

Sports

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Local 517

CFL heads south

by DOUG SMITH

PORTLAND, Ore. (CP) — The CFL's great expansion experiment, where three-down football heads south of the 49th parallel in search of fame and fortune, kicked off in earnest Wednesday afternoon.

Copies of First and 10 From The Fifty-Five — a sort of primer explaining rouges, 12 men on a 65-yard wide field and a mass of motion in the offensive backfield — greeted reporters, corporate sponsors and interested spectators as the Toronto Argonauts and Calgary Stampeders took to the practice field at Civic Stadium to get ready for tonight's exhibition game.

"We'll have some fun, it'll be second only to their own game — NBA basketball," said Toronto running back Mike (Pinball) Clemons, basking in the 33 C heat which has enveloped this normally wet and warm city of 550,000.

"People are going to see some wide open, run-and-gun, high-scoring football."

Just how many people see the game — the first CFL exhibition game outside Canada since 1958 — is the key question organizers and league officials want answered.

Commissioner Larry Smith, completing round after round after round of interviews explaining the quirks of the Canadian version of football, said tonight's game (TSN, 10:30 p.m. EDT) is being viewed as a serious experiment at the league level.

"We've had some very serious discussions with the people here and now that we've been dancing for a while, we have to see if we want to consummate the relationship," he said.

"If we get 17,000 or 18,000 and a really good game, we'll be very, very happy."

The game's being played on a hybrid Canadian field. The 27,000 seat Civic Stadium is set up to accommodate the wider Canadian field (65 yards rather than 53 for NFL-style football) but it's only 100 yards wide long (110 is the CFL norm) and the end zones are 10 yards deep, as opposed to 20 in Canadian cities). However, the stadium could be adapted to full CFL size with little expense.

And, according to a senior official with Peter Jacobsen Productions (the firm staging the game), response to CFL football has been great.

"I think people want to see a team here," said Jim Etzel, a senior account executive with PJP. "The corporate response here has been phenomenal, I think the corporate community is very aware of the sports market this type of game could reach."

This isn't Portland's first blush with pro football. The late, unlamented World Football League and United States Football League each had franchises here.

Etzel said the CFL's background makes it attractive, despite the past failures.

"Why we think the CFL is a more impressive deal is it's a historical entity," he said. "It's going to be around for a while."

Kings hire new coach

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — The Los Angeles Kings called a news conference for noon today to announce the hiring of Barry Melrose as coach, as well as a front office reshuffling.

Melrose, who has coached Adirondack of the American Hockey League for three years, winning the AHL title this spring, replaces Tom Webster, who was fired May 4 after a turbulent season in which the Kings lost in the first round of the playoffs.

Reports Wednesday night also said general manager Rogie Vachon will become an assistant to owner Bruce McNall. Nick Beverley, now assistant general manager, will take Vachon's place.

Melrose, 35, had hoped to eventually succeed Brian Murray as coach of the Detroit Red Wings.

To lure Melrose away from the Detroit organization, the Kings are giving him a four-year contract worth about \$800,000.



Selects player of the game Raynan Johnson gets in the way of 86er midfielder Scott Macey.

Everybody wins at 86ers game

by ED MILLS
Citizen Staff

It was a unanimous decision — everybody won at Massey Place Stadium last night.

When it was over the score might have said the Vancouver 86ers 9, the Prince George Selects 0. But what it didn't say was what the fans, the players, coaches and countless kids were all saying — that the Air B.C. Challenge Cup gave the sellout crowd of 1,800 exactly what they wanted.

"The game was a good one, the crowd was a good one, I think everybody can go away happy with the night," said 86ers coach Bob Lenarduzzi, standing three deep in a crowd of kids patiently signing autographs after the game.

"Regardless of the score line, I think what we wanted to do is spread the word about soccer. Judging by the turnout, there's not a lot of preaching needed here," he said.

It was the same story from the man on the other side of the score.

"It's pretty obvious that the sport is alive and well in this town," said Selects coach Orlando Mauro. "Above all we wanted to be respectable, but I think the main purpose of the game was to promote soccer. I think the organizers and players on the field did that."

And that was an echo heard across the Stadium, which at halftime bore more of a resemblance to a huge family picnic rather than a sporting contest.

For the kids, many of them Prince George Youth Soccer Association players in uniform, the game was a chance to mix with legitimate soccer stars, have balls, shirts and programs willingly autographed and generally have a heyday running around the stadium.

For the serious soccer fan there was serious soccer, lots of goals and players from both sides chiding the refs, delivering solid tackles and making great saves.

For everyone, there was John Catliff twice demonstrating the acrobatic bicycle kick — amazing for a man his size. There was the dippy-doodling of Carl Valentine and a patented 25-metre blast Dale Mitchell rang off the crossbar.

For the Selects, an all-star squad made up of players from local teams, it was a first-hand chance to play against the best.

"They're fast, it's impossible to go one-on-one with them, you can see why they are the best in Canada," said Raynan Johnson, named the Selects player of the game.

As Johnson alluded to, the outcome of the game was the product of a mismatch, and the result not unexpected.

The 86ers were stronger, faster, more skilled, which is what they should be as professionals and the four-time defending national champs.

For their part, the Selects were on a par with the pros when it came to heart and desire, with Johnson and goaltender John Cote leading the way.

The fans cheered all the 86ers' goals and great plays, but reserved the biggest oohs and aahs for the few chances the locals had. The best of those came off the foot of Craig Christie, who hit the cross bar late in the second half, while Mick Kearns forced 86ers goalie Paul Dolan to make a diving save when he broke in one-on-one earlier in the half.

In the end it seemed the players enjoyed the fans support as much as the fans enjoyed watching them.

"Obviously we have a lot of fans around here, it makes you feel good and we appreciate their support," said veteran Dale Mitchell.

Mitchell, who is coming off an injury and made his first appearance in an 86ers' uniform this season last night — opened the scoring for the 86ers about 15 minutes into the game.

Jim Easton and Guido Titotto scored to give the 86ers a 3-0 lead at the half, which was more than respectable for Mauro and company.

The flood gates opened early in the second half with goals by Mark Karpun, Steve MacDonald, Catliff, Titotto again and two by Carlos Batista.

"Once they get on ya' they stomp on ya'" Mauro said. "But I like to think that we gave them a game, that they walked off the field and the fans left knowing they had a game with us."

Laumann will go to Games

TORONTO (CP) — Sculler Silken Laumann says she will definitely compete at the Summer Olympics.

"I'm confident that by the Barcelona Games, I'll be at the Olympic level," Laumann, who is recovering from a career-threatening leg injury, said Wednesday. "Whether I'll be a medalist or not, I don't know."

"I don't know what I'm capable of yet. I'll have to race myself and hope it's good enough to get me to the next stage."

Laumann, 27, leaves Tuesday for a training camp in France. She has spent the past two weeks regaining her rowing technique and gradually putting weight on a right leg that was smashed in a freak collision May 16.

Laumann was hurt in the warmup area of a course at Essen, Germany. A German men's pair, practicing starts, crashed into her scull. The wooden splashboard of the her boat was driven deep into her right leg and broke her tibia.

Laumann underwent four operations: to clean out wood fragments, to repair the bone, her calf muscle and some nerve damage, then a skin graft. She spent 10 days in hospital in Germany before continuing her recuperation in hospital in Victoria.

Doctors essentially ruled out the Barcelona Games and some doubted whether she would even row again. Laumann always left the door open for a return to the water and said only five days after the accident if a miracle were possible, she would compete.

"It's unexpected and wonderful news," Mark Lowry, general manager of Rowing Canada, said. "This is motivating for the entire team. We're very, very proud of

her and her ability to come back from such a serious injury."

Two weeks ago, Rowing Canada's medical director, Dr. Richard Backus said the Mississauga native was breaking barriers with her rate of recovery from the injury.

When she finally got out of the hospital, before she even attempted to walk, Laumann crawled into a shell June 12 and began testing herself, looking for the miracle.

"I'm still not walking, although I'm getting around on crutches," said Laumann from her training base in Victoria.

The boat was modified so the right leg wasn't taking any load. She is now rowing 20 to 30 kilometres a day. In full training, she has hit a maximum of 50 km a day.

Last week, she stepped up her on-water training to two and three hours a day.

"I feel great and I'm excited about the progress," said Laumann, who before the accident was favored to capture the single sculls gold medal at Barcelona. "I've been off in my own little world, focused on what I've been doing."

"Some of the other sculls competitors wrote me notes saying how bad they felt for me. They may not know I'm coming back."

The increased blood flow and pressure during workouts still leaves her right leg inflamed and throbbing, but off the water, Laumann says she is usually pain free.

She said the fitness base was very strong and that her endurance wouldn't pose a problem. Speed is another matter.

"I can't estimate how fast I'll be compared to what I might have been without the accident. It should be fairly close."

Baseball bans Howe for life

NEW YORK (AP) — Commissioner Fay Vincent announced Wednesday that New York Yankees relief pitcher Steve Howe has been suspended permanently from baseball after pleading guilty to a drug misdemeanor in Montana earlier this month.

The ruling came after arbitrator George Nicolau ordered the commissioner to put a time frame on Howe's seventh drug or alcohol related suspension, which originally had been announced as an indefinite one.

"It is my judgment that Steve Howe has finally extinguished his opportunity to play major league baseball," the commissioner wrote in his decision.

"The record amply demonstrates that he has squandered the many opportunities given to him that he can comply with baseball's unequivocal policy where illegal drugs are concerned."

Vincent said Howe has the longest disciplinary record of drug abuse offenses in the history of baseball. It dates back to 1982 when he went into drug rehabilitation for the first time.

Two years earlier, he had been National League rookie of the year while pitching for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Howe's drug and alcohol problems followed him to Minnesota and Texas as well as the minor leagues.

In 1989, Howe asked Vincent

for one more chance and the commissioner allowed him to come back.

He pitched for the New York Yankees last season when he was 3-1 with a 1.68 earned-run average.

Last Dec. 19, he was arrested in Kalispell, Mont., on the misdemeanor charge of attempted possession of cocaine and was later charged with a second misdemeanor count of cocaine possession.

He continued pitching for the Yankees until the case went to court, where Howe pleaded guilty on June 8. The commissioner's suspension followed.

CHANGED FORMAT

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