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Players Salaries Out of Control

Ticket prices are already too high and athletes are making too much money. It's got to stop.

You can't blame the athletes.

If I'm Larry Johnson and I can make \$84 million to put on a pair of shorts and shoot a basketball, hell yeah, I'm gonna do it.

Who wouldn't?

But sports is getting to the point where it's bordering on ridiculous. The athletes in baseball and basketball are making \$7 and \$8 million a year regularly. And as soon as Johnson signs a 11-year, \$84 million contract with Charlotte's NBA Hornets, here comes New Jersey's Derrick Coleman wanting \$100 million.

And who is Derrick Coleman? What has he done for us lately? Hasn't even played in an all-star game.

It gets worse. Rookies are making three, four and five times as much as veterans. Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway, signed a \$40-plus million dollar contract with the Orlando Magic before he dribbled the ball one on the NBA floor. Makes as much as Shaqville (before endorsements).

A Penny make as much as Shaq?

Give me a break.

And you know who gets to pay all these guys?

Me and you.

NBA tickets prices went up 7.7 percent this year, and the average ticket price rose to \$27.12 this season from \$25.18. The average cost of a Major League Baseball ticket went up 1.7 percent to \$29.57 this season. NFL tickets prices increased 3.5 percent to \$28.68.

The Consumer Price Index, the broadest measure for inflation, has risen at an annual rate of 2.5 percent in 1993.

But that's average.

The New York Knicks, for example, charge \$39.66 for an average ticket, up 9.7 percent from last year. That's the highest in the league.

Indiana is the lowest, averaging \$20.71 per ticket. But even Pacer tickets went up 6.9 percent.

Someone's got to pay these Penny Hardaways of the world.

Now, I am not a math major, but let's see, you take the family to see Johnson and the Hornets play in New York. That's four tickets at \$40 each. Say little Johnny wants a hot dog and Sally Sue wants a coke. Oh, and you have got to park somewhere or ride the train or cab.

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SWAC Hopes for Encore of '92-93 Cinderella Season

The SWAC is back. That is what the league coaches and players are proclaiming after a banner year from Southern and Jackson State.

It was by for one of the best season in league history with Southern knocking off Atlantic Coast Conference tournament champion Georgia Tech in the first round of the NCAA tournament and Jackson State beating Connecticut in the opening round of the National Invitation Tournament.

In addition to that, four players from the league were taken in the NBA draft including two from Mississippi Valley.

"It was a great year for the SWAC," Jackson State coach Andy Stoglin said.

The big question is whether last year was a one shot deal for the league.

"We have to build on last year's success," proclaims SWAC commissioner James Frank.

ALABAMA STATE (14-13 overall in 1992-93, 9-5 SWAC), prediction: First

With starters returning and 10 lettermen, the Hornets are expected to be the SWAC representative in the NCAA tournament this season.

"I fell we'll be one of the teams to beat," Alabama State coach James Oliver said. "A lot will depend on upon our guard play."

Both Michael Frazier and Devin Warmack are back at the guard spots.

The Hornets will have one of the league's best front-court duos in Jimmy Lunsford and Kirby Fortenberry. Lunsford, a 6-8 sophomore center, was spectacular in his debut at Montgomery last season, averaging 15.7 points and 7.5 rebounds per game. Fortenberry averaged 12.9 points and 7.8 rebounds. "Our frontline is the best in the league," Oliver said. "and with another year of experience under their belts, we should be even stronger. We can show versatility and have depth at each position."

JACKSON STATE (25-9, 13-1), prediction: Second

This year's squad has a tough act to follow. The Tigers had one of the most successful season in school history. Last year's 25-9 record was the third-best in school history. Add in the Tigers won the SWAC regular season title and strung together the nation's longest winning streak of 16 games and sent guard Lindsey Hunter to the NBA as a lottery pick (selected tenth overall by the Detroit Pistons).

"Our whole thing last year was to make people respect black college basketball," JSU coach Andy Stoglin said.

After stunning Tulane and suffering near losses to Illinois, Kansas and Memphis State, JSU had the attention for the Tigers is not bare for Stoglin. He has 11 lettermen and four of five starters returning from last year's team.

Leading the cast of returning starters is forward Godfrey Thompson, the two-time SWAC Defensive Player of the Year. Last year the 6-7 senior averaged 7.5 points and 7.1 rebounds while having a league-high 96 blocked shots.

Stoglin is hoping 6-4 swingman Ryan Lorthridge can fill the scoring void left by Hunter. Last year Lorthridge, a part-time starter, averaged 8.8 points, but came on strong near the end of the season. John Taylor returns or his third straight season as the point guard. Taylor had 137 assists last season. "We are very excited about this



Southern prepares for another run at the SWAC title. The Jaguars went to the NCAA tournament and shocked Georgia Tech in the first round.

season," Stoglin said. "We have eight seniors on the team alone with several guys who played a lot last year. Our guys saw what hard work did for us last year. Each season and game is different. We are try to establish our own identity."

SOUTHERN (21-10, 9-5), prediction: Third

The saying around the SWAC is never count out a Ben Jobe-coached team.

In his previous 21 years as a coach, Jobe has never had a losing season. Don't expect this year to be any different.

The Jaguars, who have lead the nation in scoring the last two years, will be built around 6-7 forward JerVaughn Scales, who averaged 18.7 points and 12.7 rebounds last year. "JerVaughn will have to be the focal point of our basketball team," Jobe said. "He will have to be involved in every phase of our game. He has proven that he can play with the better players in the country and he will have to lead by example."

Scales, a native of Dayton, Ohio, spent the summer

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