



The renewal of spring hasn't been as sweet as [Ryan Howard](#) ([contract](#)) expected.

Philadelphia's 27-year-old slugger had hoped to parlay his 2006 MVP season into a lucrative long-term contract. He and his agent, Casey Close, discussed a multi-year deal with the Phillies this off-season. When those talks failed to yield an agreement, the two sides discussed a one-year contract including award and performance bonuses.

But when Howard chose not to accept the team's salary figure, the Phillies renewed his contract for 2007 unilaterally, forcing Howard to settle for a one-year, \$900,000 deal without any incentive clauses.



Though his 2007 salary is a record for a player with less than two years in the majors, the renewal cost Howard, whose contract has been renewed at the Phillies' salary figure each of the last two off-seasons.

Each March, clubs may unilaterally renew contracts of unsigned players who are not yet eligible for salary arbitration. The right of renewal gives a club a decided advantage in salary

Contract Renewal Round-Up: Players 0-3 Years

Written by Jeff Euston

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negotiations and leaves the player with a choice. He can accept the offer and sign his contract, or he can refuse to sign and face the prospect of his team renewing his contract at a salary the club chooses, a figure often less than the original offer.

The process can be a frustrating fact of life for “0-to-3 players,” those who lack the nearly three years of Major League service needed to qualify for salary arbitration.

“The fact that the 0-3 guys are told what they will make is an imperfect system at best,” said an agent who represents several young players. “In nearly all situations, it creates the scenario whereby the player says, ‘OK, I’ll bide my time, but you will pay in the end.’”

Young stars have not always been willing to wait. After winning the AL Cy Young and MVP award in 1986, [Roger Clemens](#) walked out of training camp the next spring when the Red Sox threatened to renew his contract for \$400,000. Clemens boycotted the exhibition season before agreeing to a 2-year deal guaranteeing him about \$2 million.

The process is rarely as acrimonious today, although it can lay the groundwork for future negotiations as a player reaches his arbitration years and free agency.

Complicating matters this off-season is a significant increase in the minimum major-league salary, which jumps from \$327,000 last season to \$380,000 for 2007. Player agents see the new minimum as a starting point, while clubs tend to view the \$53,000 jump in the minimum as a significant pay raise by itself.

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