

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH MICHAEL WEINER

SUBJECT: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND THE FUTURE OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

MODERATOR: THERESA WERNER, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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THERESA WERNER: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Theresa Werner, and I'm the 105th President of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through our programming while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website, www.press.org. To donate to programs offered to the public through the National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit www.press.org/institute.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you attending today's events. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are Press Club members. And if you hear applause in our audience, we'd note that members of the general public are attending so it is not necessarily an evidence of lack of journalistic objectivity. (Laughter)

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN audience and our Public Radio audiences. Our luncheons are also featured on our member-produced weekly Podcasts from the National Press Club available on iTunes. You can also follow the action on Twitter using hashtag NPCLunch. After our guest's speech concludes, we will have a Q&A and I will ask as many questions as time permits. Now it's time to introduce our head table guests, and I'd ask each of you here to stand up briefly as your name is announced.

From your right, Julio Aliaga, News Director, WZDC TV Telemundo, and a new Press Club member; Ken Giglio, Public Relations Consultant, PSG Communications, and star outfielder for the National Press Club softball team; Jonathan Salant, reporter,

Bloomberg News and past National Press Club president; Steve Rogers, special assistant to the executive director, Major League Baseball Players Association, and former Montréal Expo; Jackie Lewandowski, master's candidate in communications, culture and technology at Georgetown University; Bobby Bonilla, six time all-star player and former player in major league baseball who played from 1986 to 2001 and helped get the Orioles to the American League championship series in 1996; Alison Fitzgerald, freelance journalist and chair of the Speakers Committee. I'm going to skip our speaker for a moment.

Debra Silimeo, Executive Vice President, Hagar Sharp, and organizer of the luncheon today; Tony Clark, Director of the Player Relations and former first basemen, known as Tony the Tiger when he played for the Detroit Tigers; Jake Serwer, TV producer and special assistant to Chris Wallace, FOX News Sunday; Paul Shinkman, reporter, WTOP Radio and chair of the Young Members Committee; Patrick Host, reporter, *Defense Daily*. (Applause)

Baseball, many fans will tell you, is not just a sport; it's part of the fabric of America. They make movies about it, which treat baseball with reverence; "Field of Dreams," "The Natural," "Bull Durham," and one of my favorites, "A League of their Own." But behind America's past time, there is a business, a big business. Baseball, like many other sports, has had a rough labor history. There have been strikes and work stoppages; even a strike in 1994 that cancelled the World Series.

But now as 2012 season gets under way, players, owners and fans can breathe easy. Baseball's collective bargaining agreement guarantees uninterrupted play until the 2016 season. It is equal to the longest agreement in baseball history; some say it should be a model for other professional sports leagues.

Today, we'll hear from the man behind the agreement, the Executive Director of Major League Baseball Players Association, Michael Weiner. As the head of baseball's labor union, he is responsible for representing the players' interests when it comes to contracts, player safety, and one of the most controversial issues, drug use and drug testing. That issue will be making headlines next week as the Roger Clemens steroids trial gets under way.

Michael Weiner joined the Players Association in 1988, served as general counsel since 2004, and was named Executive Director in 2009. And, of course, he was right in the middle of the tug of war getting the Nationals to D.C. In the midst of all this, Weiner draws inspiration from one of his favorite performers, not on the baseball diamond but on the concert stage, Bruce Springsteen. So with apologies to The Boss and Mr. Weiner, we ask if it's true that you were humming "Working on a Dream" during the contract negotiations, and look forward to hearing from you today about what's ahead this year for the sport that was born in the USA. Welcome, Michael Weiner. (Applause)

MR. WEINER: Thank you, Theresa for the introduction and for the privilege of speaking here today. Before I get started, I'd like to acknowledge a few people that were

kind enough to come today. First, a longtime friend and a committed union leader during his distinguished playing career, B. J. Surhoff. (Applause) They had to leave, apparently, to handle a New Orleans Saints matter, but Steve Smith, the Executive Director of the NFL Players Association, Richard Berthelsen, who's longtime general counsel, were here. I want to thank Bob Foose, the Executive Director of the Major League Soccer Players Association and his general counsel, Jon Newman. Judy Scott, general counsel to the SCIU, Pat Syzmanski, general counsel of Change to Win. I'm also honored to acknowledge here the presence of Mark Pearce, chairman of the National Labor Relations Board, Sharon Block and Richard Griffin, NLRB members. Les Heltzer, the NLRB executive secretary sitting over here. Patricia Smith, solicitor of labor, John Lund, assistant secretary of labor.

I proudly welcome as well a longtime colleague and friend, Virginia Seitz, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Counsel. Thanks to all of them and to all of you for attending this afternoon.

For going on 24 years, I've worked for the union that represents major league baseball players. And for going on 24 years, I've heard, "That's great, Mike, but it's not like you work for a real union. Come on, you get to hang out with Derek Jeter or Jose Batista or Ryan Zimmerman. It's part of your job that you have to go to the All Star game and you have to go to the World Series every single year." I'll concede there are benefits to working for this union. But I'll insist at the same time that the MLBPA always has been, and remains today, a real labor union.

Our members make more money than most. Our guys have a higher public profile. But at bottom, the MLBPA does what every union does; we attempt to further our members' interests and to protect our members' rights through the process of collective bargaining. Collective bargaining as an institution took some body shots over the past year. In Wisconsin, most notably among other places, the right of public sector employees to bargain was blamed for the state's fiscal difficulties. In Indiana, so-called right to work legislation was passed with supporters contending that collective bargaining actually hampered job growth. The National Labor Relations Board has been vilified for fulfilling its statutory mandate to administer the federal labor statutes.

In the sports world, NFL players abandoned their right to bargain collectively in the face of aggressive demands from their owners. Fortunately for all, that dispute was resolved without the loss of regular season games. NBA fans were not as fortunate, as the NBA owners' lockout of our brethren there resulted in truncated season.

The MLBPA and the 30 baseball clubs, by contrast, announced new five-year labor contracts last November, a month before the previous deal ended. We had no lockout, no strike, no threat of a work stoppage. Why did collective bargaining succeed in baseball last year? How did baseball, the sport whose labor history is most contentious, avoid strife in 2011? Some suggest a smooth negotiation was inevitable given the economic circumstances under which we bargained. But neither revenue nor profitability explain our results.

Coming into 2011, the NFL's annual revenue exceeded Major League Baseball's. And the NBA's annual revenue lagged ours. But both leagues picked protracted fights with their players and the it's millionaires versus billionaires line was also said of baseball in the '80s and '90s when every labor negotiation included a work stoppage. Profitability is not the driver, either. Both an admittedly profitable league in the NFL, and the reportedly unprofitable one in the NBA, had work stoppages in 2011. Baseball's profitability fell in between the two. Moreover, each of the last three labor contracts in baseball were reached without a stoppage. One negotiated when the owners were suffering losses in 2002, one when they were enjoying substantial profits in 2006, and last year when the truth lay in between.

There was nothing preordained about bargaining during this round. As always, the union was prepared for a worst case scenario. We had sufficient reserves in the bank, we counseled players to save their money. We told players that while no one wanted a stoppage, they had to be ready as if one were coming. We've been roundly applauded for having achieved labor peace. But I'll let you in on a little secret: labor peace was not our goal when we started bargaining. Our list of objectives in bargaining generated over years of discussions with players included improved healthcare and pensions, a higher minimum salary, better treatment of injured players, better salary arbitration and free agency rules and a whole host of other demands. But labor peace wasn't on the list. Neither was labor war. We set out in this negotiation to achieve a fair deal for players; ideally, a good deal for players. Our preference, just as it was under Marvin Miller's or Don Fehr's leadership was to get that deal without a work stoppage.

But the goal was a good deal, not a quick, easy or painless one. Collective bargaining by design is an adversarial process. Our negotiations in 2011 with major league baseball were adversarial, at times intensely so. Controversial, even provocative positions were advanced. Conversations were heated, frustrations were expressed. Meetings ended abruptly. People, players, owners, negotiators for both sides, got angry. We didn't air our arguments publicly as we've done in the past but that doesn't mean that we didn't argue.

Collective bargaining in the end is about power. The federal law governing collective bargaining limits the exercise of that power, but not very much. There's plenty of room under the National Labor Relations Act to beat your counterpart into submission, even to mutually destroy your industry. For years in baseball, the power struggle that is collective bargaining was defined by the owners' attempts to force their demands down the players throats, sometimes through distasteful but legal means, such as lockouts, hard bargaining and replacement players; sometimes not, through collusion and unfair labor practices.

In 2011, and in our more recent bargaining rounds, that power struggle has manifested itself differently. It's still a power struggle. Baseball owners' desires have not changed. They want to pay players as little as possible and control their services for as long as possible. And that's understandable from the owners' perspective. What has

changed is that baseball owners, led by Commissioner Bud Selig, have come to respect the collective power of their bargaining adversary, the players. That respect was earned through the solidarity of players in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s. That solidarity culminated in a real sense in the spring of 1995 when the owners used replacement players throughout spring training to try to break the union and force acceptance of a salary cap. And not a single union member, not a single 40-man roster player, crossed the line.

But that was then. The membership of our union turns over very quickly. Only a handful of players active in 2011 were professionals during the 1994-95 strike. The MLBPA understands that each generation of players must justify the respect that their predecessors earned. We must remind the owners of the players' collective power every time we come to the bargaining table. That is why starting with the days of Marvin Miller this union has insisted on direct player participation in the bargaining process. Players formulate bargaining proposals and strategies. That might come as no surprise. The players attend bargaining sessions. We won't schedule such sessions unless players can be there. And players actively participate in those sessions.

At any given meeting, the MLB negotiators are as likely to hear from Curtis Granderson or Jeremy Guthrie or C. J. Wilson or Carlos Villanueva as they are to hear from me. Player participation in our bargaining in 2011 was extraordinary, and even for our union, unprecedented. As for player leadership, we had a remarkably dedicated negotiating committee of 25 active players. Week after week of conference calls, they were responsible for developing and approving all of our major bargaining proposals. And those negotiating committee members attended bargaining session after session.

But player participation extended to the full union membership. We had 238 different major league players attend the negotiating sessions in 2011, 238 players. Players in their first week in the majors and players with 20 years of major league service, players whose tickets to Cooperstown already have been punched, and players whose major league careers may not extend into 2012. Players making the minimum salary and players making \$20 million per year. Players from virtually every country represented in our bargaining unit. It was a tremendous show of force.

In the power struggle that is collective bargaining, it is natural to gauge the strength of your counterpart. Those 238 players by their presence provided an unmistakable answer to any owner who might have questioned whether in 2011 the collective power of the players remained deserving of respect.

Collective bargaining changes when each side respects the power of the other. You've got to try something else if you can't just push your counterpart around. If you want to change, you've either got to persuade them to give it to you, or you've got to fashion some compromise in which you trade for it. The most likely result of bargaining in that situation is a truce, a deal at or very close to status quo. That might not be what's best for either party or for that industry, but that's what you're left with.

Our new collective bargaining agreement amounts to far more than a truce. It contains meaningful changes in the rules governing free agency, salary arbitration and the amateur draft, significant revisions in our revenue sharing, competitive balance tax and debt service rules, a new structure for our leagues and divisions, a new format for post season play, enhanced healthcare coverage for international players and their families, improved benefits and other payments flowing to former players and their widows, important changes in our joint drug agreement and dozens of other improvements in the working conditions of players.

This negotiation touched more parts of our labor contracts than any other in which I have been involved in 24 years. None of those changes were made at a gun point. Some resulted from persuasion, there were times when one side recognized the validity of the other's position and acquiesced to a proposal. Many changes resulted from compromise and frequently from creative compromise. One side or the other often expanded the scope of matters under discussion to create more flexibility, more moving parts, to fashion that compromise.

Other changes resulted from the parties identifying areas of mutual benefit. I can't say this has never happened before in our bargaining, but only in bits and pieces. In 2011, we made agreements that were unimaginable in our past; in revenue sharing, in healthcare, in drug testing, and most notably, perhaps, in our new 15/15 alignment and additional wild card team. That happened only because each side was prepared to recognize a good idea when it appeared no matter who presented it, and no matter if that idea historically was associated with the other side.

More than ever before, our bargaining was not just over how to resolve our differences, but how we could identify and further our common objectives. How did that happen? We avoided a work stoppage because of mutual respect for each side's collective strength. But why didn't we just default to a status quo deal? The answer, again, lies in respect but respect here for the players' ideas, not just their muscle. I credit Bud Selig, Rob Manfred and the MLB negotiators and owners with recognizing that the players are not just a force to be reckoned with, but that in area after area, the players, those 238 guys who showed up at the meetings, had good ideas about how to improve the game and the industry.

It may seem obvious that the best players in the world and their representatives would have those ideas. It just hasn't been obvious before to baseball owners, and it certainly didn't seem obvious in the approach adopted last year by the NFL and the NBA toward their players. The real success of bargaining in baseball last year was not just that we made a deal without a stoppage, but that we made agreements in scope and content that should benefit players, owners, fans, and all connected with the game for years to come.

I'm now torn between prudence and opportunity. Prudence tells a guy who has worked his entire professional career in baseball to limit his remarks to baseball. But on my other shoulder, opportunity tells me that I should at least try to relate baseball's

bargaining success to the broader world. This is the National Press Club, after all, it's not the Mike and Mike show. So here goes.

The economic downturn has placed tremendous stress on the already adversarial relationship between workers and their bosses. Private sector employers and employees in the U.S. face increased global competition. Public sector labor relations have been caught in the vice of budgetary crises. In both areas, a handy response has been to attack workers rights to organize and to bargain collectively, to attempt to strip bargaining rights from public employees and to handicap private sector workers who seek to organize. That's unfair in part because our current economic difficulties were not caused by America's working men and women. History counsels that such blame may be inevitable but that doesn't make it fair. It's just not true that municipal and state employees making \$40,000 per year caused the present fiscal crisis.

It's also unfair because depriving workers of their rights to organize and to bargain deprives them of the only realistic leverage they have. It's okay, even laudable, in this country, for political candidates or for companies to have leverage because of their financial assets. It's okay in this country to obtain leverage through a successful push for legislative or regulatory advantage. But why is it not acceptable for workers to exercise the only leverage they possess: to act collectively?

If you take bargaining rights away from Wisconsin schoolteachers or Indiana factor workers, it leaves one side in a contest with no ability to compete. It has long been the public policy of this country that labor relations should be a fight, but never a one-sided fight. It's fundamentally unfair, particularly in this economic environment to pass legislation that still allows that fight, but rigs it against working men and women. All that collective bargaining allows workers is a voice in the ongoing argument over their working conditions. Bargaining does not guarantee any result, it doesn't guarantee that pensions will be preserved, or that wages won't be reduced.

Under federal legislation on our books for over 70 years permitting workers to organize and to bargain collectively, has been seen as a natural component of our competitive economy. What is unnatural and counterproductive are the recent legislative efforts to strip workers of those rights. The economic health of our country will not be revitalized by depriving workers of their voice.

In 2011, baseball demonstrated that collective bargaining can produce a progressive and productive agreement if each party respects both the power and the ideas of its counterpart. Even in an economic environment as challenging as today's better results will flow from the bargaining process and from unilateral imposition by management. Better ideas will be generated with employees' input. We've proven that in baseball through collectively bargained innovations such as the World Baseball Classic, our jointly run international tournament to be played for the third time next March. Agreements reached with employee support can be implemented more effectively and efficiently as shown by our jointly administered drug program.

Unions can effectively and productively represent workers even in struggling industries. Collective bargaining in times such as these may be difficult, adversarial and contentious. But as demonstrated in baseball, of all places, it is the surest path to mutually advantageous and potentially enduring solutions. Thank you, enjoy the season, should be a great one. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Thank you, Michael. Since you believe that baseball's collective bargaining agreement is the gold standard for professional sports leagues, have you been approached by other union leaders asking for advice?

MR. WEINER: The leaders of the various sports unions cooperate on all kinds of matters and the unions do as well, as evidenced by the presence of soccer players' representatives and the football players' representatives here. I more than occasionally will talk with the head of the Hockey Players Association. He happened to be my boss for 20-some odd years. The industries are different and the sports are different but we collaborate, as you might expect.

MS. WERNER: You mentioned the labor struggles in Wisconsin. Have you ever advised public sector union leaders, and do people seek you out?

MR. WEINER: I haven't been presumptuous enough to try to give advice to somebody representing a public sector union. The nature of bargaining there is very different. But we frequently are contacted by unions and their members for letters of support, for assistance. Our players, our members, politically are all across the spectrum. But when it comes to labor matters, they understand the importance of unions and we've tried to support those public sector unions every chance we could.

MS. WERNER: You're heading into years of labor peace. But do you think that people are more willing to negotiate because of what happened with the strike of '94 and '95?

MR. WEINER: I don't know about more willing to negotiate, but you can't understand our success in bargaining without understanding that history. As I said before, we moved to a world where there was respect by both sides for the bargaining power of their adversaries because of what happened leading up to, but perhaps most principally in '94 and '95. So I don't think you have the agreements that we made in '02, '06 or 2011 if the players hadn't take the stand they took back then.

MS. WERNER: Couple of questions wondering if fans were represented during negotiations either in internal union meetings or collective bargaining? One person said it cost the average American family of four \$300 or more to go to a baseball game. Is this the direct result of some of the players' huge salaries?

MR. WEINER: There's a few questions smuggled in there. We didn't have any fans on our negotiating committee calls unless you count the players themselves as fans. But I can tell you that the players, and we have representatives here, all the players that

are sitting up here, as well as B. J., were negotiating committee members themselves when they were active. Players are constantly thinking about the fans and public acceptance of the game. That shows itself in our negotiation over things like the schedule, over things like the post season, over the drug testing program throughout our negotiations.

In terms of a potential link between ticket prices and players salaries, I know there are a couple of very distinguished economists in the room here today, but ticket prices are set based on supply and demand for that product. The owners set their prices as high as they can based on the demand for those tickets. They really don't have anything to do with how much money players get paid.

MS. WERNER: Do you think the players union would ever agree to eliminate the designated hitter and restore the game to the way it was meant to be played?
(Laughter)

MR. WEINER: I don't know if there are names on that one, that one could have come from my wife who's been known to-- who as a National League fan has been known to parade around the house saying, "Dump the DH." Let me say this. I've gotten a variant of that question quite frequently. Neither the owners nor the players came to the bargaining table this time looking to change the rules regarding the designated hitter even though we changed the alignment of the leagues and post season play. I don't think anybody would design an industry where one set, one league, had one set of rules and the other has another. But I think that that compromise, if you will, is here to stay for a long time.

MS. WERNER: Safety in sports has become a big issue at both the professional and amateur levels. What is the MLBPA doing to address this issue in baseball?

MR. WEINER: Well, health and safety was as much a part of our negotiations as it's ever been. In addition to what we did in our joint drug program, and to address substance abuse and substance use by players, we negotiated over safer batting helmets, we negotiated recently new protocols for treating, diagnosing concussions and for return to play. We negotiated over safer bats. There was a tremendous amount of negotiation over health and safety this time in bargaining. I think that's a reflection of, as I said before, what bargaining can do when you stop trying to knock the stuffing out of one another. It allows people to really put their heads together and try to solve problems in a way that you can't do when it's a death match.

MS. WERNER: Why can players only be required to take a blood test for human growth hormone for reasonable cause? If they don't have anything to hide, why not conduct random tests like any other sport?

MR. WEINER: Again, there's a few questions smuggled in there. I'll work from the back. I think that the drug testing and the blood testing that we agreed to stands up with that in any other sport including the Olympic sports. In terms of what we agreed to

as well, it's not only that players can be tested for reasonable cause, that's true. All players were tested for blood during spring training of 2012. I dare to say that we had more blood collections in spring training of 2012 than any sport has had in any single year alone, just with our spring training testing. We also have the random testing for all players starting this off season, every player in baseball is subject to testing for blood once the season is over.

MS. WERNER: What is the difference between not smoking on the ball field and not using smokeless tobacco? In other words, why should players be allowed to chew tobacco in front of the cameras and the kids?

MR. WEINER: Well, there's a few differences. One is you can't play baseball while you're smoking. And there are secondary-- it interferes with work. And there are secondary health risks associated with smoking. The position of the union on smokeless tobacco, though, was pretty clear. We have long advised our players of the serious health risks of the product. We have long provided resources for our players to try to cease using.

The discussion that we had in bargaining this time showed that the players understand that they can have an impact on the use of this product by younger people and through education and through other efforts we're going to our best to try to be role models there.

MS. WERNER: How can small market teams like the Pirates ever hope to win without a salary cap?

MR. WEINER: If I wanted to give a wise answer, I could say the same way that small market teams like the Twins and the Marlins and the Rockies and others have. Major League Baseball has shown that we can have extraordinary competitive balance without a salary cap. Competitive balance in the game since the collective bargaining agreement reached in 1996 really has been unprecedented. Through revenue sharing, through our reserve system which allows clubs to hold onto reserve rights for players for the first six years of their career, and through other measures including the competitive balance tax, we think-- and I think as well the representatives of the owners think that we're at a place where we think each team has a fair opportunity to win the World Series.

MS. WERNER: How can you encourage small market teams to spend revenue sharing money on payroll instead of pocketing it?

MR. WEINER: That's a subject that we focused as much on in bargaining over the last 20 years as almost any other. We do it through a few different ways. We have an enforcement mechanism in our contract, clubs are required to spend the revenue sharing proceeds to put a more competitive team on the field. If they don't, there's an arbitration process that we can go through. We've used that effectively in the past to monitor this position. We've beefed that up in this last round of bargaining.

But more importantly, we try to create incentives in our revenue sharing program so that each team has the maximum incentive to increase their local revenue to put a competitive team on the field. I think some of the most creative bargaining that we've done, and this goes back-- I see Chuck O'Connor who was very much involved in the initial bargaining over our revenue sharing agreement-- some of the most creative bargaining that management and labor has done in baseball is in revenue sharing and fashioning a system where every team, no matter where they fall on the revenue spectrum, has an incentive to try to win.

MS. WERNER: The head table is populated by former players who are active in union leadership. What role do they play that other union staff members do not?

MR. WEINER: Well, there's a lot of people in this country who think they know a lot about baseball. And then there are guys that have played the game. Guys that play the game know what it means to play the game. They know what it means on the field, they know the stresses that being a professional baseball bring. They know that being a professional baseball player brings. It's always been our view that to effectively represent baseball players, you have to have the input of those players. We get the input of current players all the time, but it's incredibly useful, it's essential, really, to have the deep group of former players that we have on staff.

We have people-- without giving away ages-- we have people on our staff, even on this dais, whose playing careers spanned virtually the entire history of the players association. And part of our success is having that resource to tap any time that I need to send an email or make a phone call.

MS. WERNER: With 20/20 hindsight, how do you think the drug testing in the MLB should have been handled?

MR. WEINER: I don't have 20/20 hindsight, nobody else does. Don Fehr's been asked that question and he said that in retrospect, it would have been better if everybody associated with the game had moved a little more quickly. But, let me say this, without getting into too much history, the bargaining history of baseball suggests that it would have been very difficult-- well, the bargaining history of baseball explains that we got to random drug testing about as quickly as we could. Like with everything else in baseball, there was very contentious drug testing history. In the mid '80s, we had a joint drug program and the owners terminated it. The drugs that were involved then were cocaine and drugs of abuse, not performance enhancing drugs, but the owners chose to terminate that program. Who knows what the world would have been like if we had a joint drug program continuously operating up through the '80s. We had very contentious legal fights about drug testing.

The owners did make a proposal on drug testing in 1994, but I think it's fair to say it was not seriously pushed by the owners at that point. The first time the owners seriously proposed random drug testing was in 2002 and the players agreed to it. So I'm the same place as Don. In retrospect, I think everybody can take a hard look at what they

did. But when you understand the history of bargaining in baseball, I don't know that we could have reached an agreement much sooner.

MS. WERNER: From a players association perspective, is there any concern about how young baseball players are being treated and developed in high schools and college that you care to address?

MR. WEINER: Well, sure. We want the best athletes playing baseball and we want all young people who are playing the game and are playing athletics to do so safely. We are very much involved, the union is, and this is another area of great cooperation with management in trying to provide resources, equipment, playing fields, for more players to play the game, particularly in urban areas in this country and other places around the world where the resources don't exist through the Baseball Tomorrow Fund, something jointly trusted by management and union officials.

We've provided millions of dollars to try to get more players on the field and give more kids a chance to play baseball and softball.

MS. WERNER: With so many kids choosing soccer, what are you doing to encourage them to play baseball instead? (Laughter)

MR. WEINER: So, sitting over here I have the head of the Soccer Players Union and general counsel, one of my dearest friends who would be very upset with me if he thought I was actually discouraging people from playing soccer. There's a lot of people in this country and a lot of people in this world and a lot of great games. I don't think we need to discourage any young kids from playing any sport. We want kids to be active, there's plenty of kids playing baseball. There's more girls playing softball than ever before. As long as everybody's active, there's plenty to go around.

MS. WERNER: What would be the impact of the TV deal for the Nats being renegotiated now, since Orioles owner Peter Angelos got the MLB to give him most of the profits from the Nats as a TV sweetener for putting another team in his back yard?

MR. WEINER: Chuck, you want to take this one? (Laughter) The local TV revenue is a crucial part of our game and a crucial part of our industry. And you've seen the rights, the local broadcasting rights, go through the roof for team after team. And that really only makes sense. When you think about it, baseball is 162 new reality shows a year, very cheap to produce, tremendous content, part of what-- and baseball fits the new media very, very closely.

I'm not going to try to predict how the negotiation involving the Nationals, the Orioles and MASN is going to play out. All I'll say is it'll be a very important negotiation for both franchises.

MS. WERNER: Players have benefited financially from the rise in regional sports networks and payments to the teams. Do you see a potential bubble here bursting eventually?

MR. WEINER: As I said in the last question, I'm not a media consultant and I understand that all ratings for national events, not just athletics, are facing a challenge. When it comes to baseball locally, the power of baseball as programming in local markets, is extremely high for the reasons that I said. It's tremendous amount of content, whether that's for satellite radio, whether that's for television, whether that's for the internet and the other way baseball is transmitted.

I give people at central baseball a lot of credit for recognizing the change in technology and seeing different ways to bring the game to people, not only in their local markets, but people who want to follow the Tigers or follow the Red Sox even though they may live here in Washington. I don't think there's a bubble there, I think the value of that content is-- well, that value is there.

MS. WERNER: Could the new smart phone app ever fully replace baseball cards? (Laughter)

MR. WEINER: That may be the hardest question I've been asked because it requires me to know what a smart phone app is. I'm not the most technologically savvy person. I think that, and as a kid who grew up collecting baseball cards and even swapping baseball cards as late as college, including with some people in this room, I think that you can marry the technology with the joy of card collecting and I think that our licensees are joint licensees with major league baseball in this area in order for cards to continue to get vital are going to have to continue to figure out a way to use the new technology in that area.

MS. WERNER: Will MLBPA ever endorse other cards aside from Tops? Those are the little baseball cards.

MR. WEINER: Yeah, Tops I know. The MLBPA and MLB have long had agreements with other card companies. Tops has not been, nor now, is the exclusive baseball card licensee of the Players Association. While Tops historically, for reasons I won't bore you with, has been making cards for the longest period of time, we've had licenses with other companies and we still do.

MS. WERNER: What is the union's position on Hall of Fame induction for players who use steroids?

MR. WEINER: I can't speak necessarily for the union on that one. When you ask the union's position, I'd have to talk with the current members of the union. But I'll give you my position, I'm not afraid to do that. The Hall of Fame is for the best baseball players that have ever played. Pete Rose belongs in the Hall of Fame, he has more hits than anybody else. He belongs in the Hall of Fame. And the best baseball players should

be in the Hall of Fame. It's a museum. If you want to have some notation on their plaque that indicates that they were either adjudged to have used performance enhancing substances or accused of having done that, so be it. There are people in the Hall of Fame, and there will be people in the Hall of Fame, who have been adjudged by several arbitrators to have engaged in a massive conspiracy called collusion to defraud the fans of free competition. Those people belong in the Hall of Fame as well.

So from my perspective, the Hall of Fame is for the best baseball players and the most influential executives that have been involved and they should all be in.

MS. WERNER: Do you think that the drug scandal has jaded young fans and made them more suspicious of players' achievements?

MR. WEINER: Maybe, but I think young fans or young people are just more jaded than they used to be, period. And maybe that's a good thing. Athletes and celebrities are covered in a way now that they weren't covered certainly when I was a kid. And it'd be impossible, I think, whoever your hero is, to see them as the larger than life figure that we might have seen when we were kids.

I'll tell you this, baseball's as popular as it's ever been. That's shown by attendance, that's shown by ratings, that's shown by the people following the game. It's extremely popular among today's youth. So even if they're jaded, I think they understand both the beauty and power of the game and the incredible talent of the players who are playing it.

MS. WERNER: Should the union have a role in selecting Bud Selig's successor?

MR. WEINER: Absolutely not. One of the, I think, positive things that I've seen in baseball since 1988 is a recognition by everybody that the commissioner of baseball is the top representative of the owners. There was a time when the commissioner was viewed as being representative of the fans, representative of the game or the institution. And I'm not saying that Bud Selig and people in the commissioner's office don't think about the game and institution and fans just like players do. But as I said in my main remarks, collective bargaining is an adversarial process. That's how it works. Bud was an owner, Bud is unabashedly the head of the owners when it comes time to bargain and when it comes time to represent baseball against third parties, that's how it should be. We'll obviously wait with interest 20, 30, 40 years from now when Bud actually steps down. But we should have no role in selecting his successor.

MS. WERNER: Should financially strapped cities be subsidizing stadiums for millionaire owners?

MR. WEINER: So I have to decide whether to answer that one as the head of the Baseball Players Association or as a citizen in this country. I'll answer it as the head of the Baseball Players Association. Anybody in any industry wants to get as much

support from the municipal authorities as they can. I think it's a subject of some economic-- it can be the subject of some economic debate in particular cities, whether subsidizing sports arenas or entertainment facilities is the best use of public funds. But in many places, Baltimore being one for sure, it was critically important to the revival of the city there. Baseball is an important institution, as you said, and we welcome the assistance of any municipality that's willing to provide it.

MS. WERNER: What impact will the sale of the Dodgers and the Mets Madoff lawsuit have on baseball considering these are two of the largest markets?

MR. WEINER: A large impact. The Dodgers and the Mets are not only play in two of the largest markets, but are flagship franchises for the sport. And whether you're a Mets fan or a Dodgers fan or not, you want to see those kinds of franchises thrive. The Dodgers sale and moving to-- and having the group that's involved there, a group that not only has the financial wherewithal but clearly has the excitement for the game and the acceptance in that community, is great for Dodger fans and great for everybody in baseball. I'm not just saying this because my wife is a Mets fan, but it's great for everybody in baseball that the Mets and the Wilpons can focus on trying to put the best team on the field. National League Baseball in New York is one of the treasures in the history of this game and it can only be better for the game if the Mets have an opportunity to be as competitive as possible.

MS. WERNER: There's been a lot of talk about paying NCAA athletes. Do you think student athletes should be paid or unionized?

MR. WEINER: That's a little bit different for baseball players than it is for-- those questions usually come up with respect to football and basketball players. Baseball players in college really are a little bit different because when a baseball player goes to college, he must remain-- he can't come out and play professionally for three years. I think baseball players are much closer to the model of a scholar athlete that many people would like to see. And baseball players don't generate the kind of revenue in college that football and basketball players do.

So I think there are reforms that can be made in college baseball that could benefit the owners. One of the things Don Fehr really pushed for and this union has stood for is giving more baseball players a chance to use their talent to get an education before they try to play professionally. And along with the commissioner's office, we're working to try to make that more of a reality. But I think that there is a serious debate that can be had with respect to football and basketball players given the revenue that they produce. I don't think those concerns really apply to college baseball players.

MS. WERNER: What do you advise players in terms of their use of social media such as Twitter?

MR. WEINER: I do know what Twitter is. We advise players, on the one hand, part of why baseball is as popular as it is is that fans have a personal connection with

baseball players that may be different than their connection with any other athletes. They live with baseball players on their favorite teams every single day from the beginning of spring training until that team season is over. And social media allows fans to connect with those players in a very intimate way. Nationals fans think every single guy on the Nationals 25 man roster is a celebrity. Doesn't have to be Ryan Zimmerman or Stephen Strasburg. And so we advise guys, it's great for you to use social media if you're comfortable doing it to establish that connection with fans.

On the other hand, you got to think before you do it. And we've been fortunate. Our players, I'm not saying we haven't had any difficulties, but compared to some of the athletes in other sports, our players, I think, have used that media responsibly. And I hope they continue to do it. It's a great way to cement and to further that connection between fans and players.

MS. WERNER: What advice can you give young players who hope to become professional baseball players?

MR. WEINER: Learn to throw left-handed. (Laughter) Another possibility, and B. J. could help me out on this one, is learn to catch and hit left-handed. Those are two things that can keep you in the game for a long time. I think that I go back to a day when kids played sports because it was fun to play sports, not necessarily thinking when you were eight years old that you were going to get a college scholarship or that you were going to get a chance to play professionally. What I would advise any kid is to play sports, be active, play as many sports as you enjoy rather than just focusing on one particular game and playing that year round.

If you have the talent and the competitive drive to use your athletic skills to get an education, that's great, do that. And then if you happen to be one of the minute percentage that have the ability to make a living professionally, you can try it. But you can't be thinking about that when you're a young kid.

MS. WERNER: I throw left-handed, so I was wondering when will baseball have its first woman player, umpire or general manager?

MR. WEINER: General manager could happen really at any point in time. There are several baseball executives right now working for clubs, working for the commissioner's office, who are eminently qualified to be general manager. So that's just a matter of time and opportunity, that's there. Umpires I know less about the possibilities of a woman becoming an umpire at the major league level. I generally consider, I don't mean to stereotype, but women as generally being smarter than men so why they'd want to actually be an umpire might be another question.

MS. WERNER: Maybe they'd get the calls right.

MR. WEINER: It's a very, very difficult job. It's a very, very difficult and thankless job. But we're ready for a female general manager and there are a number of great candidates out there right now.

MS. WERNER: Will there ever be a true World Series in which the top MLB team plays a top foreign team?

MR. WEINER: I'm not sure that we'll get to a stage where the World Series champion in North America plays a team in Japan. We've thought about that, that's quite-- there's a lot of challenges there. But the World Baseball Classic, the tournament that I described, really gets to that. The World Baseball Classic has the best players in the world, many of them playing in major league baseball, but the Cuba National Team, Japanese, Korean players that play professionally there, competing against one another in a very high level competition, and we really hope that-- the WBC is already a great tournament. This is the first time that we're going to play it in 2012, 2013 with qualifying rounds. And I think that the World Baseball Classic has within it the potential to be that kind of true World Series that fans have been looking for.

MS. WERNER: You said the umpire job is tough and thankless. Will MLB ever utilize instant replay to assist umpires?

MR. WEINER: I think as many of you know, we already do use instant replay to some extent on what we call boundary calls for home runs. If a ball is over a fence, or if it's been interfered with by the fan or if it's fair or foul on a home run. In our collective bargaining with the owners, we did reach an agreement to expand instant replay to other calls, to all fair and foul calls and to what are called trap plays, whether a player caught the ball or whether it hits the ground. That agreement was subject to further bargaining that hasn't been concluded between the owners and the umpires union. Instant replay is a subject where the owners have an obligation to bargain not only with the players union, but with the umpires union. And so when that bargaining is concluded, you very well may see expanded use of replay in the game.

MS. WERNER: In your experience, do baseball players consider themselves part of the 1 percent or the 99 percent?

MR. WEINER: I think if given that choice, most baseball players would say the 99 percent. The best part about this job-- there's a lot of challenges to this job. The best part about this job is working for the players. And the reason for that is that the players recognize just how fortunate they are to get to make a living and to make an unbelievable living playing the game of baseball. They're incredibly humble guys, they are regular guys, they don't take for granted, at all, what they have. They give back to the community. Part of this is what makes them such great union members. But I think while their economics of many of them would place them in the 1 percent, their outlook towards life is such these are regular guys.

MS. WERNER: Who do you think were the best baseball players of all time, and why?

MR. WEINER: Steve Rogers, Bobby Bonilla, Tony Clark and B. J. Surhoff. I'm going to be a little bit politic here and not name any names. I could say that everybody thinks the best baseball players are those that were playing the game when they were about seven, eight or nine years old. But I think I can say with confidence the best baseball players of all time are those who are playing the game right now. The quality of their training, of their fitness, of the skill of the competition, has gotten to the point where the players and the fact that we're more inclusive than we've ever been if you go back to the history of the game before African-Americans could play, before we had the best international players playing, I'm not going to name any names, everybody has their own opinions. But I can say with confidence that the quality of the play of the game today is as high as it's ever been.

MS. WERNER: If you were trapped on a desert island, which two MLB owners would you most prefer to be with? (Laughter)

MR. WEINER: So the challenge here is does an owner want to be on that list or not on that list, is what I have to figure out. Well, maybe Tom Werner would be a good choice because he's responsible for having created all these wonderful television shows and all this great entertainment, and so he'd be an interesting guy to have as well. Let's see. I guess Magic Johnson because who wouldn't want to be on a desert island with Magic Johnson?

MS. WERNER: We're almost out of time, but before asking the last question, we have a couple of housekeeping matters to take care of. First of all, I'd like to remind you about our upcoming luncheons speakers. On Monday, April 16th, we have Alec Baldwin, actor and spokesperson, Americas for the Arts. It's sold out, but tune into C-SPAN or log onto NPC.org to watch it streamed live. On May 4th, we're going to continue in our baseball stream with Mike Rizzo, general manager of the Washington Nationals. And on May 9th, we have Billie Jean King, tennis legend. Next up, I'd like to present our traditional NPC mug. It'll be handy for drinking coffee on the desert island.

And I have one last question. Who do you think will win the World Series this year?

MR. WEINER: Someone predicted that I was going to get this question and the answer I gave was that every player pays the same amount of dues and those dues are what pay the salaries here. In seriousness, I think even the most ardent baseball writer would say this is almost an impossible year to pick that. You've got six or seven teams in the American League that are just as good or better than any other to make it to the World Series. The National League appears to be completely wide open. So that's the one question I'm going to duck. I answered the owner question, but that question I'm going to duck.

MS. WERNER: How about a round of applause for our speaker today?
(Applause) I want to thank all of you for coming today. And I'd also like to thank our National Press Club staff including its journalism institute and broadcast center for organizing today's event. Finally, here's the reminder that you can find more information about the National Press Club on our website. And if you would like to get a copy of today's program, please check out our website at www.press.org. Thank you all for coming, we're adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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