

SPORTS SLANTS

- By Ray Shank

Maybe something should be said in this column about the skyrocketing salaries in sports.

Can you imagine a fellow like Marc Tardif, who was just a so-so forward with Montreal Canadiens until he defected to Los Angeles Sharks of the WHA this season, pocketing \$150,000 a year?

That's what Marc is making, all right -- \$150,000 smackers!

Mike Walton, an average player with Toronto Maple Leafs and Boston Bruins before he jumped to Minnesota Fighting Saints of the same WHA. He's now under a three-year, \$440,000 contract with the Fighting Saints.

I would think Tardif and Walton were lucky to be making \$40,000 a year when they played in the NHL.

And look at Gordie Howe and Bobby Hull, two super stars when they played with Detroit and Chicago in the NHL. Howe didn't make \$100,000 a year until his final season with the Red Wings -- and that was his 25th campaign with the Detroiters.

Hull was probably raking in 100 grand or better when he left the Black Hawks, but now he's under a 10-year, million-dollar contract, with fringe benefits.

But what the heck, Howe and Hull were the NHL's premier players. They best deserve the best, and they're getting it.

More fantastic salaries: Brad Park, second best defenceman in the NHL, of New York Rangers, is said to be making \$250,000 a season. And members of the Rangers' top line -- Jean Ratelle, Rod Gilbert and Vic Hadfield -- supposedly pocket \$175,000 apiece per year.

But those fantastic salaries aren't restricted to pro hockey.

In basketball, for instance, Nate Archibald of the Kansas City-Omaha team is under contract for \$3 million. I don't know exactly how many years Archibald has to play with the team to make that kind of cash, but even if he plays until he's 75 years old, he'll have made a fabulous salary.

O.J. Simpson, the fine back of Buffalo Bills of the National Football League, recently signed a lifetime contract with the team. It's not known exactly what Simpson signed for, but you can bet it's somewhere in the neighborhood of 200 grand a year. That's not bad for a 14-game season.

It's not quite as bad in baseball, since they haven't had renegade leagues enter the picture and steal their players. But there

are a few players -- like Dick Allen of Chicago White Sox and Hank Aaron of Atlanta -- who are pocketing more than \$200,000 a year.

I don't really have any complaint about what anyone makes, except I must say I'm a little jealous and feeling like I got into the wrong business when I cash MY company cheques every two weeks.

However, I must point out that if an athlete is getting a quarter of a million dollars today, he will not settle for less in the future. His salary will increase by nature.

What concerns me most is what these astronomical salaries to the athlete will do to Joe Fan, in the way of ticket prices and what it will do to the stability of the sports themselves.

Let's face it, if salaries keep going up, ticket prices also have to be raised. It's just not fair to the fan to pay higher prices to watch a diluted sport.

Teams like California Golden Seals are lucky to draw 5,000 fans for a hockey game. Many teams in the NBA (National Basketball Association) are lucky to get 3,000 or 4,000 out to a game. And the average salary in the NBA is about \$70,000 a season.

cont'd pg. 5

SPORTS CORNER



A FIERY COMPETITOR AND BENCH JOCKEY DURING PLAYING DAYS WITH DODGERS, ORIOLES, INDIANS, A's (KANSAS CITY) AND RED SOX...

RICHARD H. (DICK) WILLIAMS

REMAINED A WINNER AS A MANAGER IN MINOR LEAGUES (1965-66) BOSTON RED SOX, 1967-69; MONTREAL EXPOS, 1970; AND OAKLAND A's (1971-73).

CONTROVERSY OVER HIS SIGNING WITH YANKEES MADE WINTER HEADLINES FOR BASEBALL. IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT OAKLAND'S OWNER CHARLES FINLEY HATES TO PART WITH A WINNING MANAGER... AS FOR THE YANKEES... WELL, A TEAM WITH A WINNING TRADITION SHOULD GO WELL FOR A MANAGER WITH WINNING WAYS.