

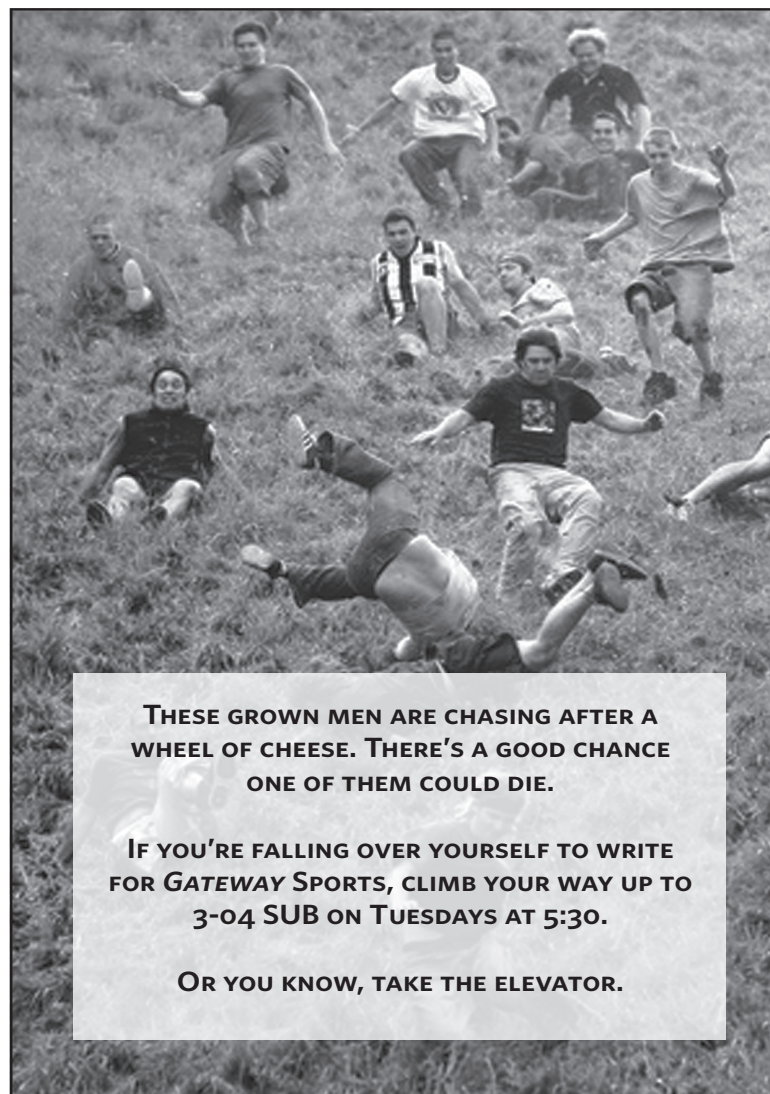
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What I liked on my summer vacation



SPORTS STAFF

Group Commentary

If you're like us, you spent the past four months watching, listening to, attending, or just plain thinking about sports. But since you're probably not just like us (thank goodness; somebody has to be productive to allow us this life of luxury), we've compiled what we consider to be the highlights—and lowlights—of summer sports.

Robin Collum

All things considered, this wasn't a bad summer for sports. Even when things weren't great, they were scandalous, and that's almost as good. I try to forget the bad moments, like Barry "Who says cheaters never win?" Bonds' home run record and Michael Vick's entire existence. On the other hand, I don't have any difficulty choosing my favourite sports moment of the summer, and I think a lot of people will agree to its being the best.

I refer, of course, to the FIFA under-20 World Cup, hosted this year by a number of Canadian cities, including Edmonton. The trophy went to Argentina after they beat Croatia in the final match, but for me, it was just about watching the games (and the fans) rather than the outcomes. Because I don't shell out for the specialty channels—and I don't like watching matches in the middle of the night in Spanish—I rarely get to see soccer played at such a high level. And of course, watching some of them live (and from the air-conditioned, rainproof press box) made the games about ten times more special.

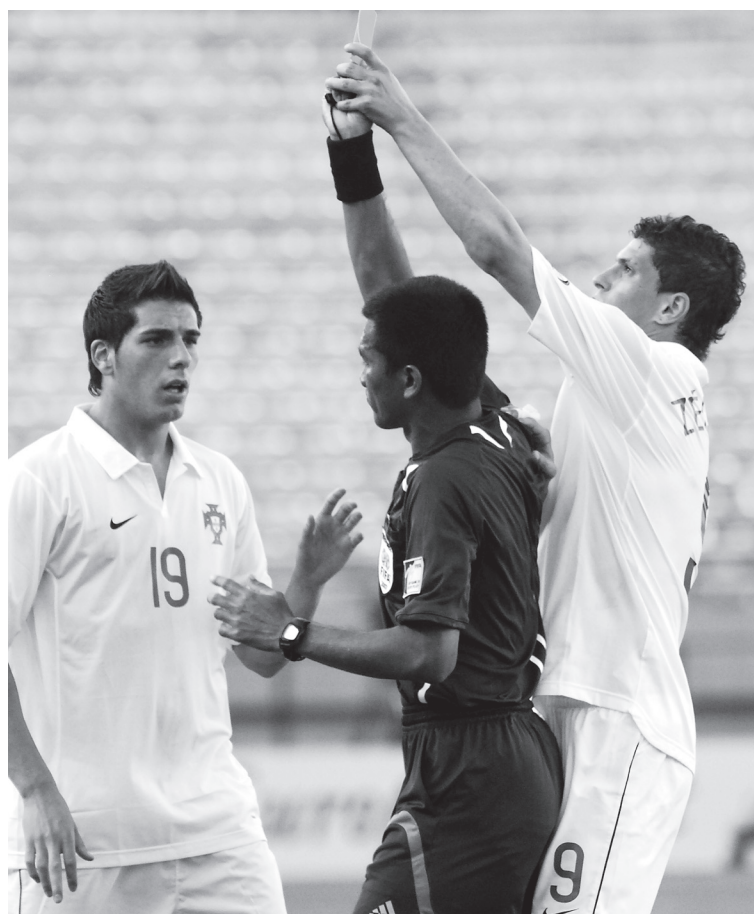
The most memorable—and hilarious—moment was near the end of the game in Portugal's round-of-16 loss to Chile. Portuguese defender Mano hit a Chilean player in the head after the whistle, and was shown a red card by the referee. In the confusion of pleading and shouting that ensued, Zequinha, a Portuguese forward, snatched the card out of the ref's hand and just started to walk away. In the end, they were both ejected, of course, but it was the most audacious move I've ever seen on a court, pitch, or rink, and the YouTube video of it still cracks me up.

Ross Prusakowski

At the end of every summer, it's always valuable to pause and take stock of what the last four months have thrown your way. Whether it's the job that's only worth remembering because of your newly fattened bank account or that summer fling, there's always something positive that'll stand out. Unless you spent your summer in the sports world, that is.

From Mike Vick's dogs and Tim Donaghy's bets to Chilean soccer players getting a beat down from Toronto police, it's been an ugly summer. But as bad as each of these stories was, by far the worst sports moment of the summer was when Barry Bonds circled the bases as baseball's new all-time home-run leader. The combination of likely steroid use, a *prima donna* attitude, and a myopic fan base that can't see all the faults in their star represented all that is dismal in professional sports.

While there haven't been nearly as many good sports stories of the



FILE PHOTO: NICK WIEBE

OH NO HE DI-IN'T Zequinha's card-stealing hissy fit at the FIFA U-20 World Cup may have embarrassed Portugal, but we thought it was hilarious.

summer, one of the best stories has been the Edmonton Oilers' quest for a talented frontline player. This story was great mostly because of the soap opera that was Kevin Lowe's follies and enraged/expectant Oiler fans' reactions. From Buffalo vowing to do everything in their power to hurt the Oilers in the future to Brian Burke's tirades against Lowe's moves, this story had everything a good summer soap needed, save an evil twin and a pool-side catfight. But for a die-hard hockey fan like me, swamped with details of dog killing, gambling rings, post-game punch-ups, and steroid use, Lowe's RFA dalliances hit the spot, leaving at least one thing for this Flames fan to chuckle about in an otherwise somber summer.

Trevor Phillips

Though summer is usually a time best spent outdoors, where the sweltering heat and glorious sunshine can be taken in while enjoying a plethora of recreational activities, I spent most of mine on the couch cursing out supremely fit millionaire athletes for not making the right cut, shot, pass, or pitch. So picking a best and worst moment for the last four months is like shooting fish in a barrel.

Now, I don't want to beat a dead horse or anything, but Chris Pronger winning the Stanley Cup in mid-June was a pretty shitty moment. It got even worse when Kevin Lowe dealt Joffrey Lupul—the guy the Oil traded Pronger for—to the Flyers a couple weeks later. But it really hit rock bottom when nhl.com ran a feature story about the Cup spending a day with the Pronger family in mid-July. Seeing Mrs Pronger with a huge smile on her face while caressing that Cup in front of a Southern California skyline was like a swift kick in the berries that only a week of drinking could aid.

Baseball, however, was able to lift my spirits. Though my Blue Jays have drastically underachieved so far, this season's saving grace has to have been when soft-throwing Josh Towers plunked Alex Rodriguez as payback for a bush-league act of abuse that had been made a couple of months earlier—A-Rod had run behind Toronto third baseman Howie Clark

on a pop-up and shouted "Mine," causing Clark to move out of the way and allowing the ball to drop. The benches emptied twice after Rodriguez was nailed and ended with good ol' Canadian boy Matt Stairs sitting on the Gatorade jugs at the top steps of the dugout, presumably with foil in hand. The best part: a teary-eyed A-Rod, pants rolled up to his knee, and a big blue bruise on his calf, shooting a sullen glare at the TV cameras.

Andrew Renfree

There is such a grand buffet of potential worst moments in sports over the summer that I figured I'd pick a brighter moment as my favourite to prove that athletes aren't all a bunch of selfish, desperate scoundrels.

In my mind, the best sports moment this summer was when Oilers GM Kevin Lowe had the gall to "steal" Dustin Penner away from the Anaheim Ducks. This deal topped my charts for two reasons.

First, we got to hear Anaheim GM Brian Burke whine about how unfairly Lowe was behaving. When Burke was unwilling/unable to match the Oilers' offer on Penner, I loved Burke's classic response: "It was an act of desperation by a GM fighting to keep his job."

However, Burke may want to read the fine print in the Collective Bargaining Agreement: what Lowe did might have been slightly underhanded, but he was acting within the rules of the CBA regarding restricted free agents. And it's not as if Anaheim was left empty-handed: they now get first-, second- and third-round picks from the Oilers, which could significantly improve the Ducks' future.

Yet what makes the Penner deal even better than seeing Burke throw a tantrum is that the Oilers added a strong power forward to their top line who can hit and score. Imagine the potential the Copper and Blue will have now, with Hemsy and Horcoff being able to set up Penner? I see the Oilers top line for 2007/08 as comparable to Vancouver's Bertuzzi-Naslund-Morrison line of a few years ago. As long as Penner can avoid punching someone in the back of the head, the Oilers should be golden.