

Has Athletics learned from their mistakes in their first year on the job? — page 12.

Sports

The UofA Rugby Club fared well in Victoria against the American champs — page 13.

Spring has sprung — Play Ball!!

by Pat Maguire

Early this week the sun shone, the snow melted and my glands, mutated by the winter television radiation, released spring fever hormones into my clogging arteries.

My apartment is 15 floors up and faces west, so the mid-afternoon sun drew me to my window sill. I sat up there holding a cold beer in my hand and looked over at Newton Place hoping to see my neighbours' copulatory acts, when this sickness grabbed ahold.

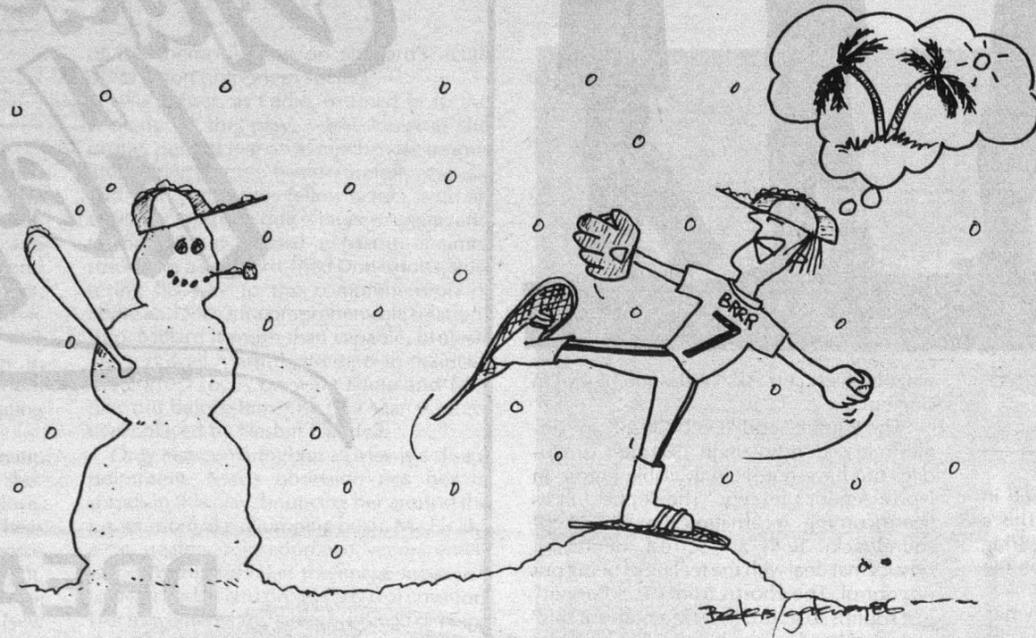
Spring fever grabs different people in different ways. For me is inspiring.

My neighbours seemed to have libido troubles that afternoon, so I turned my attention elsewhere. Down along the tree-lined avenue, people were enjoying a snowball fight. It was the perfect day for this activity and the romanticism of the scene was only diminished by a girl in tight jeans dampened by her opponents' projectiles.

She bent over and molded the perfect snowball. She faced the villain, nodded her head and delivered. There was something very familiar here. The ball hit her opponent... well, below the belt — in the privates?

No, in the STRIKE ZONE!! Yes folks, it is spring training season.

My journalistic inclinations



abounded. I ran to my editor. He sat on his platform, raised like a judge, yet asleep.

"Sir?" I said.

"What the hell do you want Maguire?" he peered down.

"Well, sir, it is spring, sir."

"I am a busy person, get to it," he

sneered at me.

I took a breath and blurted it out. "I want to do a story on spring training. It's baseball season sir, and I want the Gateway to send me to Florida."

"Florida?"

"Yeah, last week we carried some

girls' story from Hong Kong."

"Those damn feminists." Sports-writers seem to have a surplus of male hormones.

"So, can I go?"

"The feminist got to go to Hong Kong, huh?"

"Yeah." My editor's brain clicked

into gear.

You could see the strain.

"No, you can't go, but make it up. Say you went and file reports."

"But, sir, —"

"Lie, and don't tell anybody. Get out of here, you have a plane to catch."

My editor went back to sleep. I still had questions to ask. What about an expense account? Can I take the girl in the wet jeans to keep me inspired? I guess I can do what I want if it is all make-believe.

So there I stood looking up at my editor's nostrils resonating his glottal cacophony. I had my suntan lotion, a cooler, my in-flight entertainment (those silly slates that you draw on with a stick and then rip the plastic up to erase your efforts), and my press material: a silly slate with a stick and removable plastic to erase your efforts.

Instead of Florida, I'll report on spring training from the 15th floor while enjoying the Canadian sun from my window sill. Instead of watching tanned American flesh (my editor will love that line), I have to continue observing the bedroom habits of my neighbours in the highrise across the street.

Next week: Pat Maguire does in-depth reporting on the drug problems of baseball players (and media) direct from West Palm Beach, Florida (sort of).

Not just another guilt-a-thon

by Tim Enger

OK, let's have a show of hands. How many people out there know that the Bears won the National Hockey Championship last Sunday? That few, huh?

It's scary when you think about

it. Here is a campus of 25,000 people and most of them don't even know that the hockey championships were held here, let alone that the Bears won. What's even more frightening is the fact that only 5% of the student body cared enough

to attend the event.

Now before you put this article down thinking that it is just another why-aren't-you-coming-out-to-the-games-and-showing-some-school-spirit-you-bozos-guilt-a-thon, think again. I'm merely trying to figure out why university sports, as a whole, are so unappealing to the general public.

"It really baffles us why we didn't sell out at least the final game of the national tournament," said Director of Men's Athletics, Jim Donlevy. "We know that university sports, especially hockey, is a very marketable product. We also know that there is a market out there for it. We just haven't been able to put the two together as yet."

In the Monday, March 24th edition of the *Edmonton Sun*, sports columnist Terry Jones called the entire National Tournament "a joke". He pointed the finger at the marketing aspect of it. In his words, "The people who promote — to use the term loosely — sport at the University of Alberta couldn't organize a one-man parade..." Whoa, big guy! Take a downer. It wasn't that bad.

I guess what he's trying to say is

that the games just didn't have the splash and dash that would make the people want to come. It's true, there wasn't a lazer show between periods, but the games themselves were some of the best played this year at any level.

So, what do you attend games for? To see two teams play hockey or to watch the sideline entertainment?

Another article that talked about fan support on that Monday was Cam Cole's column in the *Journal*. In it he reminisces about the National Championship of 1975. That year it was also held in Edmonton and Varsity Arena was packed to the rafters with rowdy fans clapping along to Rick Leblanc's rendition of "Bennie and the Jets."

His point? He is saying that fan support for the Bears sure has changed since '75. True Cam, but guys weren't spiking their hair and wearing earrings back in '75 either.

To Cole's credit, he admits to having no answers to the U of A's dilemma.

"One of the problems we also have had to face is the students get in for free deal that we had last year," added Donlevy. "Once they

figured out that they didn't have to pay, most of them got it into their heads that it was worthless and didn't come anymore."

"Look, we'll be the first to admit that we made some mistakes with the hockey finals, but if we didn't feel it was worthwhile we wouldn't have done it in the first place. And we'll keep doing it because we believe that the hockey finals deserve a permanent home (like the football championship in Toronto). And what better place than Edmonton."

The funny thing is that, lost in all of this talk about fan apathy, were three of the finer games ever played in this city.

Lack of fans really didn't bother the teams who were busy trying to win a national championship. Given that, they went out and performed superbly, proving that university sports are indeed exciting and interesting.

So what is it? There isn't one reason why people stay away, there are several. But it's hard to understand why people don't beat down the doors to watch the finals of the sport that's nearest and dearest in our hearts. Nevertheless, they don't, and it's getting harder and harder to explain why.

"We realize that Rome wasn't built in a day," said Donlevy, "most of us in the Athletic Department are rookies at our jobs, but we're willing to put in the time and work towards our main objective. That is, selling out the Coliseum for the final game of the national finals of hockey regardless of who's in it."

And so, as the sun sets on another year of university athletics, one question remains: Is this band of eternal optimists from the Athletic Department flogging a dead horse in trying to gain fan support, or is there some hope yet?

Tune in next year.

the peoples pub

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