

Dollar Dome caters to a few

by Brian Lennox

In June of this year the city of Toronto opened a new sporting facility named the SkyDome. Exhibition stadium had become outdated in comparison to other stadiums in North America. The new SkyDome is equipped with a state-of-the-art retractable roof for their main tenants the Toronto Blue Jays baseball club. With the roof the stadium officials can accommodate hockey, basketball, tennis, and many other events.

I had an opportunity to see the Jays play twice in the SkyDome in June. The stadium is very impressive as it sits under the CN tower. There are few bad seats in

the SkyDome. There are plenty of washrooms in the stadium so no fan should have an agonizing wait in line. However, the SkyDome has some disturbing attributes.

There has been, in recent years, a trend for cities to build sporting facilities which cater to the rich and the SkyDome seems to be following this example. The Sky boxes which are located on the second tier cost over \$250,000 per year. A hotel is located in one section of the stadium. These rooms cost approximately \$1,000 per night. There is also a bar and buffet service which are very expensive. The cost of these facilities is so high that only corpora-

tions can afford these luxuries. The stadium is then seemingly geared to the upper class.

This is not an isolated example, though, as the wave of the future in sports is to take care of big business. Recently, Arthur Griffiths, a part owner of the Vancouver Canucks in the NHL stated that special executive boxes are the revenue that professional teams are looking for. The objective for professional teams in North America is, then, to cater to the upper class. Their contribution seems to be far more important. One cannot fault professional sports for making a profit but there are questions

about their motives.

This is not a new phenomenon; the Romans once had the same idea. Their stadiums were sectioned off in order that the rich could sit away from the rest of the crowd. However, the trend that is developing now is disturbing because the major professional team sports were once thought to be an escape for the middle class. Baseball, football, basketball, and hockey have mass appeal. To cater to a small population who possess wealth would be to the detriment of these sports and, more importantly, alienate the mass audience who have always supported these sports.

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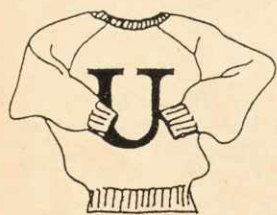
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