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BASEBALL

by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

Wisconsin residents look at the salaries pulled down by star athletes with a jaundiced eye. Nine in ten (89%) feel that professional athletes are paid "too much", with fewer than one in ten (8%) saying that what they receive is "about right", and a handful (1%) feeling it is "too little". There is remarkable agreement across various groups defined by age, gender, or partisanship (which often relates to issues of class and equity). Indeed with the exception of those under thirty, 78% of whom think professional salaries are too high, all the other groups range only from a low of 85% to a high of 94% taking this stance.

When the focus is turned to "baseball players in general", results are quite similar, both overall and for groups. To this question, 85% say salaries are too high, 10% about right and 1% too low.

The idea of a free market has only limited appeal as a standard for appropriate pay. When respondents were asked to choose between two descriptions of "the large salaries now being made by star baseball players", two thirds (65%) opted for "no one deserves that kind of money for playing a game". Three in ten were more comfortable with "a fair salary is whatever players can get the owners to pay". Except for age, results were quite stable across groups. The sentiment that no one deserves this kind of remuneration was less widespread among those below forty-five than those above that line, with those between forty-five and fifty-nine most commonly objecting.

Half (48%) of all residents identify themselves as baseball fans. Men and women are equally likely to so label themselves, and the proportion does not vary much across age groups -- though self-described Democrats are about ten points more likely than either Independents or Republicans to claim to be fans. Fans did not differ from the typical resident when it came to their sense of pro-athletic salaries in general. Nor did they differ greatly when the focus was baseball players specifically.

There is some indication that baseball is not what it used to be. When asked to compare how closely they follow baseball now to what was the case "a few years ago", about half (47%) declared their interest to be the same. But almost as many (43%) said they now followed the game "less closely", which group was only modestly offset by the one in ten (10%) who now follow the "national pasttime" more closely than they did before.

Men were more likely than women to report a dropoff of interest. This was also (modestly) the case for older respondents compared to younger ones. Self-described fans tended to agree overall with the rest of the population.

Most people in Wisconsin have been to a major league game, though not necessarily recently. Just under three in ten report that the most recent time they've attended was either this season (7%) or last (22%). Another one in five (18%) have gone to a game two or three years ago -- accounting for a total of four residents in ten. One in eight (13%) have gone to a game in the last five years, but not within three. One in four (27%) say it was longer ago than that. One Wisconsinite in eight (13%) have never been. Just under half of fans (45%) had been in attendance this season.

Except for those who said they had never been to a game, all others were asked if they had ever seen a game in the "old Milwaukee County Stadium" or Miller Park. Eight in ten (80%) of those who had ever been to a game (and thus seven residents in ten) claimed they had, with the proportion relatively flat across groups. Only half as many (39%) had been to Miller Park.

When respondents were asked what their favorite team was, the Brewers "win" hands down. Some four in ten (43%) named the Brewers. Only the Cubs (9%) and Twins (6%) exceeded one resident in twenty. A followup asked those who had not named the Brewers whether they would "describe yourself as a Brewers fan". One in three would.

The designated hitter rule is a matter of some controversy. Reminded of what it was and the leagues' differing stance on the rule, one in three residents (35%) called the situation a "good idea". Half (49%) felt it was a bad idea. Fans in general, and brewers fans in particular did not appreciably differ from their fellow residents.

Three in four (74%) feel the two leagues should come to the same determination about the DH rule. Only one in eight (13%) disagree. But this leaves two solutions. Six in ten (59%) feel the American League should give up the DH. Half as many (29%) think the National League should adopt it. Men were ten points more likely than women to want to see the DH abolished. Support of this move was strongest in the middle two age groups. Fans in general were a bit more likely to favor killing the DH than residents overall were, but Brewers fans (who have gone through the change themselves) looked like the population.

The league switch itself seems not be a matter of controversy now if it ever was. Respondents were reminded that "up until a few years ago, the Brewers had been in the American League, but then they moved to the National League", and asked for their reaction, or whether they "don't really have an opinion". Eight in ten residents (79%) took this proffered option. Among the one in five who stated a preference, those who felt it was a good idea outnumbered those feeling the opposite by a 15%-6% margin.

Men were much more likely to express themselves on this issue than were women. A similar difference was observed between baseball fans and non fans (but recall that men and women were equally likely to call themselves baseball fans). Brewers fans in particular were not that different from others.

There has been talk about the value of sporting events tickets. When respondents were asked "compared to other things you spend money for, do you think tickets to Brewers' games are a better value than most, a worse value, or neither a better value", there was only mild criticism if any on balance. The largest group (43%) said they were neither better nor worse, and another one in

six failed to express an opinion. To be sure, among the four in ten who felt one way or the other, about two in three (28% compared to 12%) called them a worse value. Fans in general or Brewers fans in particular were broadly similar to the overall population.

When the comparison is to "tickets to other sporting events", Brewer's games appear in a more positive light. Again, the largest group (here 44%) say they are neither. But this time, more say Brewers tickets are relatively a good value (26%-14%). Brewers fans and (a bit more clearly) baseball fans generally were somewhat more positive than others.

Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. All results shown are for the basic sample of state residents. The first column is the percentage of the entire sample giving each response. The second and third reports the percentages for men and women separately. The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns show self-described Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Columns seven through ten group respondents by age. The final two columns depict those persons who identified themselves as baseball fans, and that partially overlapping group who called themselves Brewer fans.

Q01. INTERVIEWER: (DO NOT ASK) Enter respondent's gender

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
MALE	49%	100%	--%	34%	55%	60%	53%	53%	38%	56%	47%	46%
FEMALE	51	--	100	66	45	40	48	47	62	44	53	54

ABNER01. On a very different topic, In general, do you think professional athletes are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
TOO MUCH	89%	85%	93%	90%	91%	86%	78%	89%	93%	94%	88%	92%
TOO LITTLE	1	2	*	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	--
ABOUT RIGHT	8	12	6	8	6	12	20	8	7	3	10	7
DON'T KNOW	1	1	*	*	2	--	2	1	--	1	*	1
REFUSED	1	1	1	*	1	1	--	1	--	1	*	--

ABNER02. How about baseball players in general, do you think they are paid too much, too little, or just the right amount?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
TOO MUCH	85%	85%	86%	86%	86%	83%	76%	86%	91%	88%	85%	88%
TOO LITTLE	1	1	1	2	3	--	1	1	2	2	1	1
ABOUT RIGHT	10	12	9	9	7	17	19	11	5	7	12	10
DON'T KNOW	2	2	3	3	3	1	4	2	2	2	1	2
REFUSED	1	1	*	*	1	--	--	*	--	1	*	--

ABNER12. And have you been to a game at the new Miller Park?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
YES	39%	35%	43%	40%	32%	48%	48%	39%	43%	29%	47%	47%
NO	61	65	57	60	68	52	52	61	57	72	53	54
DON'T KNOW	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ABNER13. What is your favorite baseball team?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
MILWAUKEE BREWERS	43%	41%	44%	46%	39%	43%	33%	43%	46%	46%	54%	88%
MINNESOTA TWINS	6	9	3	6	7	5	6	9	3	6	8	--
CHICAGO CUBS	9	10	9	11	11	9	8	10	8	11	12	--
CHICAGO WHITE SOX	1	2	1	2	3	*	1	2	--	3	2	--
ST. LOUIS CARDINALS	1	2	*	*	1	2	--	2	*	1	1	--
LOS ANGELES DODGERS	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	--	1	--
NEW YORK YANKEES	3	4	1	2	1	5	6	1	3	1	4	--
BOSTON RED SOX	*	*	*	--	--	1	--	--	1	1	1	--
ATLANTA BRAVES	2	3	2	*	3	2	5	*	2	2	3	--
OTHER	11	10	11	9	13	11	12	12	12	6	6	--
COMBO. W/BREWERS	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	3
COMBO. W/O BREWERS	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	21	17	24	21	18	18	28	18	21	19	6	10
REFUSED	1	2	*	--	1	3	--	1	1	2	1	--

ABNER14. (UNLESS BREWERS) Would you describe yourself as a Brewers fan

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
YES	33%	32%	34%	29%	38%	37%	28%	37%	38%	28%	61%	100%
NO	66	67	65	70	62	58	71	62	59	69	38	--
DON'T KNOW	1	2	1	1	--	3	1	1	3	--	--	--
REFUSED	1	--	1	--	--	2	--	--	--	2	1	--

ABNER16. Right now, the American League has the designated hitter rule, where one player bats but does not play in the field, and one fielder-- usually the pitcher--never comes up to bat. The National League has no such rule and players at every position come up to bat. In general, do you think this rule is a good idea, or a bad idea?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
GOOD IDEA	35%	37%	33%	34%	34%	37%	40%	37%	32%	32%	39%	40%
BAD IDEA	49	53	46	51	53	48	45	50	55	48	54	50
DON'T KNOW	14	9	19	14	11	14	15	12	11	16	6	9
REFUSED	2	2	2	1	3	1	--	1	2	4	2	1

ABNER17. Do you think the two leagues should have the same rule when it comes to either having or not having a designated hitter?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
YES	78%	77%	79%	81%	80%	78%	76%	75%	84%	81%	81%	84%
NO	13	17	9	14	12	12	12	18	10	10	16	13
DON'T KNOW	8	6	11	5	7	10	12	7	6	8	3	3
REFUSED	1	*	1	*	2	--	--	--	1	2	*	*

ABNER18. Which would you prefer, that the American League give up the designated hitter, or that the National League adopt it?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
AMERICAN GIVE UP	59%	64%	55%	63%	62%	53%	56%	65%	69%	48%	65%	59%
NATIONAL ADOPT	29	30	29	22	31	33	37	29	21	28	28	31
NEITHER (VOL.)	5	4	6	7	2	7	6	4	3	5	3	4
DON'T KNOW	7	3	10	8	5	8	1	2	6	17	4	6
REFUSED	*	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	1

ABNER19. Up until a few years ago, the Brewers had been in the American League, but then they moved to National League. Do you think this switch was a good idea, a bad idea, or don't you really have an opinion?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
GOOD IDEA	15%	23%	6%	12%	12%	20%	22%	15%	10%	16%	24%	18%
BAD IDEA	6	9	4	7	8	7	3	8	5	6	9	7
NO OPINION	79	68	90	81	80	73	74	78	85	77	66	75
DON'T KNOW	*	*	*	*	--	--	--	--	*	1	*	*
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	1	--	--	--	1	1	--

ABNER20. Compared to other things you spend money for, do you think tickets to Brewers' games are a better value than most, a worse value, or neither a better nor worse value than most things you might buy?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
BETTER VALUE	12%	14%	11%	12%	10%	15%	14%	12%	11%	12%	18%	16%
WORSE VALUE	28	34	22	24	28	29	32	21	31	30	23	25
NEITHER	43	35	50	47	47	37	35	55	46	34	51	48
DON'T KNOW	16	16	16	16	15	18	19	12	12	23	9	11
REFUSED	1	1	*	1	1	1	--	1	1	1	1	*

ABNER21. How about compared to tickets for other sporting events? Are tickets to Brewers' games are a better value than most, a worse value, or neither a better nor worse value than most sporting events?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
GOOD VALUE	26%	29%	22%	30%	28%	24%	29%	26%	31%	19%	38%	31%
BAD VALUE	14	17	11	11	14	15	15	11	11	18	8	10
NEITHER	44	40	47	42	38	45	43	47	46	37	44	49
DON'T KNOW	16	13	19	17	19	15	12	17	12	24	11	11
REFUSED	*	*	*	--	1	1	--	1	--	1	1	--

QD05. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
DEMOCRAT	30%	20%	38%	100%	--%	--%	25%	34%	32%	28%	35%	31%
REPUBLICAN	30	37	24	--	--	100	35	31	23	30	29	30
INDEPENDENT	25	28	22	--	100	--	26	19	31	29	24	22
OTHER	9	10	9	--	--	--	11	12	11	4	9	11
NONE	5	4	6	--	--	--	5	4	3	7	2	4
DON'T KNOW	*	*	--	--	--	--	--	*	--	--	--	*
REFUSED	1	1	2	--	--	--	--	1	--	2	1	1

QD11. In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR) (Calculated and grouped as below)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FAN YES	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	BB	MKE
18-29	18%	20%	17%	15%	19%	21%	100%	--%	--%	--%	17%	15%
30-44	30	32	28	34	23	31	--	100	--	--	29	31
45-59	28	21	33	30	34	21	--	--	100	--	30	30
60 and over	21	25	18	20	25	21	--	--	--	100	22	22
DK/REFUSED	3	2	4	1	--	5	--	--	--	--	2	3

* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This BADGER POLL™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of research designed to benefit the research community and the people of Wisconsin, under the direction of G. Donald Ferree, Jr., Associate Director for Public Opinion Research of the Center. The media sponsors of the survey are the (Madison) Capital Times, and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. The BADGER POLL™ is intended to be a "poll of record" for the state, investigating matters of concern to Wisconsinites including politics, culture, and their daily lives, adhering to the highest standards of polling methodology and rigorous independence.

A total of 505 randomly chosen state residents were interviewed for this survey by telephone between May 13 and 21, inclusive. Telephone numbers were generated by computer in proportion to the number of adults living in each area of the state. Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every eligible resident in Wisconsin, exactly these questions at the time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would differ by more than that in either direction from what we report here. There could be differences because of changes in question wording, events occurring in the meantime, or any of the practical difficulties involved in taking a scientific survey. Results based on subgroups are subject to a larger "margin of error".