

Hold on to your hats for Oilers hat-trick year

by Mark Spector

The press release read as follows: "The Edmonton Oilers have launched what might prove to be the largest and most visible sports promotion in history." P.R. man Bill Tuele likened it to the white towel craze that led the underdog Vancouver Canucks into the Stanley Cup against the New York Islanders.

But instead of towels, Oiler fans will be wearing hats.

It may not be quite that big, but the Edmonton Oilers marketing division has perhaps hit on the right nerve of the Edmonton hockey fan. And as complacency sets in

amongst the citizens of the city of champions, perhaps they are moving at exactly the right moment.

"There's only 17,000 people that come to the games," said Oiler Promotions manager Mike Brennan, "what about the Oiler fans that are all over the city? The whole idea is to get everybody involved in our drive to the Stanley Cup."

It's called Hatrick Fever, and it's an idea that other promoters (like the U of A Athletics dept) would love to have thought of.

"We wanted to do something about what we felt was a blase attitude that the city had developed

towards the Oilers playoff drive," said Tuele, and even for as passive a bunch as the Coliseum troupe, wearing a hat to the game is not too tall an order.

The drive is mainly aimed at the city as a whole, though. In fact, Mayor Decore was at Molson House on Monday to declare tomorrow "Official Hatrick Day in Edmonton". And although it remains to be seen whether or not

the hat craze will catch on in the workplace, as the Oilers would like it to, it should definitely make a difference in the atmosphere at the arena. Especially in those early play-off rounds.

And it will sure be fun when the final goal of a hatrick enters the net, won't it?

In the Crease — Charlie Huddy will be lost to the Oilers for ten days

with a broken finger. Farm hand **Jeff Buekeboom** will come up from Nova Scotia along with goalie **Ron Low**... If you're betting, put your money on the Oilers to take their third consecutive Stanley Cup. Count on Philadelphia to represent the Wales Conference, but the Oilers will make short work of the boys from Broad Street, winning the series, once again, in five games, easily.



Photo Rob Schmidt

Oilers' Grant Fuhr kicks out a shot. The Gateway predicts Edmonton to kick as well, over the Flyers in the Stanley Cup, to complete their Hatrick Fever.

The rites of spring part two

Gateway reporter Pat Maguire, having convinced his editor to send him to Florida for spring training, files his final report from the opening game of the 1986 season.

by Pat Maguire

Cincinnati (sort of) — It has been a long adventure for your roving reporter. Florida has treated me well and I've met some great people. Interstate sixty-something, I learned, leads right to the Everglades, where I met a Haitian voodoo queen feeding alligators parts of J.C. Duvalier's friends.

My mission, however, was to report on baseball. I needed somebody with connections who could show me the ropes, and I found my tour guide in a back alley, at midnight, behind a bar called Seedy's. Crazy Larry Santos was a friendly Columbian who said he could introduce me to all the players. He knew lots of them — it seems he sells laundry detergent to a lot of the big names. In fact, that is what he was

doing behind the bar that night.

There is more money in detergent than I thought.

I watched many games with Crazy Larry. I enjoyed my beer and hot dogs sitting in the sun watching the Grand Old Game. Larry sat and smiled. He smiled, but he did not seem to enjoy or appreciate the games. Each game, with its own pace, soothes the mind. A winter in Edmonton creates a condition that baseball can cure.

The sun, the beer and hot dogs, the strategy, and the athletic prowess creat an elixir that would make a rich man out of the person who could bottle it.

Baseball games are like snowflakes — from a distance they all look alike, but in reality no two are the same.

The more games you watch, the more you enjoy them. You can develop a deeper understanding for the strategy and the players' effort. The investment of the first

100 or so games pays off when you get a true feel for baseball's intricacies.

Crazy Larry said that business was down. This Pete guy whose last name seemed unpronounceable, but was always preceded by f---in, was killing business. Larry kept smiling, but complained that Pete was killing the detergent business by making players urinate into bottles.

By the end of spring training, the Dodgers, Kansas City, and the Mets looked to be the early favourites. The AL East baffles the best of futurists. The only thing to be said about that division is that it certainly gives merit to the idea of rearranging the playoff structure. Detroit, Toronto, the Yankees, and Baltimore should all deserve to be in the playoffs come October.

It was a sad night, the last evening in Florida. Crazy Larry and I attended many parties. The detergent business was falling apart and all the players we talked to seemed to be looking over their shoulders. Larry said the heat must be on. I told him he could come to Edmonton where it was cooler, but he declined mumbling something about the border. He was going to go back to Columbia the next day and for a parting gift gave me some detergent and 26 screaming-orgasms-on-the-beach (a horrendous drink to be consumed in one gulp).

The flight into Cincinnati was rough. The 26 screaming-orgasms-on-the-beach seemed to have been fruitful and multiplied, as they now filled up four of those economy-sized barf bags you find in the pages that tell you how the hell to get out of a plane if you sit beside a guy named Mohammar.

The baseball season always opens in Cincinnati for some reason. My theory concerns the smell off the river that gives Riverfront Stadium its name. All of Ohio must do their bodily functions in that river and the baseball gods that be figure that because the first game stinks so terribly, the season can only get better.

Actually, Cincinnati was home to the first ever professional baseball team, thus the traditional opening day game.

I sat in the press box, looking down at the greatest passtime not performed in a bedroom. Steve Carlton was starting for the Phillies and Mario Soto was to be the Reds' reply. The stands were filled. Little Pete was there to watch his dad, and the world was ready for summer.

Just then two men in dark suits walked up to me. "FBI," said the one.

"Gateway", I replied.

"Do you know this man?" It was Crazy Larry. He was wearing stripes and had a number below his profile. It looked like Crazy Larry was not to be the only one in trouble with the law that day.

It seems that is illegal to converse with struggling Columbian businessmen. The way I see it, it is all this Pete-guy's fault. Players shouldn't have to urinate into erlenmyer flasks. Not only is it har to aim into that small neck, but it hurts the small businessman.

From Cincinnati, I'm Pat Maguire, reporting for *The Gateway*.

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