Thank You, Baseball

By Jeff Reinke

Sports, and baseball in particular, offers a great database from which to draw examples when working to make a point. For me, it reinforces the evils of gambling. More specifically, don’t make a bet that results in having to eat something referred to on a menu as a burger, but in fact only resembles one due to its vegetarian content. Oddly enough, baseball also provides perspective on the current state of our economy.

One of my favorite shows has quickly become Hot Stove on the Major League Baseball channel. In large part this stems from my interest (and apparently my Milwaukee Brewers' non-interest) in knowing which free agent players will go to other teams and how much they will get paid. The number of one-year contracts being offered and accepted—often at lower amounts than were wanted or expected—has been one of the ongoing topics of discussion in recent days and weeks. Basically, even though the scale is still ridiculously high, the economy is impacting the salaries being extended to a lot of players.

Sure, there were record-number contracts signed early on by the economically oblivious New York Yankees, but aside from that, many really good players are feeling the economic pinch. Granted, struggling with $6 million for one year instead of $8 million for three hardly equates to a tragedy, but I still think there’s a lesson to be learned.

If teams stop investing in talent, they will no longer be competitive and will reap what they sow with a bad team, poor ticket sales and less overall revenue. Similarly, spending money like they have in the past would be irresponsible, given uncertainties surrounding the amount of discretionary income that will be available for tickets and related merchandise.

Teams have taken a cautiously optimistic approach to spending, while also working with new talent to improve their chances of being successful. They’re protecting their assets in both the short and long term by neither surrendering to the economy, nor ignoring it. Although there are a number of issues related to baseball that deserve criticism, this appears to be one place where they can offer some perspective.

For us in the processing marketplace, the road to greater economic stability can be developed through responsible investments that will help tomorrow’s performance, limit future risk, and still allow for implementing new players and approaches in striving to meet goals. While they deserve greater scrutiny in protecting our interests down the road, capital equipment investment and the pursuit of new advancements in the areas of energy efficiency, alternative feedstock use and wireless implementation, to name a few, cannot be abandoned if we’re to stay

competitive.

Sure, I would love to keep CC Sabathia [1] in blue and gold [2], but not if it means risking future signings like Trevor Hoffman [3] or re-signing younger players who will better the team.

Is this the right approach for all of us? Well, I bet another veggie burger lunch on it.

I'd love to hear your opinion. Feel free to send me an e-mail at jeff.reinke@advantagemedia.com [4].

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