

SPORTS

Armchair quarterbacks offer assist

BY FRED SIMPSON
Special

The Toronto Argonauts are alive and well and living it up in Richmond Hill.

At least in the eyes of the Friends of the Argonauts fan club, which convened Saturday for its annual corn roast in the spacious back yard of Richmond Hill resident Doug Browne.

"We started holding these get-togethers nine years ago and it has just kept growing," said club president Lorri Bursey of Markham. The club has swelled from an initial membership of 25 to 350 people from all over the GTA.

It was an especially upbeat occasion Saturday as about 200 Argo supporters dropped in for an afternoon of fun and a chance to gorge themselves on hot dogs and corn, basking in the afterglow of a victory over the Saskatchewan Roughriders the previous night.

A long association with the Canadian Football League spurred Ms Bursey and her partner and fellow Argo fan Ron Keffer to form the club. She concedes it was tough sledding in the early years.

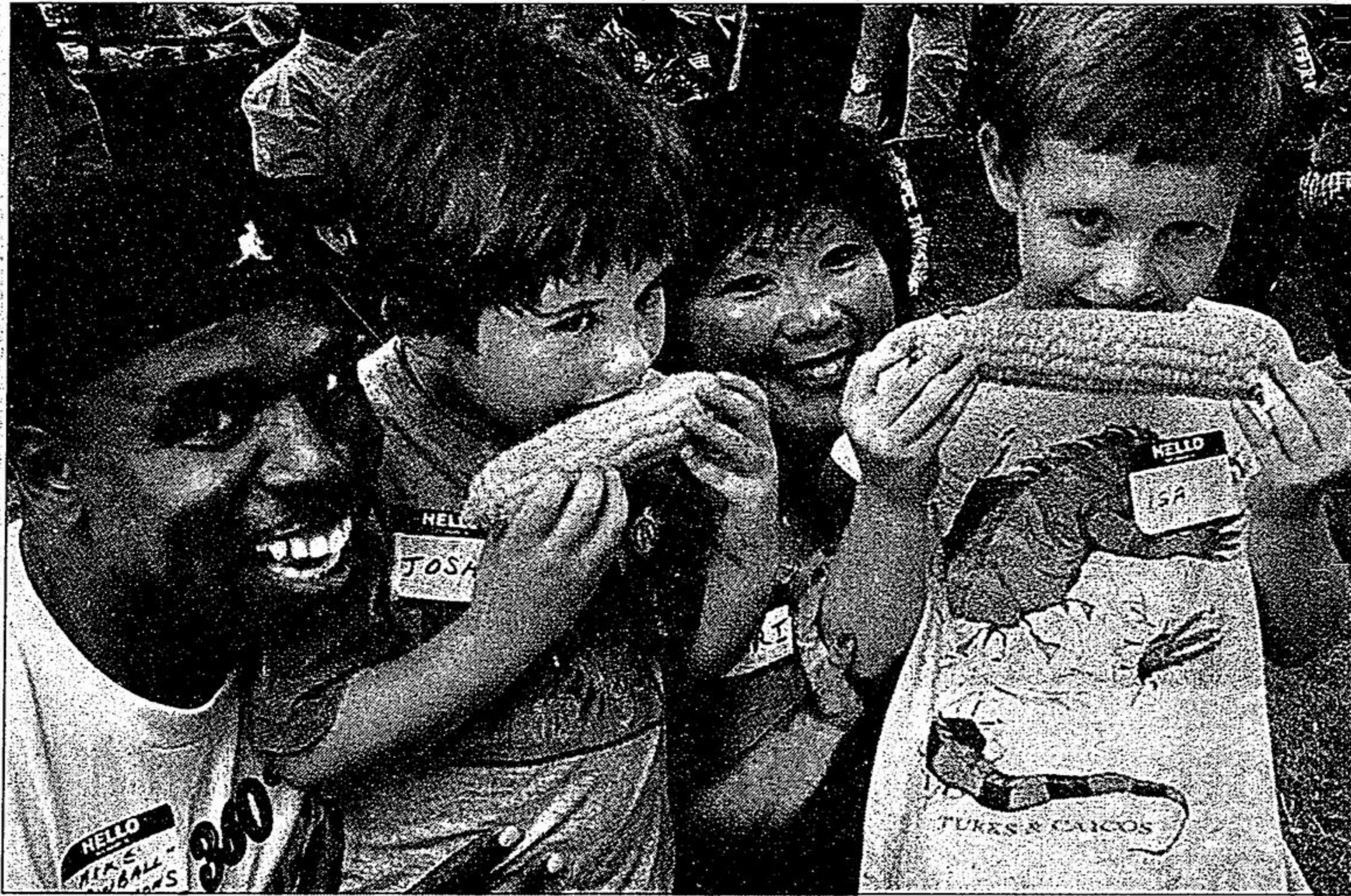
"Actually, the Argos didn't pay much attention to us in the first few years. I think they thought we were just a bunch of yahoos."

That all changed as the players "are very appreciative of our support", she said.

"I originally got involved because of a thorough love for the CFL, but especially the Toronto Argonauts," said Mr. Keffer, who helped launch the corn roasts, proceeds of which go to charity.

"It doesn't matter to us how well or how poorly the team does. We simply like to be part of them to have fun and to be very supportive."

A longtime Newmarket resident now living in Markham, Mr. Keffer also said the annual corn roast was "designed to have the kids come out and meet the players in a relaxed atmosphere and



PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Mike "Pinball" Clemons (left) and Lorri Bursey, president of Friends of the Argonauts, party with cob-munching Josh Balogh (left) and Isa Sovereign-Fox during the fan club's ninth annual charity corn roast.

have a good time."

He estimated this year's event raised more than \$5,000 for charity.

But the big attraction for fans is a chance to meet and mingle with their heroes. Among the Argos on hand last weekend were president Michael "Pinball" Clemons, Noel Prefontaine, Derrell Mitchell, Shawn Daniels, Marcello Simmons, Ted Alford, Ricky Givens, Joe Montford, Stanley Jackson, Matt McKnight and Chuck Walsh.

"It's unbelievable the support these people have given us," said seven-year Argo veteran Adrien Smith. "I've been coming to these get-togethers for the last few years and enjoying every bit of it."

Like his teammates, Mr. Smith was particularly upbeat on this sunny afternoon following the much-needed Argo victory, which

vaulted the club into a tie for second in the East Conference.

"The second half of the season is what counts," Mr. Smith said. "As long as you get to the playoffs you never know what's going to happen. Miracles do happen."

If so, maybe Argos fan club members will get an assist for helping their favourite team pull it off.

"I've always been a CFL and Argo football follower for years," said Ms Bursey, a veteran of 23 Grey Cups. "This day is for the players and they enjoy the casual atmosphere of a corn roast. It's especially enjoyable when you have just come off a win."

"We also hold a barbecue for the players every Labour Day weekend after their practice in preparation for the annual game against Hamilton."

Looking on approvingly at

Saturday's bunfest was the host, Mr. Browne.

"I've been attending the corn roasts for several years and this is the second year it has been held at my place. I've been an Argo fan going back to the days of Dick Shatto and Nobby Wirkowski."

"The CFL is our game and all of us are proud to be able to support the Argos and help charity at the same time."

"I hope to be holding these corn roasts at my place for at least another nine years."

Hopes for an Argo comeback were sky-high this Saturday afternoon.

"We are blessed to be in a division where there is really only one powerhouse," said Ms Bursey, crossing her fingers.

"We're proud of the Argos and I really feel they have the ability and talent to get to the playoffs."



Roger Varley

Been There, Done That Blue yonder not as wild as advertised

All car drivers should take
a few flying lessons

A small Cessna 150 two-seater aircraft rolled down the Buttonville Airport runway, gathering speed as the pilot gave it full throttle. Pulling back on the control wheel, the pilot pointed the nose upward and the plane lifted off the ground, climbing above the roaring Hwy. 404 traffic.

A perfect takeoff — almost.

As the pilot, my hands were wrapped around the controls in a death grip and we were climbing at too steep an angle.

Toronto Airways flying instructor Eva Swaneveld calmly talked me into relaxing my grip, explaining the first two fingers and thumb of one hand are all that are needed for a pilot to "feel" the aircraft. Sound advice, no doubt, but since this was my first time in an airplane carrying fewer than 300-odd other people, my reflexes were telling me to hang on tightly.

With constant reassurances from Ms Swaneveld, however, I relaxed and headed north toward Lake Wilcox, only to resume my death grip when she told me to "watch for traffic". The thought of having to watch for traffic in the sky had never occurred to me.

Toronto Airways, located at Canada's

See FLYING, page 26.

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