

# Postal Delays May Cost Flag

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Why would a 30-year-old man get up a couple of hours before the mailman is due to arrive with the day's collection of assorted bills and junk mail?

And why would he go into such a deep depression after the mailman leaves his bundle of goodies that even an organic pizza doesn't revive his spirits?

The only possible reason, other than an expected income tax refund, is that his APBA baseball cards were due to arrive — and didn't.

(For the uninitiated, APBA baseball is a game where statistical results of major league players are converted into a law-of-averages formula and played with dice and a master result board. It is a \$2 million a year business, has tens of thousands of fans and there are two national newspapers devoted to nothing but APBA items.)

From the time the order blank is returned to the factory, the mail is closely watched and around Feb. 1 the APBAer may be found sipping hot-coffee while sitting beside his mail box — even if it is 28 degrees and snowing.

For me, the anticipation climaxed Jan. 31 when a co-worker received his cards and was able to start contemplating a replay of the 1971 major league season. I knew mine would be here the next day and spent a sleepless night waiting for the mailman to come

He came. The cards didn't. And I don't know why.

They will arrive, but each day's delay is an eternity.

Why do I want them so badly?

Because others have them before me.

Which brings up a logical question: What difference does it make who gets them first as long as everyone gets theirs?

And the not-so-logical answer is: When you are involved in play-by-mail leagues using these cards and the trading season is open, those who receive the cards first have an advantage. They can evaluate their team's strengths and weaknesses quicker and thus get an early start on planning trades. (In mail leagues, it isn't unusual to have Willie Mays playing for Boston and Henry Aaron playing with Houston because making trades is one of the features of the leagues.)

For example, one of my teams needs a shortstop and unless I get my cards quickly, other managers in the league who also need a shortstop will be able to make trade offers before I can even see who is available.

All this brings up a legal question: Could I sue the APBA Game Co. or the Postal Service for undue mental duress due to the delay in receiving my cards after my co-worker received his?

Well, if nothing else, at least I have an excuse should I finish last. It was the Postal Service's fault.