

LETTERS

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Re: To flash or not to flash?

To the Editor

In regards to the above-named article, I think by appreciating my family's involvement in the trucking industry, I may be more aware of the four ways gesture. In my experiences, however, the gesture is failing because fewer than half of the trucks I endow with this gesture return the favor leading me to believe that they do not understand the gesture or

worse, they don't appreciate it. Most of the older driver's I encounter reciprocate, the younger ones, however do not. It was my belief that truckers of every way, shape, form and country share this gesture but with each passing year I have seen it worsen. I hope it is only my experience and no one else's.

Yours Sincerely
George Dear

LOOKING BACK

By: Scott Brooks



Sports have always been a part of high school life. Here is the Acton High track team from 1966/67. - Photo Credit: Acton High School/ Brooks Collection

SPORTS TALK

What hope for Russia?

Nil—just joking. The story of the World Cup is never complete without the host country. On a side note, Canada, USA and Mexico have put in a joint bid to host the 2026 edition of the competition. So, for long suffering soccer fans from the "True North" there may be a world cup game coming to a city near you in eight years.

Back to Russia. It must be exciting times in the world's largest country at the moment. Apart from the tremendous opportunity of hosting the most watched sporting event in the world with all the attention and economic benefits/challenges, one of their best-known citizens, Alex Ovechkin, is leading the Washington Capitals in the Stanley Cup finals against the Las Vegas Golden Knights.

That's about how far the good news goes for Russian sports, especially soccer at the present time. Their national team is currently ranked 66 in the world and has only won one of their last six first class international games. The challenge with host countries—and defending champions until recently—is that they do not play any competitive games of significance before the tournament. They qualify automatically as hosts

By
Michael Oke

and do not go through the demands and rigors of fighting for critical points like all other participating countries do. While there is little anyone can do about this, it impacts the overall quality of the squad as every game isn't a "do or die" affair. The Russian team has lost friendly—or exhibition—games against Brazil, France and most recently Austria.

The only silver lining is that they are one of the seeded teams in their Group—Group A—and are billed to take on Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Uruguay, with first game coming up just after the opening ceremony on Thursday, June 14.

It hasn't always been this gloomy for the Russians, they came third at the Euros in 2008, and prior to 1992 when they played internationally under the Soviet Union, they produced some stellar performances and players including Lev Yashin, widely regarded as probably the greatest goal keepers in the history of the sport. It always helps the competition if the host nation is able to make it to the later stages of the event, so the home-based fans remain engaged.

With home crowd support, their chances are significantly better than nil.

JUST A THOUGHT

Place your bets



By
Trish Bell

Fresh cut grass, mosquitos and a weather forecast that looks like it's decided by the whim of a mad yo-yo artist... ah, June is here. Be it soccer, baseball, track or one of the other thousands of activities, June is the unofficial line in the sand, where the activities of the school year—hockey, dance, youth clubs, school—come to a screeching halt so that we can participate in new events like ball hockey, hockey camp, and...summer school? Wait, did I mention hockey? In all seriousness, while all events have their ideal season, no one got to the NHL—or CWHL for that matter—by only playing when the weather was cold. For that level of play it takes almost obsession-like commitment and a willingness to eat, breath and sleep the craft. So, there is a part of me, during this election season, that wonders why we put such effort into creating the next Sidney Crosby, and not the next John F. Kennedy; why we celebrate the Michael Jordans and Tiger Woods but insult the Malcolm Turnbulls and Angela Merkels. We complain about the quality of our choices on the ballot, forgetting that we need someone to run. If we want a better outcome on election day, perhaps we need to treat politics more like a sport.

Despite the emotion and rhetoric that flows around all contests—and trust me politics is a contest—elections are not the same as our most acclaimed sporting competitions. First, elections are not just the accumulation of months of on-the-field performance, battling through injuries and exhaustion to see if you have what it takes to

get to the end and hoist that Stanley Cup—I mean Queen's Park pass—high into the air. No, elections are more like all that plus the draft, halftime show and a morality test all rolled into one. It is the ultimate endurance event, both physically and psychologically and at the end of this whirlwind battle, you will be known as a hero, a villain or more likely—both. Because unlike sports, politics is about juggling competing beliefs in an ever-changing world of demands. To put it into a sports context, it's like playing a combination of squash, football and cricket while simultaneously scuba diving, downhill skiing and parasailing in the deepest parts of the jungle with a Gaelic interrupter as your guide. The current system is almost exclusively a crap shoot of sorts where you can only hope the smiling face that leads the party into power will be leaning towards the beliefs you cherish and away from the things you don't. What's worse, the outcomes are bigger than bragging rights and renegotiated contracts. A decision in this arena affects all in the stadium and beyond. For a capitalist based society, a vote to consistently raise taxes is a sure-fire way to encourage businesses to pack up and leave. So, sure, we don't go around in our cheese-head hats tailgating before the big kick off, but we do wear our team's colours bright and bold, arguing

that our way is the only way to positive results. And like sports, many of us hitch our wagon based on where we grew up or for whom our dad cheered loudest. And that is the problem. The same begets the same. We want superstar leaders in a sport that is anything but super. And we are the first to yell foul for even the most minor infraction. I mean who would rather be sports icons Hayley Wickenheiser or Steve Nash, when you could be the forever hated politicians Stephen Harper or Mike Harris?

We all want the guy with the sweet smile and the sly words, telling us what we want to hear, not the coach on the sidelines who makes the tough mid-game play calls or the team owner who foots the bill. We forget that even with the best of intentions, these people are the stewards of situations that quite frankly find them neck deep in the perpetuating sewage of previous poor choices. Perhaps we could cut our future some slack and instead of thrusting those with any kind of leadership potential into jerseys and skates, we could encourage them to embrace Canadian history and law, economics and social policy, and expose them to the vastness of a world in constant change. Perhaps we could let these could-be leaders grow with ethics and without bias. And perhaps we could encourage the best of the best to take up politics with the pay and prestige befitting such an important office. After all, even sports franchises know, if you want a better batch of politician, you need to start with better dough.

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