



Howie's Hell

Canadian hypocrisy still exists in football

Nationalism was never at a higher level than it was last week, but in all the rhetoric two classic Canadian football matches got lost this past weekend.

In the university ranks it was the Vanier Cup at Varsity Stadium. The event grows every year, but has yet to receive the recognition it deserves. Saturday's match was East vs. West — Calgary vs. St. Mary's of Halifax.

The drama included St. Mary's star quarterback Chris Flynn announcing that he would be unable to play. The Hec Creighton Award winner was told by doctors that a concussion suffered in a game against Bishop's was so serious that an additional hit could lead to permanent brain damage.

How did the fans of Toronto react to this emotional setting?

Only 13,000 showed up for the game.

I realize that both participants were from areas of the country that Toronto barely acknowledges as Canadian, but surely a national championship could override this.

I guess Torontonians were too busy campaigning against free trade with America. After all, who would want to be subjected to the excitement of an Orange Bowl or Rose Bowl, with 80,000 screaming fans cheering cheering for their favourite university and the right to claim the number one ranking in the country?

This city's treatment toward the Argos is even more disgraceful. The Argos marched to a 14-4 record this season — the best in the CFL. Sunday they faced the Winnipeg Blue Bombers for the Eastern Division title.

Surely a team with the best record in the country could attract some loyalty. It's not like Torontonians have other sports teams to cheer

about. The Blue Jays were a joke this year. The Leafs' major contribution to hockey is being better than the pathetic Minnesota North Stars.

So how did the Argos fare during this week of Candian nationalism?

Well, the team drew its largest crowd of the year.

26,000 fans is all the Argos could attract in a city of 2.2 million that supposedly believes in the Canadian Dream. One wonders if the Canadian Dream should include American sports franchises.

Of course, I'm being too hard on the Toronto sports fan. Yeah, and Mulroney was too hard on Sinclair Stevens.



Many people think we have an inferior brand of football. Why should Torontonians subject themselves to watching second-rate athletes?

Check again.

Calgary's 52-23 Vanier Cup win might be classified as a blow-out, but there was still plenty of excitement. Sunday's match between the Argos and Blue Bombers may read 27-11 Winnipeg, but only seven points separated the teams in the fourth quarter.

If we want to be truly Canadian, I suggest we stop referring to our athletes as "second-rate," and get out and support them. They deserve the recognition.

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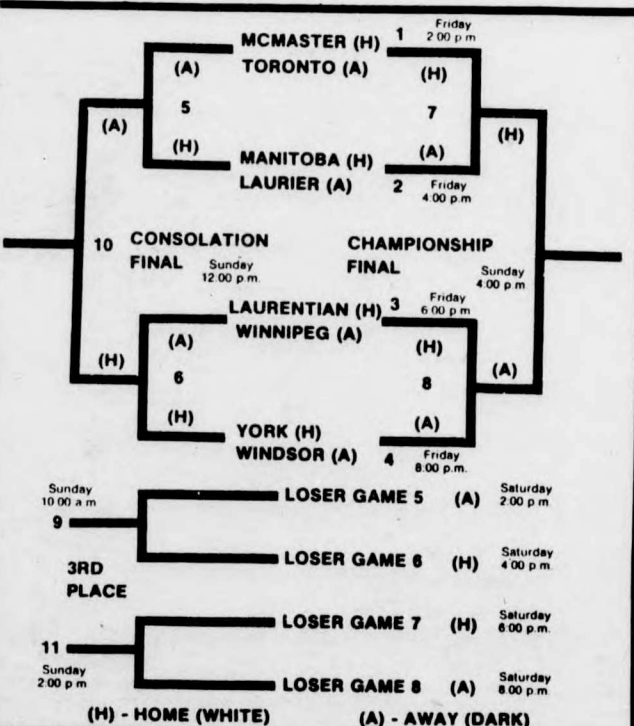
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