

Aussie rules in Maritimes

by Kingsley Ellis

(Mr. Ellis is a former professional Australian Rules player and coach who now lives in Canada.)

Exciting, thrilling, spectacular, non-stop action are some of the words used to describe one of the world's most unique sports - Australian Rules football.

This skilful, action-packed game has been played here in Canada since 1989 when the Canadian Australian Football Association was established in southern Ontario. Now the game is about to be introduced to Maritimers with the foundation of the Maritime Australian Football League. The MAFL will be formally affiliated with the CAFA.

Contrary to popular opinion, Australian Rules is not a wild, no-rules melee but is actually a strictly controlled, albeit non-stop, game that requires a high level of personal fitness and the mastery of some unique skills. Canadian players have relished the challenge of learning this new sport and their enthusiasm has resulted in a comparatively high standard of play that has impressed visiting Australian officials and players.

Already two clubs are being formed to compete in the MAFL's inaugural season, and more are sure to follow. The Moncton Bulldogs will adopt the colours of cardinal red and dark blue, while the Fredericton Knights will wear royal blue and gold.

The game truly has everything - the thrill of non-stop competition, the inner pleasure of attaining a very high level of fitness, and the easy camaraderie that follows with the fellowship of the sport. It's a game ideally suited to the rugged, pioneering spirit of Canadians as embodied by the

MAFL's President, Bill Frampton - a New Brunswick resident who decided the Australian Rules had a place to

fill in the Maritime sporting scene.

"There is definitely a place for Aussie rules in this area," says Frampton. "The sport has the best elements of other popular sports combined in one. Like hockey it has fast-paced action that flows from end to end. Like basketball it has spectacular aerial skills and high scores. Like gridiron it has plenty of body contact. The game's combination of the familiar and the unique give it an appeal that's second to none."

The sport will have great appeal to anyone familiar with the Irish game of Gaelic football. The two sports are so similar that an International series between Australia and Ireland has been in existence for several years. Indeed, Aussie Rules could legitimately be described as Gaelic football with an oval ball and tackling.

The MAFL realizes that the future life-blood of the game in this region will come from the youth and schools, and part of the League's plan revolves around junior development. A program specifically designed to present the game to young children (and their parents and teachers) as a non-violent, healthy and skilful activity, is being developed for promotion at elementary school level.

To the business community, Aussie Rules represents an ideal new vehicle for exposure with its excitement factor and healthy image appealing to a wide segment of the population.

The participation level within the MAFL is not restricted to playing. The League has

opportunities for game officials, team administrators, coaches and umpires, - and in each case there will be a support program to ensure that the participant is fully educated in the requirements of each position. Social memberships are also available for those who just want to enjoy and support the game.

Australian rules is rapidly expanding internationally, with organizations operating in New Zealand, Japan, and the United Kingdom in addition to Canada. International competition is only a matter of time.

So the call is there for those Maritimers looking for a sporting endeavor that's a little different. Try Aussie Rules; it's now in the Maritimes.

Anyone who would like to get involved can contact Bill Frampton at (506) 386-1101 or Ed Hawkes at (506) 457-6223.

**What's black,
white and gold
and plays golf
in early April?**

**Answer
The Boston Bruins**

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VIEW FROM THE CHANGELING

Last week I wrote that the NHL players have every right to strike and that I hope that they win each of their demands. This week I will discuss why I will in fact be pissed off if the players do strike this season.

It is well publicized by now that it is the players who make the profits during the regular season and the owners through the playoffs. Therefore, it is an excellent strategy for the players to strike at a time which will minimize damage to themselves and maximize damage to their foes, the owners. However, the players should realize that a strike preceding the playoffs will also maximize damage to their ultimate employers: the fans.

Let's face it, the regular season in hockey is not all that important to the fans except for the small percentage whose teams are actually fighting for a playoff berth. Thus fans in Toronto and Minnesota are daily checking the scores. Most of the rest of the league's fans don't really care. They watch games with a feeling of detachment, going for the excitement and the entertainment, without feeling the passionate concern, joy, and despair which makes sports spectatorship worthwhile. Last Monday I watched my Canadians lose to the Rangers 4-1: True, I was disappointed, but had this been the game eliminating the Habs from the playoffs I would have been devastated. If the players strike now the emotional extremes (either to the heights or to the depths) will be taken away from us.

In a very real sense the fans are being held hostage by the players. Even though their demands are both legitimate and reasonable, why are we the ones who are forced to suffer in order that they be met? If a price must be paid in order for the players to win their demands (and this does appear to be the case) why are we the ones being forced to pay? Since the players will be reaping the benefits of this strike, shouldn't they place the ones making the sacrifice?

Had the players gone on strike at the beginning or middle of the season I would have given them total support, even if it had lasted into the playoffs, but now that strike is being waged along purely labour terms my sympathy is lost. I, who have been a hero worshipping fan all my life, will no longer give a damn about individual players, since they will have finally proven that they don't give a damn about me.

Hopefully, all of this has been a red herring and there will be no strike, but if there is I will be prepared. Should I come across any NHL player during the strike I fully intend to spit in their faces, insult their wives/girlfriends/boyfriends, kick their dogs, and make fun of their children. Immature? Yes, Gratifying? Also, yes. Anyway, since I don't seem to travel in the same circles as NHL players I am not overly concerned about my bluff being called.

On a more pleasant note my hat is off to the Acadia Axemen for their play in the CIAU hockey tournament. Despite being undermanned and overmatched they came perilously close to winning it all. Had Alberta net minder Darren Shyunka not played extremely well the University Cup might now reside in the Maritimes. The Axemen have successfully advertised both their school and the AUAA.

One final question. During this time of high employment, how can a person who performs his job as poorly as does TSN's Micheal Landsberg keep his job? The man is horrible.

NHL Team Trivia

- 1) Which team has an igloo in their logo?
- 2) What team nickname is grammatically incorrect?
- 3) Which logo depicts both the city name and the nickname pictorially?
- 4) What is a "Bruin"?
- 5) Which team has a flying skate in their logo?

- ANSWERS**
- 1) Quebec Nordiques.
 - 2) Toronto Maple Leafs. Should be Leaves.
 - 3) Buffalo Sabres.
 - 4) A type of bear.
 - 5) Vancouver Canucks.

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