

Show you care Jays, or go perch elsewhere



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

So now the Toronto Blue Jays want me to help them "Bring It On!" In their latest attempt to shore up ticket sales that have been sagging ever since their glory day back in 1993, the blue birds are appealing to small town hacks like yours truly. Yes sir, this assortment of millionaires in play clothes, or at least the brewmeisters running the show, are looking to those of us whose job it is to report what's going on at the local arenas, high school gymnasiums and ball dia-

monds to carry their new message. And that message is, according to an elaborate folderful of glossy brochures, print outs and jazzy decals dropped off in my office mail box the other day, that this is a team of caring, community-minded athletes. They have decided that this is the fact to take if they are to win back a strong fan base with a renewed interest in the grand old game.

My personalized package, even included samples of the team's radio scripts designed to portray an image of folksy, aw shucks guys who have got nothing better to do during the off season than sit down and write cheesy poems.

Walt Whitman isn't about to be knocked off his perch by these jocks-turned-poets. You may have heard

them. "So when I'm at the plate and filled with doubt, I do my best to knock the mother out," writes one inspired Jay. How about this one: "Hello little Oriole, perched high upon a bough. Come out and play with your friend, the Blue Jay." This gem concludes with a less than endearing exhortation: "But don't slide into home, little fellow. Because I'll knock the air right out of your lungs."



Here's a sport that has gone to such great lengths to alienate people, going so far as to pull the plug on the World Series a few seasons back.

And now they are trying to play the "we're just plain folks" card, complete with an attempt to bring on board small town sports scribes in an effort to sell their overpriced product.

Big league baseball? Family fun? What do you mean you're not willing to shell out a hundred bucks for half decent tickets to take your kids to a game, not to mention the high priced but chintzy SkyDome food, the parking and traffic hassles, and the fact that most of the game is spent sitting around watching these overpaid jocks spit and scratch themselves?

A friend of mine, a trained medical professional trying to survive, let alone flourish in these days of increased operating costs and government-imposed income ceilings, has long questioned the values of a society willing to lavish such rich rewards on pro athletes whose contribution to the common good is so minimal. I've come to agree with him.

Anyway, because I'm fair, here's what I'm going to do. If the Blue Jays are serious about their grandiose claims of being community minded and caring, I'm going to issue an invitation right here for them to send a delegation of players and officials to take part at an upcoming local event such as Stouffville's Strawberry Festival, or Uxbridge's Art in the Park. Hey, anyone who can produce such soothing poetry must have an appreciation of things artistic, right? Maybe they could sell raffle tickets on a Roger Clemens jersey with the money going to the local hospital. Or, put on a clinic for local ball players, sit in the dunk tank, help out at a fundraising car wash for a local team. Then maybe we'll give them some ink.

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