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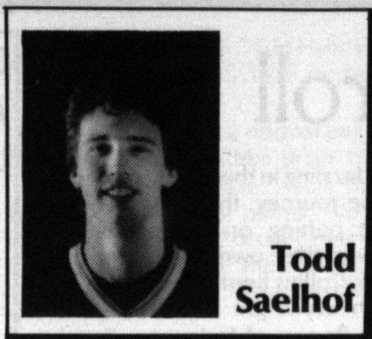
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Todd Saelhof

A friend of mine gave me an idea the other day about giving certain gifts to sports athletes and organizations in the Christmas spirit. So I took his advice and prepared special presents to those who have deserved recognition for their efforts in the last decade.

The first consideration to be made is that the "gifts" that I am giving are not the same as those "gifts" that NCAA football teams such as the Southern Methodist University Mustangs and the Houston Cougars provided their players.

In fact the first present to be offered is to those NCAA football teams who feel entire football programs must be jeopardized for the sake of attracting talented players. Let's give SMU and Houston professional status so that an all-Texan NFL division can be formed where the Dallas Cowboys could finish in any position but last place.

Staying with the amateur ranks, let's give NCAA basketball players access to more drugs so number one NBA picks may continue the Len Bias tradition of celebration following basketball draft day.

Turning to amateur hockey, let's give Don Cherry a bullhorn to get it through Brian Williams' head that the Canadian boys brawled with the Russians in the

1985 World Junior Championships because they were compelled to save face.

For Russian player Vladimir Kovin, free plastic surgery for Xmas would be handy after having part of Mark Messier's elbow tattooed on his face during the '84 Canada Cup Series.

For Messier's linemate, Glenn Anderson, let's give him the benefit of the doubt. Hockey is an emotional game and Anderson experienced two traumatic events prior to last season's 16 goal tragedy.

Continuing with the hockey gifts, let's give Don Koharski a big box of donuts for his efforts and achievement so far in this year's NHL campaign. I'm sure ex-Devil coach Jim Schoenfeld would assist in selecting the donuts.

For 1980 Olympic gold medal winner Jim Craig, a magic telephone booth can be given, so that his disappearing act from pro hockey can be perfected following the American goalie's early retirement from the NHL.

But for American boxer Todd Foster and other cheated combatants, one free round in the boxing ring with Korean boxing officials would be appropriate considering judging antics during the '88 Seoul Olympics.

Further political implications shape presents to those athletes who were cheated out of years of hard work when governments boycotted the '80 and '84 Olympics. Gold medals should be awarded to each and every one of them.

To the gridiron now, where a Christmas gift of another camera with a different angle to ABC so

that the Lawrence Taylor hit on Washington Redskin quarterback Joe Theismann can be replayed a dozen more times.

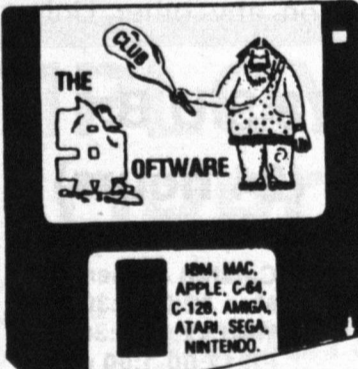
Let's give the NFL a hand for having purchased the USFL when they did. In these times of dramatic inflation, the NFL might have had to shell out \$1.25 for the hapless league, instead of just a looney.

Let's give transplanted wide receiver Fred Biletnikoff a paint roller so that the application of stickum can be made much easier. Biletnikoff deserves another present because of his inability to comprehend the CFL rule book. Let's offer Freddy a new quarterback who will hit him on the numbers, or at least within three feet of his stickum covered body. Prolific Los Angeles Rams' passer Vince Ferragamo proved his inept passing ability as a member of the Montreal Alouettes.

Sticking to the CFL (no pun intended Freddy!), let's give the province of Saskatchewan another major league franchise, so they don't have to wait another 23 years to celebrate a victorious team. Let's give Pete Rose 1000-1 odds of Saskatchewan ever attaining that other pro sports franchise.

For Bill Buckner, a gold card membership to Spa Lady would come in handy. A daily dosage of deep knee bends could prevent him from missing the next World Series ball that dribbles through his legs.

To end on a slightly more serious tone, let's give baseball owners a manhole cover to cover the deep hole already dug with respect to outrageous financial gifts given to the players.



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


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