

Oilers don't need more ice

Instead of sending their rookies somewhere nice to train, they were stuck in the boring, unappealing Northwest Territories



PAUL OWEN

Sports
Commentary

When the prevailing public opinion of your hockey franchise is that it operates inside of a fishbowl, and that every move you make is subject to almost endless scrutiny, it's probably a good idea to get out of town for training camp. Of course, when the second-most prevalent opinion of your team—especially amongst players' wives—is that it's located in an ice-bound winter wasteland that doesn't see the sun from October to March, that pre-season move probably shouldn't be to somewhere even further north. So the Edmonton Oilers head office somehow decided that it makes perfect sense for the team to pack up and head to Yellowknife for their rookie camp.

Let's be clear about one thing here: even in the beginning of September, Yellowknife is a pretty shitty place to be. The three days the new Oilers spent there saw the temperature hover around 10C, and the team was in an old, cramped arena usually reserved for bantam teams. It really was a poor first impression to give to the rooks. Moreover, holding court in Yellowknife doesn't exactly help the perception had by many a player's wife—those of Chris Pronger, Peter Nedved and Michael Nylander among them—that it is the aforementioned land of ice and snow.

The Oilers are desperately in need of a makeover in the eyes of the league's free agents—they need to start seeming like a good team to play for instead of one of the worst. And instead of showcasing the city and what Edmonton has to offer, they chose to put their young recruits in one of the most remote and inconsequential cities in the country, probably damaging their reputation even more.

The jaunt didn't really serve any practical purpose for the Oil anyway. Sure, they managed to grab some media attention and earned the adulation of the Yellowknifers, but it's not as if many of them will be willing to make the 1500km drive to watch the Oilers play, especially in the winter. The team would have been better served,—from a marketing standpoint—to travel to Saskatoon and try to grab a bigger chunk of the 200 000 or so citizens there, the majority of whom don't have a natural, geographic home team. It's four-lane highway to Saskatoon, and those Skatchies don't have anything better to do once the Riders' season ends. Plus Saskatoon has plenty of retail options for the Oilers to stock their copper and blue merchandise.

Let's be clear about one thing here: even in the beginning of September, Yellowknife is a pretty shitty place to be. The three days the new Oilers spent there saw the temperature hover around 10C, and the team was in an old, cramped arena usually reserved for bantam teams.

Instead of using their training camp to boost the team's reputation or financial position, the Oilers opted for the gimmicky choice of Yellowknife, instead of a more viable location like Red Deer, Saskatoon, or even Edmonton. This is already a high-revenue NHL team, but with the prospect of a new arena looming, a little more coin in the coffers would have been helpful. Instead, Oilers brass got to freeze their asses off while they showed their rookies to a fan base that will have little impact on the team's future, further damaging their reputation with the players in the process.

Esks rotting from the top down



SCOTT LILWALL

Sports
Commentary

There have been a lot of adjectives of varying colour and venom tossed around to describe the Edmonton Eskimo season thus far: "trainwreck" and "carwreck" are oft-repeated in the sports sections of both the *Journal* and the *Sun*, and a frustrated friend of mine opted for the less-heard term "unexplained, spontaneous shit-plosion" to describe the Labour Day loss. But these epithets fail to accurately explain what is happening to a squad that two short years ago were Grey Cup champions. That's because metaphors invoking planes, trains, and automobiles imply some sort of external cause, where the problems with the Esks are primarily an internal one: the football club has contracted a terminal illness.

Whatever bug the hometown team has caught, the prognosis for the rest of the year isn't exactly optimistic; with a dismal 3-6-1 record including a pair of recent losses to the rival Stampeders, there's very little reason to think that Edmonton's vitals are going to be getting any stronger anytime soon. The ailment that has a hold of the team is systemic, spreading to every aspect of the game: the once-proud Edmonton defense has atrophied, the offensive line is coughing up blood intermittently, and even the huddle seems to have a touch of gangrene.

The point is that if there is to be any hope of recovery, a course of aggressive treatment needs

to be taken. CFL fans discovered this week what Dr Danny Maciocia prescribes: sending sack-crazy Rahim Abdullah back home to Florida. The loud-mouthed, abrasive defensive end has been in hot water since introducing his knee to the neck of Stamps' tailback Gerald Commissiong, an idiotic penalty that kept alive the Calgary drive that tied up the game last Friday—a game that the Esks eventually lost 20-17.

Now, let me first say that I'm all for amputating Abdullah. While he is an impressive player, his behaviour and conduct both on the field and off is nothing more than shameful. He's got a problem controlling his temper—a disability that Calgary obviously was aware of and used to their advantage. But as a whole, getting rid of Abdullah is akin to lancing a boil from the foot of an Ebola patient: sure it's an improvement, but it isn't exactly the most pressing problem. And with the rash of stupid penalties taken by the likes of AJ Gass and Adam Braidwood, Dr Danny could spend the rest of the season doing cosmetic work while the rest of the team lingers on life support, without making any progress on curing the team.

Abdullah's lack of control isn't the disease that has infected the team, it's only a symptom. Throughout 2006 and into this year, Maciocia has had a long list of excuses for the team's performance. And while injuries, weather and other external causes can plague a football team, the lack of discipline that the team has shown can be put squarely on the shoulders of the coaches. Canning Abdullah is nothing more than putting a band-aid on a flesh wound. The real cause is higher up in the team's body, and Dr Danny should consider taking himself off the Eskimo case permanently. Physician, heal thyself.

thank you

Barbecue!

To thank University of Alberta students, faculty and staff for their support, Coca-Cola invites you to a Barbecue!
* while quantities last



11:00 am

Wednesday, September 12

in Quad

please bring a monetary donation for the Campus Food Bank



ever wonder why only Coca-Cola on campus?
Coca-Cola has been the exclusive cold beverage supplier on campus for just over nine years. Through this joint agreement between the University, your Students' Union and Coca-Cola, over \$4 million has been generated and given back to the U of A campus!

how do these funds reach students?

- funding bursaries and scholarships
- supporting Graduate Studies' special initiatives
- sponsoring events such as Week of Welcome, United Way Sub Day and the Turkey Trot
- supporting athletics and sport camps

So, the next time you reach for your Coca-Cola, enjoy it knowing you are supporting these great programs on campus.





Go to the top



Attend a scholarship workshop for tips on applying to NSERC, SSHRC & CIHR



Tuesday
Sept 11, 2007
9:00-12:00 pm*



Wednesday
Sept 12, 2007
9:00-11:00 am*



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Friday
Sept 21, 2007
9:00-12:00 pm*

All workshops located in
Council Chambers, 2-1 University Hall (south of SUB)

*9:00-11:00 – graduate scholarship session

*11:00-12:00 – postdoctoral fellowship session (NSERC & SSHRC)

–Sponsored by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research