

## THE LABOR ISSUE

# Baseball's Busch league

**O**n the greatest day of Mike Busch's career, none of his teammates would talk to him. After toiling for six years in baseball's bush leagues, Busch was called up late last summer to help the Los Angeles Dodgers in a close pennant race. That day, he warmed up alone and was kicked out

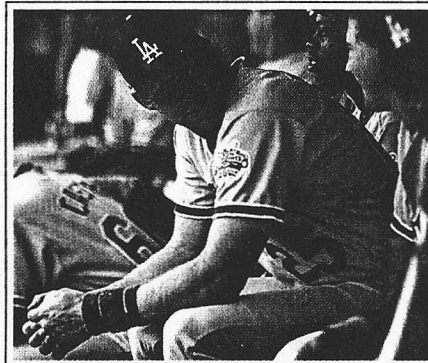
of the clubhouse while the players voted unanimously, in vain, to send him back to the minors. A little more than a month later, Busch hit a home run that helped clinch a post-season berth for the Dodgers.

**Stress.** The 6-foot, 5-inch infielder earned this spite by playing in exhibition games during last year's baseball strike. Players called Busch a scab, but fans supported him. Despite the good feelings that Cal Ripken generated last summer, the stress created by the strike and replacement players like Busch still lingers. And as the new sea-



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TIM SHORTT / FLORIDA TODAY - SILVER IMAGE



**Digging in.** Busch wants to be a player.

son opens, owners and players still haven't settled on a labor agreement.

Yet far from the negotiating table, in Vero Beach, Fla., where the Dodgers conduct spring training, Busch sees baseball as a renewed game today. "Everything is absolutely normal," he reports. "I converse with everybody." Nevertheless, his decision to cross the picket line is still an issue. Busch is one of the replacement players who now want to be admitted into the players' union. The financial incentives are great: In the past, union members have reportedly received as much as \$80,000

a year in licensing revenues. Referring to the union's admission process, Donald Fehr, chief negotiator for the players association, says: "We had a strike . . . [but] we have to have due process."

On the field, Busch is competing for the final spot on the Dodgers' roster. The outcome will likely depend on injuries and whether the team wants a power-hitting infielder on the bench. Busch wants to put last season behind him. Fans hope that Major League Baseball can do the same.

BY JOSH CHETWYND

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