

Grey Cup match the beginning of the end of two seasons: football and winter

We're having a Grey Cup party tomorrow, but the list of invitees will be restricted to those sharing our rather

unorthodox view of the boisterous and punishing game of football.

The first clue that those assembled don't fall into the category of hardened fans who abandon wife and family to worship the gods of the gridiron every autumn Sunday will be found in the brand names, and the modest quantity, of beer being consumed. Rather than the stuff brewed in million litre vats for those whose taste in the suds matches their choice of Sunday diversion, these labels will undoubtedly be those of companies still governed by the Bavarian Purity Law of 1516.

There will be no shouts of "Pound him," "Give em' the fore arm smash,"



From where I live

Bruce Stapley

or "Kick him through the goal posts of life," as we watch the Argos in one of their rare Grey Cup appearances. In fact, conversation will more likely than not stray regularly away from the

game to topics relating to Ontario's medical crisis and the troubles in Zaire, or the relaying of witty jokes heard in recent days.

That's because the underlying purpose of this little bash is to celebrate the first significant milestone in the long march towards spring, that being the conclusion of the Canadian Football League season. The next landmark is the Super Bowl some two months down the road. When that's behind us, we can finally say good riddance to pro football altogether and look ahead to the Stanley Cup playoffs, which, while interminable, serve as the link between late winter and early summer.

Those of us who get together to usher out the CFL campaign tomorrow are in agreement that, like all other sports where salaries rule, pro football has become a rich man's domain inhabited by individuals whose vocabularies and grasp of English grammar is in direct proportion to their runaway egos. Having covered the local sports beat for the better part of a decade, I am convinced of the pure excitement, thrills and sense of accomplishment to be found in one's own athletic back yard. Watching the Uxbridge Secondary School Tigers senior football team win its first ever Durham championship this fall was gripping, entertaining, and without cost for any fan who chose to follow the team. The Stouffville sports scene has provided similar highs throughout the years as students and true amateurs compete for bragging rights and personal fulfillment, not fat contracts and obscene endorsement cheques.

Granted, the good old Canadian Football League is on a different scale altogether than the NFL to the south of us. Part of the appeal of watching the Grey Cup each year is that you may be witnessing the last ever such event as the league totters ever closer to extinction. But money still talks in the Canadian game, and American hired gun Doug Flutie and his multi-million dollar salary is the reason the Argos are odds-on favorites to win it all tomorrow.

So, it's root root root for the home team, or at least the guys from the sprawling megalopolis just below us, as we gather in front of the tube for tomorrow's big game. The snacks will be tasty, the guacamole spicy, and the Caribbean posters will be in place on the back wall of the family room as always, serving as a reminder of the summer sun which will eventually return once the coming winter has chewed us up like a dog with a rawhide.

Arrrrrgos!

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