

## Interview - (Part 1) Dick Moss - MLBPA Legend & Agent

Written by Maury Brown  
Tuesday, 17 July 2007 20:00

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In Major League Baseball history, there may not be a more seminal point in its history as the period in which the players organized themselves as a union, and started chipping away at the control that the owners had had over them since the dawn of professional baseball.

The movement and actions of the players seemed to mirror the events of the day in the United States. There was the Civil Rights movement. Vietnam. Watergate. Nixon's resignation. The Watts riots. The counterculture movement. Ronald Reagan's ascension... All within the period from the early '60s well into the '70s when the players took on the establishment – ergo, the owners and the commissioners of the day. "Change" seemed to typify history during this time in America, and baseball was no different.

[The Biz of Baseball](#) has been extremely fortunate to interview several key figures that were in places of power during that time. Former executive director of the Players Association

[Marvin Miller](#)

. Former commissioners

[Bowie Kuhn](#)

and

[Fay Vincent](#)

. Former GM, and executive vice-president of the Dodgers, Angels, and Padres

[Buzzie Bavasi](#)

, as well as

[Tal Smith](#)

, who was one of the first to pioneer the use of statistical analysis on management's side of the table when free agency occurred in the mid-'70s. Smith is current the President of Baseball Operations for the Houston Astros.

Now, [The Biz of Baseball](#) adds one other interview – one that is our most inclusive and expansive to date – with the former general counsel for the MLBPA and a man that would become one of the very first “super agents”, **Dick Moss**.

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Moss is legendary in the sense that he witnessed every work stoppage in MLB – all eight of them. He was the general counsel when **Curt Flood** fought for the right to be a free agent during MLB's reserve list period. He represented the much maligned

**Alex Johnson**

in arbitration, arguing that mental illness should be treated the same as a physical illness in Major League Baseball. He was a player agent for

**Nolan Ryan**

and

**Fernando Valenzuela**

, negotiating the first million dollar a year contract for Ryan, and the first million dollar salary arbitration case in 1983 for Valenzuela. And, he was able to argue before an arbitor to get

**Steve Howe**

reinstated in baseball after being banned from baseball for life due to drug abuse.

Moss has been there for all of this... and more.

Given Moss' place in history, and the numerous key events that he has been a part of, this interview has been broken into two parts. The interview touches on all the points mentioned above in Part I and much, much more.

Part II of this interview will be coming very shortly. We hope you enjoy. – *Maury Brown*

Maury Brown for *The Biz of Baseball*: John Helyar portrayed you as a “rabid Pirates fan” in his seminal book,

*Lords of the Realm*, as did Marvin Miller in

his autobiography,

A

*Whole Different Ballgame*

. What's your most vivid Forbes Field memory?

Dick Moss: That's easy. The seventh game of the 1960 World Series.

Bizball: How did Miller approach you about leaving the Steelworkers Union and joining him as general council at the beginning of the Players Association as we know it today?

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Moss: Well, Marvin was an old friend of mine. We worked together at the Steelworkers Union. When he was approached by the players regarding the Player's Association, he asked me to advise him, and I sort of represented him during that whole process. At the end of it, he asked me to join it as general counsel.

Bizball: Did your love of the Pirates, and baseball in particular play a pivotal role in accepting the position with Miller? Making the jump to the Players Association was a pretty big career gamble, wasn't it?

Moss: Not really. It was an interesting idea. My mother thought it was a gamble. She didn't think it was a good job, you know. She thought, "You have a job, but you should have a different job. Something where you are not dealing with baseball players." I ignored her advice and took the job anyway. I had just been promoted to assistant general counsel so there were other lawyers at the Steelworkers Union.

Some people think it would have been a gamble, but it really wasn't.

Bizball: Can you recall what the first meetings between you and Miller were about once you were installed as general council?

Moss: Well, the first thing that was to be done after Marvin was retained was the negotiations regarding the Pension Agreement. In December, 1966, there was a Board meeting to be held in Pittsburgh. Marvin invited me to that meeting and introduced me to the players' representatives at that time, as the new general counsel.

Bizball: For those that may not understand the differences between how the relationship between management and labor were in early years of the Players Association to how they are today, can you go over how some of the initial disputes, such as management's issues over the players pension plan in 1966?

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**"Joe [Cronin] said, 'This is none of the players' business. This is our business.' And he got up and walked out of the meeting."**

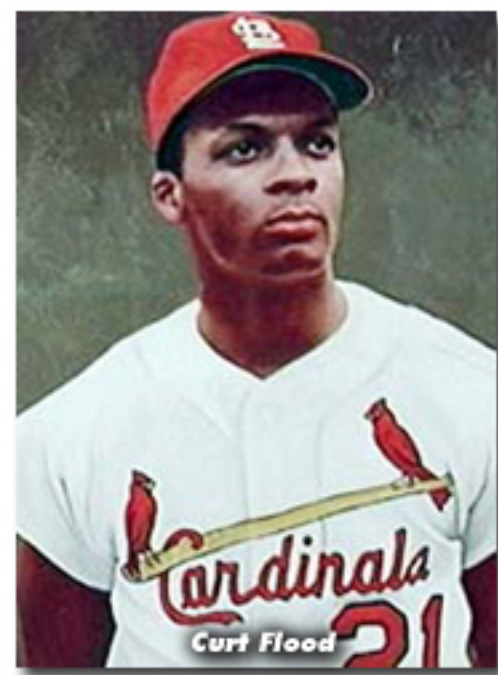
As I mentioned, the players' union was not a union at the time. It was just a group of players who were trying to get together and make a deal with the owners. But the owners were not interested in that. They were interested in making money. And they were willing to do whatever it took to do that.



Walter O'Malley was a very powerful man in baseball. He was the owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers, and he was one of the most powerful owners in the game. He was a very aggressive negotiator, and he was willing to do whatever it took to make his team successful. He was a very important figure in the history of baseball.

**"The excuse that [Charlie Finley] had was, well... it was an excuse."**

Charlie Finley was a very powerful man in baseball. He was the owner of the Oakland Athletics, and he was one of the most powerful owners in the game. He was a very aggressive negotiator, and he was willing to do whatever it took to make his team successful. He was a very important figure in the history of baseball.



Curt Flood was a very important figure in the history of baseball. He was a player for the St. Louis Cardinals, and he was one of the most powerful players in the game. He was a very aggressive negotiator, and he was willing to do whatever it took to make his team successful. He was a very important figure in the history of baseball.

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**"Now the bottom line was that Alex Johnston - at least at that time - was a very disturbed individual."**

**"Buzzie, and the guys in the press said, 'This guy is crazy! A million dollars - a million dollars a year for Nolan Ryan!'"**



**"I used to say that Steve [Howe] was wired differently than most of us because he reacted differently to different things."**