

VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Now that it is hopefully close to playoff time in the NHL an analysis of playoff formats seems in order. Should the NHL maintain their current practice of allowing 16 teams into the playoff round, or should this number be reduced? If the latter, then by how much? What about other sports such as baseball, basketball, and football?

The complaint that sporting magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* has against the playoff system of the NHL is that it makes the regular season meaningless. What is implied by this statement is the American cultural maxim that "winning is everything." To proponents of this view there is no value in the game itself; only victory counts. They indicate that spectators can get no enjoyment outside of ultimate victory, and that buying a ticket for a losing team smacks of stupidity since these teams have no chance of winning a championship.

I, of course, argue against such a paradigm of sports. It is my belief that, despite its many mercenarial aspects, sports has an intrinsic value in and of itself. While I freely admit that winning is both important and generally more fun than its

alternative I also feel that sports most important aspect is its entertainment value. Sport, at its most fundamental level, is entertainment. People attend sporting event in order to be entertained.

At first glance it may appear that I am arguing from cross-purposes since the NHL's 16 team playoffs allows that many teams the chance to win, thus supporting the 'winning is everything' hypothesis. However, if we accept the view of the playoffs as a 'second season' to be accurate and not just a cliché we can successfully refute this argument. In many recreational leagues all teams make the playoffs. This would seem to indicate that the regular season of these leagues are totally devoid of meaning. If so, then why do they bother? Why not simply have a season long playoff? The reason is because at this level it is understood that the purpose of the sport is enjoyment. Therefore, the maximum possible number of teams are allowed into the playoffs because this in turn maximizes enjoyment. The same should be true for professional sports, with the bonus that now greater numbers of spectators are

included as recipients of this joy.

By and large I think that this principle is understood by most. It seems that the owners, players, and fans enjoy having a large playoff. The only real objection is from the media, who are supposedly acting in the interest of the fan. Well, I consider myself to be a 'true' fan, and the media definitely doesn't speak for me. As a result I am inclined to ask the media to abandon its role as protector of the game and start seriously questioning what aspects of sport actually need to be altered.

Hockey and basketball currently share very similar playoff formats, with football only marginally different. Baseball, however, is in a world of its won. Of 26 teams only four make it to post-season play. And yet, despite what I wrote above, I believe that baseball's playoffs should not be expanded. The reason is the sheer length of the regular season. To tack an eight or 16 team playoff system onto the end of a 162 game schedule would result in overkill. Baseball's enjoyment has traditionally been maximized by the length of its schedule as opposed to a playoff. Should that schedule be shortened then an expanded playoff would become appropriate. As it is, schedule's are now too long, with the seasonal aspects of sports being ignored. But the dangers of summer hockey and winter baseball should be countered by reducing the schedules, not the playoffs.

Campus recreation

The hockey season has once again come to an end. Both final games were well contested, even though there was some controversy with one teams even being in the final, which we will not name.

The competitive division final was played between the "Law Lords" and "Thunder Chickens". Even though the game was well publicized there were only about 40 fans out to watch. It was a very fast and exciting game with the "Thunder Chickens" scoring two goals in the first period to take a 2-0 lead. This did not stop the "Law Lords", who came from behind to score six unanswered goals to win the competitive division championship by a score of 6-2.

In the recreation division final, the "Harrington Raiders" went up against the "Forestry Skidders". There were 75 fans on hand to watch this exciting final game. With most of the crowd behind the "Forestry" team, the Raiders managed to hold off the Skidders in a well contested match (5-2).

I would like to thank the referees as well as the AUC staff, who put up with a lot of S--- from some of the teams. Congratulations to the winners and the other teams who participated in intramural hockey.

Thank you

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 - André Malraux

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