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Press Statement of Major League Presidents Joseph E. Cronin and Charles S. Feeney Regarding Curt Flood Lawsuit

Joseph E. Cronin

Charles S. Feeney

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PRESS STATEMENT OF MAJOR LEAGUE PRESIDENTS
JOSEPH E. CRONIN AND CHARLES S. FEENEY

As Presidents of the two Major Leagues, we regret that Curt Flood, a highly paid star, who has contributed much to and obtained much from baseball, has decided to refuse to honor the assignment of his contract by the St. Louis Cardinals to the Philadelphia Phillies and has demanded that he be permitted to play Major League baseball where he pleases.

When a player refuses to honor an assignment, he violates his contract, in which he agrees that assignments may be made, and he violates the fundamental baseball rules, including the reserve clause, which experience has shown to be absolutely necessary to the successful operation of baseball.

The court action commenced by Curt Flood attacks these fundamental rules and makes the same charges that have been made in the past and rejected by the Supreme Court of the United States. We have complete confidence that the rules of professional baseball, which have been central to the success of the game over many decades and which have permitted players such as Curt Flood to reap rich personal rewards, will withstand this new attack.

We also regret that the Major League Baseball Players Association has decided to support and encourage the demands and legal action of Curt Flood. This position of the Players Association violates its pledge to the Clubs in the basic collective bargaining agreement between the Association and the Clubs to use its "best efforts to ensure that all terms and conditions of all Uniform Player's Contracts signed by individual players will be carried out in full."

Many hundreds of players have chosen baseball as a profession with full knowledge that professional baseball is and must be "organized", with rules as to how the game is played and who is eligible to play it. Under the rules, a player is not free to jump from Club to Club or to demand more than 3 strikes. Nor is a Club free to tamper with players under contract to other Clubs or to sign as many players as it wishes.

Today players are assured a substantial minimum salary, an unmatched pension, health and welfare plan and the protection of draft and waiver rules to enable them to advance and play in the highest league classification for which they are qualified.

Baseball's reserve clause grew out of the early years of the game when, without the reserve clause, players constantly jumped to wealthier clubs, league competition was destroyed, and baseball was in chaos. There is no reason to believe results would be any different today if players were given the "freedom" to sign with any Club and to refuse assignment of their contracts. Even amateur baseball organizations, such as the Little League, have found it necessary to adopt strict rules so that players cannot jump or be induced to jump from one Club to another.

A Congressional Committee, after an exhaustive study of baseball and weeks of hearings, concluded as follows:

"Baseball's history shows that chaotic conditions prevailed when there was no reserve clause. Experience points to no feasible substitute to protect the integrity of the game or to guarantee a comparatively even competitive struggle."

The chaotic results that would be created without the reserve clause should be obvious:

1. Without the reserve clause the wealthier clubs could sign an unbeatable team of all-stars, totally destroying league competition.
2. Clubs of more limited resources would be stripped of their stars and their ability to field a team which the public would accept.
3. The integrity of the game would be threatened as players could negotiate with one Club while playing for another.
4. Clubs could no longer afford to spend millions of dollars to scout and sign new players and to subsidize their development in the Minor Leagues. No Club could build with assurance and no intelligent person would continue to invest the large capital required for player compensation, an unmatched pension and benefit plan costing \$5,450,000 per year, Minor League subsidies and the other costs of operating a Major League Club.
5. The Minor Leagues, which exist only because of Major League support, would be destroyed. Professional baseball is the only team sport that finances the development of its players.
6. Mutually advantageous trades would become impossible if the players' consents were required, thus preventing contract assignments which have been beneficial to both Clubs and players and which are exciting to those who support the game of baseball.
7. Professional baseball would simply cease to exist.