

FEATURE

Pushing athletes into international competitors

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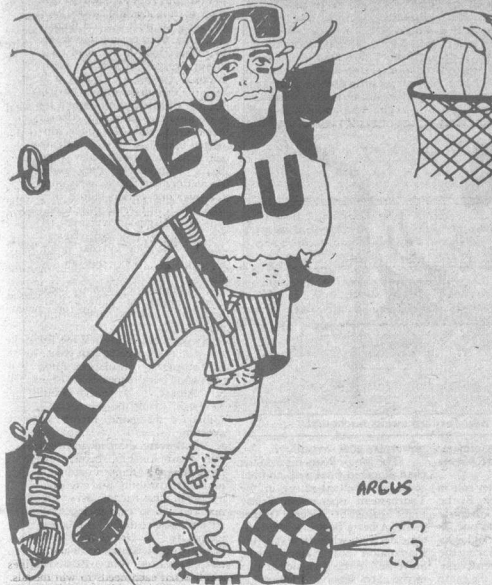
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from now seem almost conservative.
Currently the total Sport Canada budget is approximately \$35 million annually. It will be up to the federal cabinet to decide how much of the betting intake goes to sport, but Sport Canada is well-prepared to lobby for as much as 50 per cent.
Richard Pound, former president of the Canadian Olympic Association said in a

Champion Magazine interview last year that 1982 was a crucial period for Canadian sport. "We either have to sink back into the middle to twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth at the Olympic Games or say okay, we're going to compete."
Since that statement the Olympic Association has received a \$200 million commitment from Regan towards the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. The money will

come from sports pools and the sale of coins and stamps. It will go towards facilities such as a new hockey arena and a sports medicine clinic.

So what is so terrible about our sport system? Why all this expense?

After all, the federal government has established an athlete assistance program which gives our top jocks as much as \$385 a month (plus free university tuition and allowances for special equipment).

Also, we have a national sport and recreation centre in downtown Ottawa housing administrative bodies for every sport in Canada. The days of athletes surviving on peanut butter and friendly encouragement are long gone.

But there's a big difference between an athlete surviving in some degree of

Athletes may have money to put food on the table, but the way they're being trained often is sub-standard.

One of the weaker links in the system is coaching. Douglas Fisher, a veteran lobbyist for amateur sport and the author of an Ontario government task force report on amateur sport (1981) summarized the problem thus: "In Canada...coaching continues to be regarded as a hobby, an avocation, a part-time pursuit. Views commonly held are 'anyone can do it' or 'it is somehow frivolous'."

Greg Joy, a former world record holder in high jump, said in an interview, "Canadians don't recognize it now requires a 'professional' to coach high level amateur athletes."

By professional he means a full-time

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comfort and an athletic program that strives for excellence.

"The increment for moving from one sporting perch to another in international competition is discreet and expensive," Ole Sorensen, a technical consultant at Sport Canada explains.

Canada still has to create a system which will help a very talented athlete perform just a little better than other very talented athletes.

As Hoffman puts it, "It's a very tough world of sport" and the margin of victory is measured in tenths of a second, quarters of an inch and fractions of a point.

person who is trained for a career in coaching.

Sport Canada funds a few such individuals to coach national teams, but Hoffman estimates there are only about ten full-time track club coaches in Canada.

Pat Reid, a national coach for women's high jump, said in a telephone interview Italy has 60 professional high jumping coaches sponsored by the state. "We have none," he added. "I get an honorarium of a few hundred dollars when I travel with the team."

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