

Pro Athletes' Salaries Aren't Overly Exorbitant

Editorial by Mark Singletary

Do Professional Athletes Get Paid Too Much?

Editorial by Justin Hjelm

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML7-958

Are people paid **FAIRLY?**

COMMON CORE

RI 8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

The president of the United States earns \$400,000 a year. A Wall Street stock trader can earn even more, while a first-year New York City police officer earns less than \$45,000. Is this fair? In the editorials that follow, two writers offer opposite opinions about the multimillion-dollar salaries today's professional athletes make.

DISCUSS With a group of classmates, examine this chart of average annual salaries. Talk about who you think deserves more, who could do with a little less, who is paid the right amount, and why.

AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARIES

Retail Salesperson \$22,540	Firefighter \$38,810
Kindergarten Teacher \$43,530	Registered Nurse \$52,810
Computer Programmer \$65,170	Airline Pilot \$129,230
Surgeon \$182,690	Major League Baseball Player \$2,376,580

Source: "November 2003 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates," U.S. Department of Labor; Bureau of Labor Statistics



Meet the Authors

● TEXT ANALYSIS: ARGUMENT

An **argument** expresses a position on an issue or problem and provides support for that position. Strong arguments have the following elements:

- a **claim**, which is the writer’s main idea or position
- **support**, or reasons and evidence that back up the claim
- **counterarguments**, which are arguments made to address points that someone with an opposing view might raise

As you read, identify the elements in each argument.

● READING SKILL: EVALUATE REASONING

In a strong argument, the writer supports claims and assertions with sound reasoning and evidence. If the argument is based on **rhetorical fallacies**, which are false or misleading statements, then the argument is weakened.

One common rhetorical fallacy that writers use is stereotyping. A **stereotype** is a way of thinking about a group of people as if all members are alike and have no individual differences. It can lead to unfair judgments based on people’s ethnic background, beliefs, practices, or physical appearance. “All teenagers love to listen to loud music” is a stereotype because not all teenagers do.

As you read, use a chart to record examples of stereotyping.

Example of Stereotyping	Explanation
“... the players are selfish ...” (line 10)	An unfair judgment based on the actions of a few

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The boldfaced words help these authors construct their arguments. To see how many you know, substitute a different word or phrase for each boldfaced term.

1. Star Player’s **Compensation** Shoots Up to \$15 Million
2. **Brevity** of Pitcher’s Career Caused by Arm Injury
3. Umpire Call Challenged by **Dissenter**
4. Coach’s **Entitlement** to Special Treatment Questioned
5. **Appalling** Brawl in Bleachers Injures 20
6. **Voracious** Fans Can’t Get Enough of Home Team



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Mark Singletary

born 1952

Veteran Publisher Mark Singletary is president and publisher of New Orleans Publishing Group, which prints business-related journals. What does Singletary say about professional athletes’ salaries? “More power to ‘em.”



Justin Hjelm

born 1983

Student Journalist While attending Westmont College in California, Justin Hjelm (yělm) knew that the best way to make his views known was to write about them. Hjelm’s editorial is an example of how students can make their voices heard.



BACKGROUND TO THE ARTICLES

Weighing In on Heavy Salaries

Frequently when athletes’ salaries make the news, editorials start appearing in many publications. “Pro Athletes’ Salaries Aren’t Overly Exorbitant” appeared in *New Orleans CityBusiness*. “Do Professional Athletes Get Paid Too Much?” was published in Westmont College’s campus newspaper, the *Horizon*.

Authors Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML7-959



A player signs autographs for die-hard fans before the 75th Major League Baseball All-Star Game.

Pro Athletes' Salaries Aren't Overly Exorbitant¹

A ARGUMENT

You can immediately identify the author's claim by reading the editorial's title.

Paraphrase the title, or restate it in your own words.

B EVALUATE REASONING

What **stereotype** does Singletary present in lines 10–13? Explain why his statement is unfair.

MARK SINGLETARY

I am going to try and make a point about the salaries that professional athletes get to play their games. I think I'm moving into a very solid "more power to 'em" position. I guess until recently I've thought the players were a bit selfish and their salaries would lead to the failure of professional sports.

10 Of course, the players are selfish and ultimately professional sports will fail or have to be restructured significantly. Who knows when that time will come? **B**

But the players are no more selfish than the owners who pay the salaries. And the owners are no more selfish than the television and radio networks that pay outlandish sums to broadcast the games.

All of us are looking for something. The games work best when those willing to pay match up evenly with what the others have to sell.

I've always thought of myself as the kind of guy who would give his left arm or eye or big toe to have a chance to play any of the major league sports. Now I think I can honestly
30 say that I would give up a lot, but

1. **exorbitant** (ĭg-zôr'бі-tənt): exceeding all bounds of custom or fairness.

not everything, to have the chance to play one big game.

Pause and reflection make me think now that it would still be awesome to train hard, make a major league roster and spend an entire season with the team, but at some point the fun might turn into work.

I would probably begin to think that if I was good enough to make the squad, then I would deserve to be paid the same as my teammates. And if by chance I would happen to be star quality and could reasonably assume that coming to see me play was a big deal, then I might end up asking for a little more than the average player gets.

Also, when I read the sports or business pages of the newspaper, I see that television networks pay huge sums to broadcast my games. When I go to work, I realize that other companies want to name our stadium, promote our schedule and decorate our arena with their advertisements.

The historical argument for paying exorbitant salaries to athletes is the **brevity** of their careers. All of these athletes are a busted knee, concussion or torn rotator cuff² away from the end of their career, and very few sports offer guaranteed contracts that go beyond the season when the injury occurs.

Our fans are important to the economic health of our ball club. My teammates and I are responsible for

finding and keeping fans. If I am a star, it can rightly be assumed the fans come to see me play.

When the fans come to see the stars perform, the value of the franchise³ increases. I'm pretty smart and understand all this and how it relates to me. I also know what I make and how that relates to others that play my game.

So, it seems to me that even though I love the game, even though just playing the game is huge **compensation** and very, very satisfying, I want things to be fair.

Fair is fair. And fair is that the athletes deserve what the fans are willing to pay.

The owners probably don't care what the athletes make, as long as they can pass the cost on to sponsors and ticket buyers. The intelligence in sports ownership is the ability to predict exactly where the fans and sponsors lose interest.

Until that time, it seems fair to allocate as much as possible to the players that make the games entertaining. It's also the only way to win consistently in modern, major league sports. The smartest in all the groups are not only taking as much and passing along as much as possible, but they are also looking toward the future to see when it all ends. **C**

So, everyone benefits right up until the time that no one benefits.

compensation
(kŏm'pən-sā'shən) *n.*
payment

brevity (brĕv'ĭ-tē) *n.*
shortness

- C ARGUMENT**
Reread lines 91–100, which contain Singletary's main **claim**, and his reasons for supporting it. Paraphrase, or restate, his claim.

2. **concussion** . . . **rotator cuff**: A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by a fall or a blow to the head. A rotator cuff is the muscle and tendon that support the shoulder joint, a place of common injury among baseball pitchers.

3. **franchise**: a team that is a member of a professional sports league.

The Horizon

WESTMONT COLLEGE

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

DO PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES GET PAID TOO MUCH?



JUSTIN HJELM

Staff Reporter

YES. When asked in the early twenties what justified him making more money than the President of the United States, Babe Ruth¹ replied “Well, I had a better year.”

For nearly a century, superstar athletes have demanded and received salaries grossly out of proportion with the average income of their 10 times. What makes modern times different and more disturbing is that even the role players in professional sports are pulling in an exorbitant amount of money. ◆

20 ten times more than the average working man. ◆

Nolan Ryan² broke ground in 1979, becoming the first athlete to receive a \$1-million-a-year contract. It took over a century for baseball to reach this milestone income figure, and just 25 years later a \$1 million contract offer is considered an insult.

◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Notice that the sentence in lines 6–10 begins with an introductory phrase followed by a comma. The comma alerts readers to pause and helps them clearly understand the sentence.

ⓐ ARGUMENT

“Athletes have always made a lot of money”—that’s the argument Hjelm anticipates in lines 6–21. What is his counterargument?

1. **Babe Ruth:** a baseball player from 1914 to 1935, considered by many to be the best baseball player in the history of the sport.
2. **Nolan Ryan:** a baseball pitcher from 1966 to 1993 who held over 50 major-league records.

The contracts of professional athletes
30 have gone unchecked for too long,
and now athletes are among the
wealthiest people in our nation.

Athletes are paid far too much
for simply playing games. Essentially,
as anyone can tell you, sports
are entertainment. We pay to see
these athletes perform at the
highest level. **E**

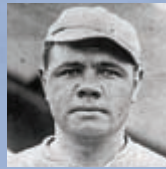
It is a sad commentary on our
40 societal values that these entertainers
are raking in seven-figure salaries
while teachers, police officers, and fire
fighters make less than one percent
of the income of some athletes.
Entertainment is a necessary thing,
but it is not needed nearly as much as
countless other occupations are.

What kind of message are we
50 sending our children with these
backward values?

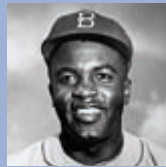
From the perspective of a young
person, sports seem like the better
and easier path. Would a child rather
play basketball and make millions
or go to school for years and end up
making \$50,000 a year?

Dissenters will say that it is not
that cut and dried,³ and they are
probably right. Making a professional
60 sporting league is exceptionally
difficult. But fewer and fewer kids
are realizing this.

One only needs to look as far as
the NBA draft⁴ for proof of this.



Athlete: Babe Ruth
Sport: Baseball
Team: New York Yankees
Contract Year: 1921
Contracted Salary: \$39,638
Salary Adjusted to 2004 Dollars: \$418,303



Athlete: Jackie Robinson
Sport: Baseball
Team: Brooklyn Dodgers
Contract Year: 1947
Contracted Salary: \$8,500
Salary Adjusted to 2004 Dollars: \$72,002



Athlete: Bill Russell
Sport: Basketball
Team: Boston Celtics
Contract Year: 1956
Contracted Salary: \$19,500
Salary Adjusted to 2004 Dollars: \$135,425



Athlete: Nolan Ryan
Sport: Baseball
Team: Houston Astros
Contract Year: 1979
Contracted Salary: \$1,100,000
Salary Adjusted to 2004 Dollars: \$2,862,121

Language Coach

Slang Words that are made up or words that are used informally and in a way other than expected are called slang. In line 41, the phrase *raking in* is an example of slang. Here, it means “earning.”

E ARGUMENT

Reread lines 33–38.
What is Hjelm’s **claim**
about the salaries of
professional athletes?
As you continue to trace
Hjelm’s argument, note
how he **supports** his
claim.

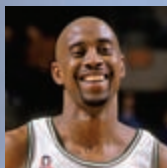
dissenter (dī-sĕn’tĕr)
n. one who disagrees or
holds a different opinion

3. **cut and dried:** simple

4. **NBA draft:** the process by which teams in the National Basketball Association select, or draft, players. Generally, the teams with the worst records from the preceding year get the top draft choices.

MATH CONNECTION

How much more was Alex Rodriguez's contracted salary in 2004 than Kenny Anderson's was in 1999?



Athlete: Kenny Anderson
Sport: Basketball
Team: Boston Celtics
Contract Year: 1999
Contracted Salary: \$5,845,000
Salary Adjusted to 2004 Dollars: \$6,627,374



Athlete: Alex Rodriguez
Sport: Baseball
Team: New York Yankees
Contract Year: 2004
Contracted Salary: \$21,726,881

A decade ago, a high school player skipping college was a rarity. In 1994, you could count the early entrants on one hand. Now, however, there are numerous high schoolers declaring for the draft every year, some of whom do not even get drafted. These players forfeit their college eligibility and will struggle for years to make an NBA team. After that, without a college education, they struggle to find a decent job.

Also troubling are the egos of the athletes receiving these giant paychecks. They have no ability to relate to the public. During the NBA lockout in 1998-99, players were crying poverty. **F**

Kenny Anderson, then a guard for the Boston Celtics, complained of not being able to afford the insurance on his eight cars. The sense of **entitlement** that these athletes have is **appalling**. They play a game that

many would play for meal money and get paid like royalty, and then have the gall to whine that they are not paid enough.

It's startling that people have blasé⁵ attitudes about \$100 million contracts. Eight-figure deals are not something to be yawned at, but with their current frequency, it is becoming that way. Athletes are paid far too much for what they do, but I believe that society is more at fault for this than the athletes themselves are.

We simply put too much importance on entertainment, and with this statement I condemn myself and the rabidity⁶ with which I follow sports. The once tightly controlled finances of the sporting world have been torn apart and the winds of greed and America's **voracious** thirst for entertainment have scattered the pieces so that they can never be put together again.

F EVALUATE REASONING

Reread lines 77–82. What stereotype is Hjelm making about professional athletes? Explain.

entitlement

(ĕn-tĭt'ĭ-mənt) *n.* the state of having a right or claim to something

appalling (ə-pŏ'lĭŋg) *adj.* outrageous; terrible
appall *v.*

voracious (vŏ-rā'shəs) *adj.* possessing an insatiable desire; greedy

5. **blasé** (blā-zā'): unconcerned; uninterested.

6. **rabidity**: craziness or unreasonable extremeness.

Comprehension

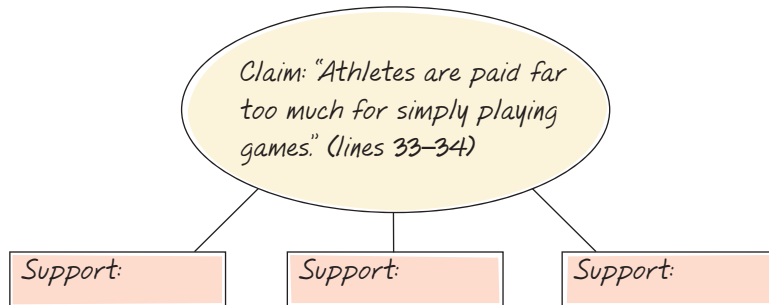
1. **Recall** What does Singletary believe about the future of professional sports?
2. **Clarify** Why does Hjelm place some of the blame for athletes' high salaries on himself as a sports fan and on society as a whole?

COMMON CORE

RI 8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

Text Analysis

3. **Identify a Counterargument** Reread lines 10–20 of the first editorial. What counterargument does Singletary offer to oppose the notion that pro athletes are selfish?
4. **Trace an Argument** Think about the **claim** that Hjelm presents in “Do Professional Athletes Get Paid Too Much?” Complete the graphic by listing three reasons or examples Hjelm uses to **support** his claim.



5. **Evaluate Reasoning** Choose one example of stereotyping that you noted as you read. What point was the writer trying to make? Suggest how Singletary or Hjelm could strengthen his argument by rewording this statement so that it does not rely on stereotyping.

Extension and Challenge

6. **Speaking and Listening** In class, set up a panel discussion about pro athletes' salaries. Assign classmates to a role: team owner, professional athlete, sports broadcaster, and fan. A moderator can take questions from the audience for the panelists, who can respond as their characters would.
7. **MATH CONNECTION** Using Babe Ruth's salary adjusted to 2004 dollars, how much more money did Alex Rodriguez make in 2004 than Babe Ruth did in 1921? What percentage increase is this? You can find these numbers in the sidebars on pages 963 and 964.

$$\% \text{ increase} = \frac{\text{amount of increase}}{\text{lower salary in 2004 dollars}}$$

Are people paid FAIRLY?

Think of a job or chore that you or a friend did recently. Do you think that you or your friend received a fair payment? Why or why not?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether each statement is true or false.

1. A **dissenter** is usually a person who goes along with what others think.
2. Someone with a **voracious** appetite for sports often goes to several games a week.
3. An **appalling** situation is one that shocks and depresses you.
4. If you do volunteer work, you don't expect **compensation** for your services.
5. The author of a 3,400-page book should be praised for her **brevity**.
6. Meek, humble people usually feel a strong sense of **entitlement**.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• area • domain • hypothesis • objective • resolve

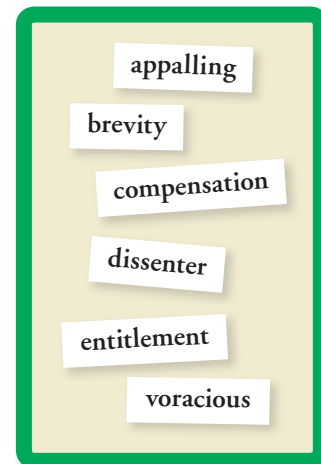
With a small group, research some starting salaries for different careers that might interest you. Discuss with your classmates why one **area** of expertise deserves a higher salary than another. Use the Academic Vocabulary words in your discussion.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: IDIOMS

Idioms are common expressions whose meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words in them. For example, the expression *cut and dried*, which appears on page 963, means “simple,” not “sliced into pieces and dried.”

PRACTICE Define the italicized idiom in each sentence.

1. To get along with Madeline, you need to learn to *hold your tongue*.
2. All those compliments are *going to Sam's head*.
3. After he lost his job, Mr. Murphy looked a bit *down at the heels*.
4. I can't quite *put my finger on* why she makes me so angry.
5. It is a good idea for business partners to *see eye to eye* on most things.
6. The rumor is that Jake *paid through the nose* for that car.



COMMON CORE

L5 Demonstrate understanding of nuances in word meanings.
L6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic words.



Language

◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Use Commas After Introductory Words

Be sure to use commas correctly after **introductory words and phrases** and when listing **items in a series**. Place commas immediately after introductory words such as *Finally* and *Afterwards* and after introductory phrases that contain prepositional phrases. Also place a comma after every item in a series except the last one. (A series consists of three or more items.)

Original: During their careers athletes face injuries stiff competition and a lot of pressure to prove themselves.

Revised: During their careers, athletes face injuries, stiff competition, and a lot of pressure to prove themselves.

PRACTICE In each sentence, add commas where they are needed.

1. In recent years athletes' salaries have greatly increased.
2. Babe Ruth Jackie Robinson and Nolan Ryan deserved good salaries.
3. Within the sports community it is well known how much money owners make from sponsors.
4. The owners the networks and the sponsors are all making money.

For more help with punctuating introductory words and phrases and items in a series, see page R49 in the *Grammar Handbook*.



L2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English punctuation. W1 Write arguments.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Demonstrate your understanding of these editorials by responding to the prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Short Constructed Response: Letter

Write a **one-paragraph letter** to the editor of *New Orleans CityBusiness* or the *Horizon* in response to one of the selections. Explain whether you agree or disagree with the writer's opinion. Remember to keep your audience in mind as you write.

REVISING TIP

Review your letter. Did you remember to use commas after any introductory words or phrases? If not, add commas where they are needed.

Interactive
Revision



Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML7-967