



The doors at Tiger stadium will open again Monday night, but Oakland County residents say they will not be rushing to fill the long-empty seats.

So what? Fans balk at baseball's return

By Katie Kerwin
staff writer

"Buy me some peanuts and crackerjack. I don't care if they never come back . . ."

Oakland County residents had their own version of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" last week, as the two-month-old baseball strike came to an end to a resounding chorus of "So what?"

The national pastime was not sorely missed here. Several heretics even suggested that it would be better if the shrine at Michigan and Trumbull stayed closed for good.

Perhaps a soccer strike — or maybe a polo moratorium — would create more waves.

Many of those interviewed around the county last week had been disinterested in baseball all along or had soured on the sport during the long months of labor wrangling.

"I could care less," said Randall Husk of Troy. "They could strike till the year 2,000 and it wouldn't bother me."

"I really don't care any more. I was fed up with it," Mark Secontine of Rochester said of the strike. "Now they're coming back and the season won't be what it should be."

THERE ARE EVEN a few radicals who wish that the umpire would get laryngitis on Monday before it's time to yell "Play ball."

Margaret Kayko of the West Bloomfield area is one such baseball widow who was enjoying the respite the strike provided.

"I'm sorry it's over," she said. "It's been a nice year."

She added, "I don't care if they never play baseball again."

Sure, there were a few diehard fans — usually under age 12 — who were just plain happy to see the end of the baseball drought. They usually grinned and scuffed their shoes on the cement when asked about the strike's end, obviously delighted to have their heroes returned to them.

"I'm kind of glad it's over," Anthony Gabriel, 12, of Bloomfield Hills admitted shyly.

His mother, Kathy Gabriel, took a more jaundiced view.

"I think it was ridiculous that we had a strike in the first

place, because the players are paid too much already," she said. "People are starving in this country and these guys are out playing games."

Not all local kids were starved for baseball, though.

Scott Claxton, 13, of Bloomfield Township enjoyed baseball-free, prime-time television.

"We're mad because now they're going to take off all our TV shows and put on baseball," complained Parvin Ghandchi, 13, of Bloomfield Township.

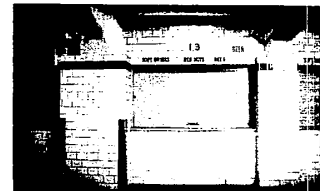
BUT SADDEST TO listen to were the embittered baseball fans, whose interest in the sport withered during negotiations.

"I could really care less," said self-avowed fan Brad Levin of Rochester. "Big deal — we missed 49 days and nights of baseball. We can't make up for those seven weeks," he said.

"You'll sit there and wonder if they will play now like they could have done before," Levin said.

"I think we were ripped off."

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Beer sellers will have their hands full once again, when the long baseball drought ends next week.



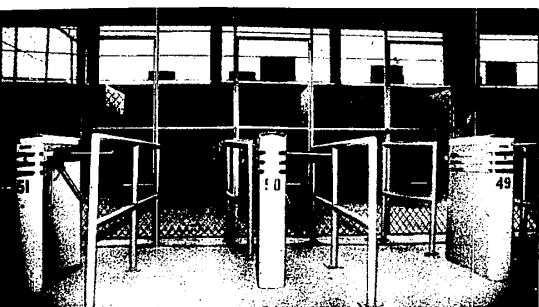
Ball players and team owners struck out during the long labor dispute, at least with some local fans who say they are fed up with baseball.



'I think it was kind of ridiculous that we had a strike in the first place, because the players are paid too much already.'
— Kathy Gabriel



'It was nice to watch something else on TV.'
— Scott Claxton



Only echoes fill the ballpark now, but the turnstiles will be spinning when the baseball is resumed next week.

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