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Kampus Koncern

by joel hansen

Dialectic of Jockism

It probably isn't in vogue to criticise varsity sports at U.P.E.I.; especially when our beloved Football Panthers are having the best season in their short history. But I do not intend to take aim at the players, coaches managers, etc., of the various varsity teams, I instead want to talk about the relevancy of varsity athletics to people, to the majority of people at U.P.E.I. and the exact place for varsity athletics in a campus community.

For the purpose of common amusement I will call this escapade the "dialectic of Jockism". For indeed even in the sport world issues surface; issues concerning the meaning of competition; and professionalism in sports for example! It is with great awe that I watched the various players associations formed in the major leagues. With the unionization of players a new era of professionalism has dawned.

Has any one noticed in the last few years that the aggressiveness of most major league, (especially NFL) associations has been toned down to prevent serious injury to a player so that his career will not be cut short of its potential? This, I think, is a direct result of the formation of player's associations. It has fostered a sense of comradeship among the players on and off the field.

Off the field the associations protect the player from being "ripped-off" by big management (and as was witnessed in the Andrews case with Charles Finlay), on the field it promotes the looking beyond of frantic, insane competition, to the development of the art of sport. After all, a player can expect to play for several teams in his career, making the long term outlook much more important than the short run view. This means increased emphasis on player development than on strict "win at any cost" thinking. In other words, the professionals are finally becoming pro-

fessionals.

What about the varsity level? Well, first off, a glaring minus at the university level is the lack of players associations in the various leagues. Of course, one can argue the ridiculousness of players associations at university because no contracts are signed. But does not this shade the issue? It is common knowledge that most hockey and football players get some kind of remuneration be it in the form of reduced tuition fees or under the table direct cash hand outs, even though this is illegal in Canada.

I personally am in support of giving athletic scholarships to exceptional students. Why?

Because professional sports has become a great market for giving young people a chance at a very interesting and worthwhile life. Probably more interesting than an academic degree would or could ever give them!

So here is where players associations at the university level would be very useful! It is up, then, to the players themselves to rectify the situation. If the players think they are being used or "ripped-off" by the university system then they must organize to fight back. Left unto themselves, the individual player stands no chance, but working as a collectivity the players can wield considerable power.

However, another possibility looms on the horizon! How much of a future does varsity sports have? Surely the dramatic increase in professionally organised leagues and form systems are drawing the person who is interested in a career in sport. There are other

problems facing varsity sport as well; for example, at present there are quite a few students and administrators in North America who are questioning the need for varsity sport at all at the university level! They claim that it is taking money from them that they cannot afford to

pay. And if they have to pay the athletic fees, it should be concentrated on intra-mural activities not on varsity sport which involves a very small minority of the student population, and exists at great monetary expense. "The emphasis should be on student-participation not on student as spectator", they say.

Fundamentally, I agree with their objections; especially the one relating to student participation since most people on this campus are in pathetic physical condition. Somehow they think that drinking beer and standing on the edges of McAdam Field will keep them in good health. It's an obvious myth.

There are two sides to any dialectic however! Many students who support varsity sport argue that big league intra-collegiate competition promotes a sense of campus purpose and comradeship as they rally around their favourite teams "en masse". I would also agree with this view as well. U.P.E.I. is slack enough, socially speaking, already; take away those Saturday football games, Sunday hockey games and stormy Monday basketball games and this place would be a drag.

And so the struggle continues. The questions must be answered. Should campuses support varsity athletics or should the money and time spent in developing the special teams be spent on a wider group of athletes namely the intra-mural and subsidiary athletic endeavors?

What is your view? I, as well as the Cadre, would like response from the community on this subject. It concerns your money therefore your well being, according to the capitalist values which most students are dominated by. And to those that participate at the inter-collegiate level a special call for response goes out; after all it is you directly on whom we are passing judgement.