweat in America. Only New Orleans' Superdome, completed last year, cost more (\$173 million); Seattle's "Kingdome," which opened this month, was a mere \$60 million. Of course, teams

once hung from the roof of the stands has been reproduced atop the new \$3 million-plus scoreboard—only in concrete, not painted copper. Because the value of copper has risen almost as drastically as ballplayers' salaries since 1923, the original façade was melted down and sold. Perhaps it is now plumbing in a renovated brownstone. The playing surface is still alive: Merion blue grass, in texture irregular enough to promise a few historic bounces and in color a nice uneven biological green.

On April 18, 1923, close to 65,000 fans* flocked to New York's \$2.5 million house of baseball. New York Governor Al Smith threw out the first ball. The first one hit into the stands—fittingly—was a game-winning home run by Babe Ruth that beat his old Red Sox teammates 4-1. Ruth's astonishing home-run hitting and his \$50,000 salary had made baseball a different game and caused many to say the new stadium should have been called Ruth Field.

*The announced figure of 74,200, the Yankees later shamelessly admitted, was impossible; the park at the time had only 62,000 seats.

The Yanks doff their caps during opening ceremonies, then give 54,000 fans an afternoon to remember.

SPORT



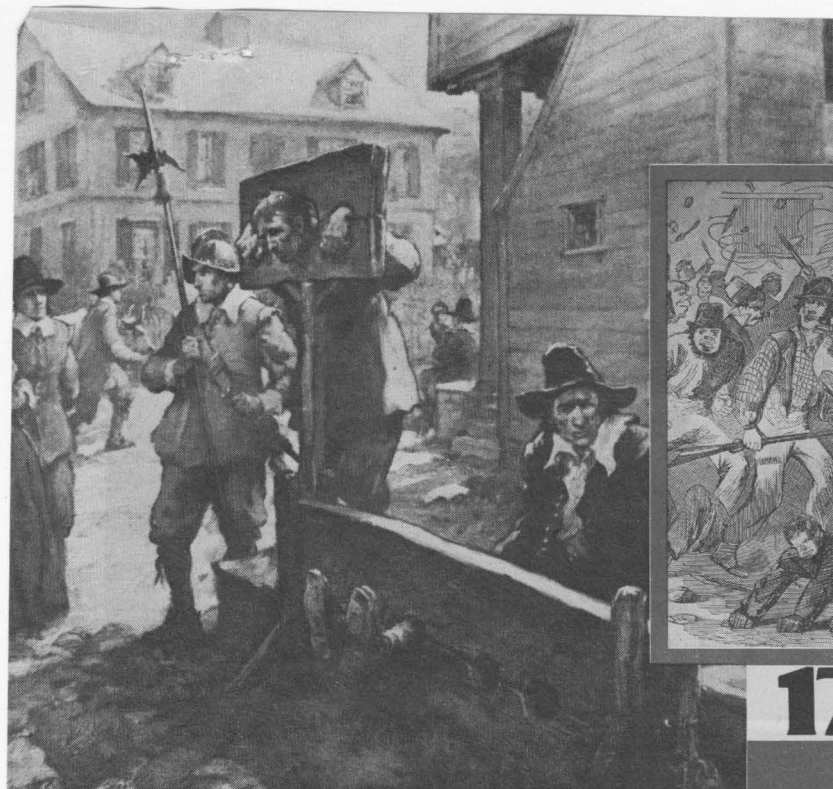
THE OLD BALL GAME



CRIME AND



1776



STOCK & PILLORY IN BOSTON, CA. 1657; NEW YORK DRAFT RIOTS, 1863

BETTMANN ARCHIVE

BROWN BROTHERS

The following Bicentennial Essay is the seventh in a series that has been appearing periodically, surveying how America has changed in its 200 years.

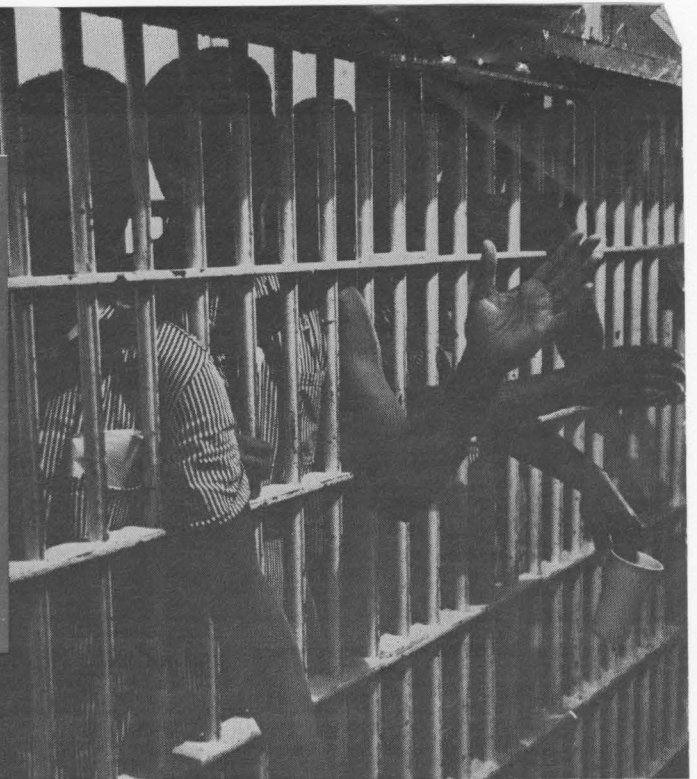
On the eve of the Revolutionary War, many colonists—and not only Tories—feared that if rebellion came, “the bands of society would be dissolved, the harmony of the world confounded, and the order of nature subverted.” Crime and lawlessness would surely accompany any challenge to authority, especially one involving a resort to arms.

It did not happen—not, at least, during the war. In retrospect, that is remarkable. In 1776 there were no municipal po-

Crime not only did not increase during the Revolutionary War, but most of it, at least in New England, continued to involve religious and moral, not acquisitive or violent, offenses. William E. Nelson, analyzing the records of seven populous Massachusetts counties, finds an average of 23 prosecutions for theft each year before 1776 and 24 a year in the five years after 1776, hardly indicative of a crime wave. But there was an average of 72 prosecutions for sexual offenses each year before 1776 and 58 a year from 1779 to 1786, along with about 24 prosecutions a year for religious offenses, like missing church on Sunday.

We have always thought of our colonial forebears as rather puritanical. That there were so many prosecutions on moral and religious charges suggests that this was, indeed, their attitude;

PUNISHMENT



1976

BICENTENNIAL ESSAY

AP

FREED—MAGNUM

ASBURY PARK, N.J., POLICE & RIOTERS, 1970; LOUISIANA PRISON, 1963

opinion not only dominated political decision making, but controlled most public and much private conduct as well. This is why there was such frequent resort to humiliation as a penalty. Stocks, pillory, and tar and feathers were effective because the opinion of one's townsmen was so important. The colonists paid a price for government by communal consensus: there was not much privacy, and what we now regard as liberties of conscience

tuous in our history. Rioting became commonplace for reasons that were partly economic (depressions that put artisans out of work or immigration that put them in competition with cheaper labor), partly religious (Catholics, Masons and Mormons were attacked and their buildings burned), partly political (the early anti-slavery agitation), and partly sporting (the drunker members of