



Eric Baich

What makes a good sports fan? Qualities such as loyalty, enthusiasm, optimism and understanding come to mind. If you looked up any of these terms in the dictionary you'd find the logo of the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

I only spent two years in Saskatchewan, but it was long enough to turn my blood from red to green. Those games at Taylor Field were nuts. People went crazy at the good plays, oohed at the bad ones, but never did they lose the spirit. It is that spirit which makes Rider fans unique. In every stadium across the country the Rider fans are easily seen... and heard.

Every year here in Edmonton, armed with our green jerseys and enthusiasm we show our Rider Pride and venture to Commonwealth Stadium for our battle against the Eskimos. No matter the outcome, we too never lost the spirit (and always needing a box of cough drops to restore feeling back to our throats).

Last year a bunch of us were cheering throughout an enter-

taining see-saw battle. In the final minutes the Eks put it away. Then, and for the first time, these guys behind us started cheering and chanting. They sit on their hands all game until they're assured of a win and then they cheer. They love the Eks now, but what if they lost? You'd no doubt hear swearing at the "losers" on the field. It

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seems there are too many of these fair weather fans around today. People only like winners and cannot tolerate losing. How many so-called Blue Jay fans from last year jumped ship because the team this year struggled? How many Oiler fans will stay loyal if the team isn't as dominant as they once were?

There's a major issue that these people miss. The true nature of sport is the expression of "ALL" emotion. You're glad, sad, excited, frustrated, angry,

and relieved. If you only focus on the winning, you lose half of what makes sport so great. It's the dealing with adversity that makes strong athletes. When the Oilers won the first cup, it was so much sweeter because they beat the Islanders who handled the Oilers so easily the year before. The cup became so much more than if they had just won it the first time. Why? Because they battled back and overcame adversity. You must know how to lose before you can really appreciate winning. Being a fan uses the same idea. The idea of believing in a team that captures your spirit and sticking with them through the good and bad.

A lot of people could learn from Rider fans. Not many sport organizations would have survived being out of the playoffs for 11 years. The Riders have and much of the credit has to be given to the fans who always believed in them and kept the spirit alive.

This year again the Riders have the spirit, but now it has spread to the field. We have a contender. With a record of 7-4 they're on target for the playoffs. Sure there are a lot of bandwagon jumpers this year who cheer for any team that wins, but it's nice to see the team win for the other fans. Not for the ones who are back, but for the fans who were always there.

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