

Replacement Parts

Spring training 1995 was a stranger, more vexing time than normal for fringe players in the minor leagues, the ones who were not yet – or never would be – on a major league team’s 40-man roster.

This was a time when major league owners, tired of their striking, non-playing players, came up with this notion of using “replacement players.”

To get these players, owners preyed upon the aforementioned tweener players, outwardly promising them they would open the season in the majors and subtly suggesting that not playing along – no pun intended – with the owners in this negotiating tactic to break the union meant a good chance of never playing again in organized ball.

“The players’ association asks me to support them, (but) management is telling us we have to play in the exhibition games,” Expos utility player F.P. Santangelo, an infielder with the 1991 Senators, said at the time.

“It’s really confusing. This isn’t my battle,” Santangelo said, “but I’m right in the middle of the firing line.”

Santangelo ended up briefly walking out of camp that spring. He ended up spending all or parts of the next seven seasons in the majors with Montreal, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Oakland.

Countless others, like Santangelo, were forced to make the same choice. Unlike Santangelo, most of them never reached the majors, let alone last there as long as Santangelo did from 1995-2001.



“I just want the opportunity to play. Whatever decision I make I have to live with. I can’t worry all my life what other people think of me. If I did that, I couldn’t survive.”

Outfielder **Tyrone Woods** (1992-94)



“You don’t know if you’re ever going to make it up there and life’s too short to wait around. I wouldn’t do it to take anybody’s job or do it for the union or do it for the owners. It’s just the situation I’m in; I have a family to support.”

Pitcher **Rick DeHart** (1993, 1995-96)

CLIPPINGS



F.P. Santangelo (1991) would spend all or parts of seven seasons in the majors



“I’ve always been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Maybe now this will be the right place at the right time. I still play the game because I love the game but, sure, it’s for the money also. The money from six or seven years in the minors isn’t a whole lot. This is a chance to make some money and get a start in life.”

Outfielder **Marc Griffin** (1993-94)



“I don’t want to cross a picket line, but that’s a lot of money. That gives someone a good start in life. This might be my only shot at playing in the big leagues.”

First baseman **Randy Wilstead** (1993-94) in spring 1995



“If I were one of them, I’d do it, too. I’d play this out as long as I can. They can make \$30,000 in one day if they make the team.”

Outfielder **Phil Dauphin** (1994-95)



“When I get there, I want to play against the guys I know from watching on television. I don’t want to do it against an insurance salesman from California.”

Phil Dauphin on rejecting the chance to be a replacement player



“For my family, this is what I’m in the game for all these years, but you want to make it to the majors the right way.”

Pitcher **Darrin Winston** (1993-94), who would reach the majors in 1997