

Pittsburgh Pirates: Poor on the field, rich off the field

Revenue sharing not achieving its goals

By SUSAN SHAN
Epoch Times Staff

When you are a Major League Baseball (MLB) team and you get blasted 20-0 at home, something is clearly wrong. When that same team also crushes you 8-1 and 8-0 in a three-game series sweep, humiliating doesn't even begin to describe the feeling.

And when that team is the Milwaukee Brewers, who are tied with you for the second-to-worst record in the National League (NL), things can't possibly get worse.

Oh, but they can. The worst team in the NL, the Houston Astros, followed the Brewers sweep with a three-game sweep of their own.

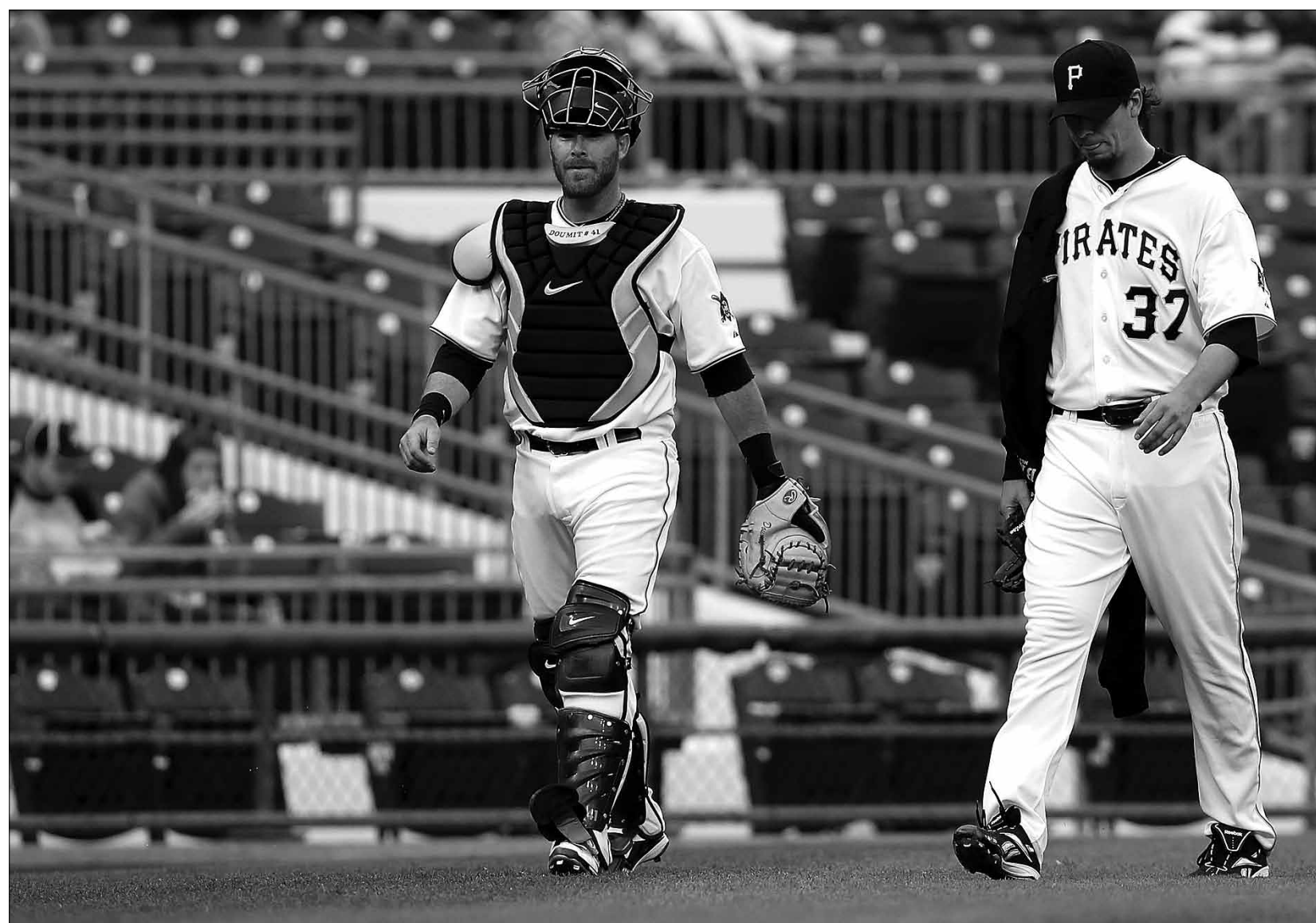
Welcome to life as a Pittsburgh Pirate.

But don't feel too sorry for Pittsburgh's upper management. Since Forbes came out with their annual rankings of MLB team value in 2002, the Pirates have made a total profit of \$116.1 million in nine years.

Their only two non-profitable years were in 2002 and 2003, when they lost \$1.6 million and \$0.3 million, respectively—pretty good for a team that hasn't had a winning season since 1992.

REVENUE SHARING GONE WRONG Pittsburgh is the ultimate example of what is wrong with baseball's revenue sharing arrangement. The last time the team broke \$50 million in player payroll was in 2003. That year, the Pirates spent \$54.8 million on its players and lost \$0.3 million as an organization.

Apparently, they got smarter because in 2004, they cut payroll to \$32.2 million (ranking 28th in the league), and made \$12.2 million in



UNINSPIRED: Pittsburgh's Ryan Doumit (left) and Charlie Morton prepare to face the Milwaukee Brewers in late April. The Pirates would be swept, losing 36-1 over three games. JARED WICKERHAM/GETTY IMAGES

profit. Since then, the Pirates have kept their payroll under \$50 million, consistently ranking in the bottom four in spending.

This year, the Pirates have the smallest payroll at \$34.9 million. The formula is clearly working because the organization continues to generate profit despite empty

seats and losing seasons.

Although financial records for each team are confidential, the union can review revenue receipts that teams are required to file. Earlier this year, the league and the union deemed that the Florida Marlins were not spending enough of their revenue sharing money.

"In response to our concerns that revenue sharing proceeds have not been used as required, the Marlins have assured the union and the commissioner's office that they plan to use such proceeds to increase player payroll annually," said Michael Weiner, executive director of the Major League

Baseball Players Association.

The rule for spending the money from revenue sharing is extremely ambiguous. Baseball's collective bargaining agreement simply states that a team must use its proceeds "in an effort to improve its performance on the field."

The vague wording allows

teams like the Pirates and Marlins to avoid increased payrolls and pocket the money instead.

One reason why the Marlins came under scrutiny is because from 2006-2009, they had the lowest player payroll for three out of the four years, yet were the most profitable team for three of those years.

Revenue sharing was created to keep baseball competitive between big market teams and small market teams. Big market teams like the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox would shell out money to help small market teams keep up with rising salaries and costs.

The problem is teams like the Pirates and Marlins are obviously not utilizing the money to improve performance on the field.

"Change is needed and that is reflected by the fact that over a billion dollars has been paid to seven chronically uncompetitive teams, five of whom have had baseball's highest operating profits," Red Sox owner John Henry told the Boston Globe last year.

"Who, except these teams, can think this is a good idea?"

It's not just owners of big market teams who are upset either. Fans are growing tired of the penny-pinching ways of certain organizations.

Twenty-seven-year-old Ben Kollow of Pittsburgh, a lifelong Pirates fan, said, "If they don't sign [Andrew] McCutchen to a long-term contract, I'm done with the team."

McCutchen is a talented 23-year-old center fielder and is the future of the team. If Pittsburgh hopes to rebuild and keep its fan support, locking up McCutchen is a necessity, not an option.

If the Pirates choose to trade McCutchen, that will be the ultimate slap in the face to their faithful followers.



NECK AND NECK: Calvin Borel rides Super Saver for the win in the 136th running of the Kentucky Derby. ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

Super Saver aims for Triple Crown

By CHERYL CASATI
Epoch Times Staff

The dust, or rather mud, has settled on Churchill Downs racetrack.

Millionaires Row is empty. The 136th running of the Kentucky Derby has moved into history. What will history show?

The Derby has been known for surprise winners. It had one this year. With pre-race favorite Eskendereya scratched from the race, WinStar Farms homebred Super Saver took his place.

Co-founder of WinStar Farms, Kenny Troutt said he had a pretty good feeling when his horse entered the starting gate. It helped that his 9-year-old daughter Savannah told him she felt Super Saver was going to win, as reported by the Associated Press.

History will also show the owners taking home the \$2 million purse, and a stallion that is now a possible Triple Crown winner for this year.

The race brought Todd Pletcher, a well-known and respected trainer, his first Kentucky Derby

win. Pletcher was the focus of some serious teasing prior to the race for his record of 0-24 runs for the Derby.

Calvin Borel, a Cajun-riding magician, earned the unique distinction of piloting Kentucky Derby winners in three of the last four Derby races. He rode the winners in 2007 on Street Sense, 2009 on Mine The Bird—a \$9,500 colt—and 2010 on Super Saver.

Borel's ride was textbook, he made the race look easy as he kept Super Saver to sit well behind a fast pace and wait for the right time to make his bid for the lead.

SECOND JEWEL

Now, all eyes have turned their focus to the second jewel in the Triple Crown. The 135th running of the Preakness, which will take place on Saturday, May 15 at Pimlico.

Super Saver with Calvin Borel up, is making a bid to go down in racing history as the first winner of the Triple Crown since Affirmed won it 34 years ago.

Tiger Woods clings to No. 1 ranking, despite Quail Hollow

Top ranking could be usurped at The Players

By JAMES FISH
Epoch Times Staff

Tiger Woods, despite his showing at Quail Hollow—one of the worst weekends in his professional career—remains the top-ranked golfer in the world. A bad weekend at The Players, however, could cost him his ranking.

If No. 2 ranked Phil Mickelson can win at The Players tournament this weekend and Woods finishes no better than fifth, Tiger's long reign as the world's best golfer will officially be over.

Tiger Woods had been ranked No. 1 for a record-setting 598 weeks. The next longest reign at the top is Greg Norman's at 331 weeks.

Last weekend's Quail Hollow Championship saw two notable events: Ireland's Rory McIlroy became the second-youngest winner of a PGA event (behind Tiger Woods) and Woods failed to make the cut for only the sixth time in his pro career, and only the third time since 2006.

While McIlroy broke the course record after making an amazing comeback, Woods started badly and ended worse.

Last Thursday, Wood shot a 2-over 74, six strokes off the lead. His drives went into the rough or into the water, and his putts didn't go into the cup.

"I didn't hit the ball very good at

all today. I had a two-way miss with everything today. Two balls in the water, and pretty much struggled all day. I just didn't have it today," Woods told the Golf Channel, after the round.

Tiger didn't have it the following day either.

In the second round, Woods shot a 79, the second-worst round of his professional career. His 43 on the back nine was his worst back nine score. His two-day total of 153 was the worst he has ever shot.

After his performance at the Masters, where he finished tied for third, Tiger Woods lost the excuse of rust accumulated from his five-month layoff. However, his personal problems continue to brew, bringing constant media attention and a steady stream of rumors and ridicule.

Woods would not blame his

personal problems for his poor performance.

"Every day I do media, I get asked it, so it doesn't go away," he said in a Golf Channel interview after the second round.

"Even when I'm at home paparazzi still follow us, helicopters still hover around. Does it test you? Yes, of course it does. Is that any excuse? No, because I'm out there and I have the same opportunity as everybody else here in this field to shoot a good number. And I didn't do it."

Whatever the cause may be, Tiger Woods, for so long known around the world as an unstoppable force on a golf course, has been slowed considerably.

If Tiger cannot find his old form for The Players tournament this weekend, his fall from grace will be reflected in the rankings.

Tottenham clinches Champions League berth

By RAHUL VAIDYANATH
Epoch Times Staff

Tottenham Hotspur wrapped up their first ever Champions League berth for next season by securing fourth place in the English Premier League after beating big-spending Manchester City 1-0 on Wednesday at the Eastlands.

Peter Crouch headed in a loose ball in the box after City goalkeeper Marton Fulop failed to adequately deal with a hard cross. The 6-foot-7-inch striker scored in the 82nd minute, giving Spurs the advantage they needed.

With the victory, Spurs now enjoy a four-point lead over City with just one game left to play. But it doesn't end there. If Tottenham can win on Sunday against relegated Burnley and Arsenal lose against Fulham, they'd snag third place from under the nose of their north London rivals.

"It's fantastic. It's been a terrific season for us. We played some good football [soccer]," said Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp in a post-match interview with Sky Sports.

"Crouchie [Peter Crouch] was fantastic tonight. He led the line well all night."



VALUABLE GOAL: Peter Crouch scores the game's only goal as Tottenham grab a precious victory at Manchester City. IAN KINGTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Speculation was rife that Spurs would play not to lose but Redknapp responded, "I picked the team to have a go."

The game featured good scoring chances at both ends of the pitch. Crouch had a header hit the post in the first half and another terrific header brilliantly saved by the feet of Fulop in the second half.

With Champions League comes the possibility of big money to the club as well as the prestige of competition against European giants like Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Inter Milan. Manchester City will settle for the second-tier Europa League next year.

COPPA ITALIA Serie A leaders and Champions

League finalists Inter Milan won the Italian Cup on Wednesday with a 1-0 win against AS Roma in Rome's Olympic Stadium.

Argentine striker Diego Milito scored the game's only goal in the 40th minute.

Inter now has the first of three big trophies in their hands.

The Serie A race has two games remaining and Inter leads Roma by two points at the top of the table.

TWELVE-GOAL THRILLER

It's not often in soccer that 12 goals are scored in one game. It's not often that a team salvages a point after being down four goals.

At Fir Park Stadium, Motherwell came back from a 6-2 deficit and scored four goals in the final 23 minutes of play to gain an incredible 6-6 draw with Hibernian in Wednesday's Scottish Premier League play.

Lucas Jutkiewicz had a chance to tie the game at 6-6 but his penalty kick was saved in the 87th minute. But he made amends with an unbelievable tight-angled blast to the top corner of the far side of the net in the 90th minute to get the draw for Motherwell.