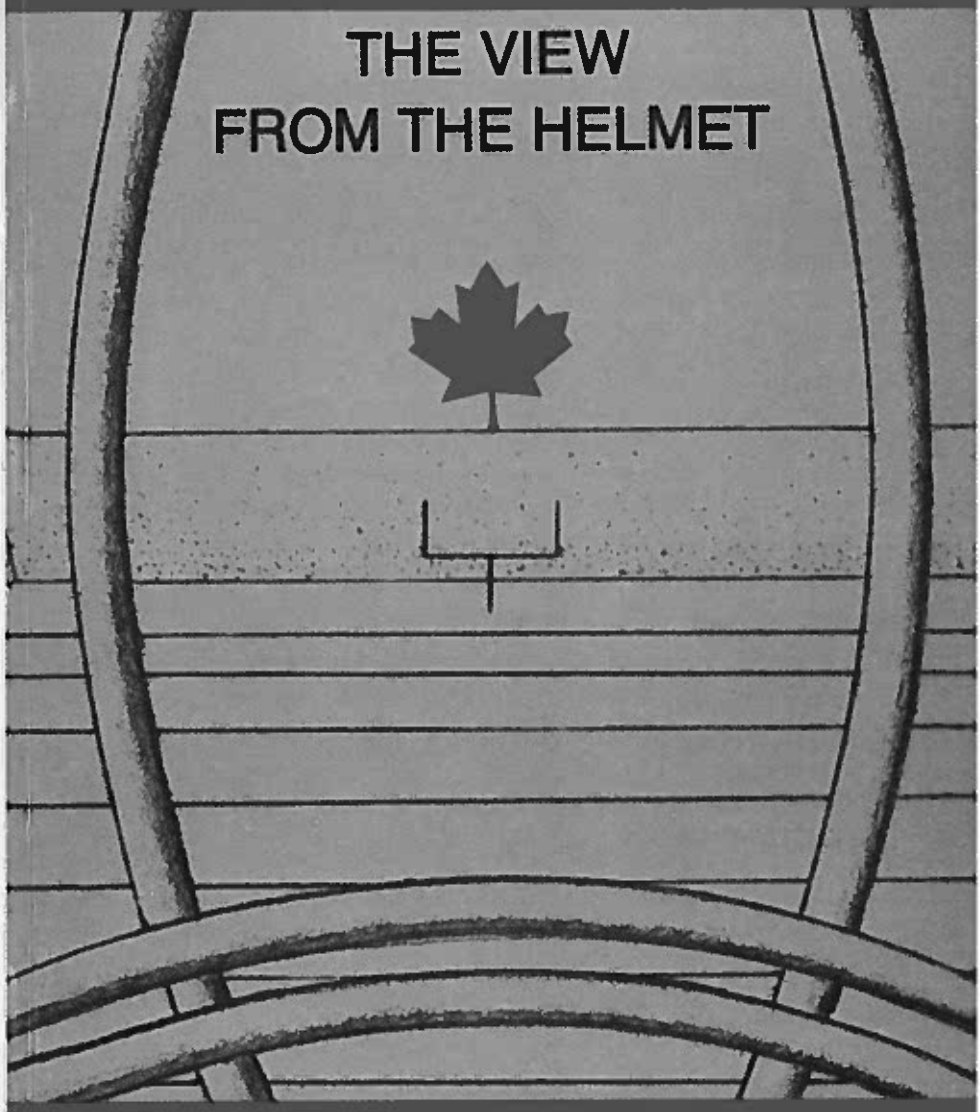
CANADIAN FOOTBALL

THE VIEW FROM THE HELMET



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To Oscar and Ginny

Foreword

Cultural performances have in recent years attracted renewed attention from various quarters of the social sciences and the humanities. Their study, moreover, has crossed, redrawn, and all but obliterated many conventional academic boundaries. The ***Culture and Performance*** series is a response to this challenging development. The series offers a topical forum for the publication of wide-ranging scholarship on the ethnography and theory of ritual, drama, festivity, sport, entertainment, ceremony, spectacle, and other popular forms of collective symbolic expression. Approaches vary but share the central aim of contributing to the social and humanistic study of performance.

Robert Stebbins' pioneering study of Canadian football reveals the remarkable extent to which the country's "second sport" is also a performance — a 'bringing into form' — of Canadian culture. The game dramatically depicts recurrent themes of Canadian life: imported symbols, unique rules, east-west conflict, compromise between English tradition and American innovation, a shifting balance of smugness and inferiority, and the sense of an elusive identity and uncertain future.

An epic event in the sport's history was the meeting of Harvard and McGill in a series of three matches in 1874. At the time Harvard was playing the "Boston Game," a modified version of soccer, and McGill was playing rugby, a sport introduced to Quebec by English military forces. Harvard won the series, but decided that it preferred rugby to soccer. Yale concurred after playing Harvard, and during the next quarter century rugby was transformed into American football.

The evolution of rugby into Canadian football was slower, as it was punctuated by a characteristic Canadian conflict between progressives and conservatives—those who wanted to adopt the American model of football and those who clung to the traditions of English rugby. The progressives eventually won most of the battles, making Canadian football increasingly if belatedly Americanized. Still, the Canadian game retains vestiges and modifications of rugby that make it unique. The field is longer and wider, all backs can move in all directions, there is an extra player on each team, and the offensive side has three downs, not four, to advance the ball. If American football exemplifies the mechanical precision and corporate organization of American urban life

press slips easily into an unholy alliance. Team politics can be cruel and debilitating. Players complain that they are exploited by coaches and commoditized by owners. Ultimately, they are there because they love it; intrinsic rewards and the sheer fun of the game are the major motives, even for professionals. From the helmet, therefore, football is primarily play. Everything else about the game, good and bad, is secondary.

Stebbins' interest in the meaning of football to the players is the rationale for his central framework, a systematic comparison between professionals (the Canadian Football League) and amateurs (university and junior teams). The professional-amateur distinction has had a central place in sports history, but has rarely been the basis of a sociological examination of a contemporary sport. Its use here is particularly appropriate in that the professionalization of football in Canada has been slower and less complete than in the U.S. The Grey Cup, for example, was initially donated for amateur competition, and university teams generally dominated the game into the 1920s. In the west, there was sporadic competition between university teams and professional teams as late as 1967. As well, the amateur and professional ranks are sequenced in the lives of players. Amateurs often aspire to professional status, and professionals have been socialized as amateurs. By comparing the two, Stebbins' analysis yields a comprehensive appreciation of how the culture of the sport is expressed at various levels of its social organization.

Stebbins concludes that professionals have an important lesson to learn from amateurs—the importance of "unified play", or teamwork. This is strongly emphasized in junior and university football, and the beauty and success of it constitute the game's greatest single satisfaction to players. In the Canadian Football League, however, there is a greater emphasis on individual stardom—a tendency nurtured by the media and by the general concern with records and statistics in modern professional sports. Stebbins argues that the preoccupation with outstanding individual players is a vicious circle in which the professionals are now trapped. It deprives the players of their major intrinsic reward, thereby lowering team morale. It perpetuates this problem by encouraging frequent turnovers of player personnel, an alienating factor for players as well as one which inhibits the coordination, cooperation, and trust required for good teamwork. This in turn erodes the caliber of play, diminishing the interest of spectators and sponsors. The solution—in this case the

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Preface

This is the seventh of a series of eight studies designed to provide an ethnographic account of two representative fields within each of the four major areas of amateurism: art, science, sport, and entertainment. In this series, this work on football takes its place alongside a companion work on baseball; in the arts I have completed studies of theater and classical music and in science I have done research on archeology and astronomy. Data are now being collected on standup comics — the final study — which will join my earlier one on entertainment magicians.

Except for the music research, each project, including the present one on football, has been carried out within a common framework of sensitizing concepts. Although this framework has undergone some modification since its initial presentation in 1977, it continues to be an effective organizer of ethnographic exploration in the four fields of amateurism. Whereas the written reports of each of the eight projects presents them somewhat differently, all contain data on leisure and (recently) work careers; costs and rewards of the vocation or avocation; core and peripheral activities; amateur/professional relations; amateurism in relation to family and occupation; and leisure self-image, confidence, preparedness, and perseverance and commitment. This minimal standardization of the exploratory research design will enable me to draw comparisons across all areas of amateurism in a synthesis of the eight studies, which will get underway following the completion of the fieldwork on comics.

Accordingly, the broadest aim of this study of football players is much the same as my aim in previous studies: to discover and present a picture of the life-style of the subjects as organized around their chosen vocation or avocation. As the title of this book indicates, this is done through their eyes. Typical of field research in general, my approach has been to study a reasonably representative group in the activity. Thus I observed extensively football-related routines, both on and off the field, over the 1983 and 1984 seasons, of a junior team (the Calgary Colts), a university team (the University of Calgary Dinosaurs) and, in a limited way, a professional team (the Calgary Stampeders). The limitations were imposed on me by the impossibility of attending professional meetings, observing professionals in the locker room (except after one game), and

The foregoing may suggest that this study of Canadian football has been stuffed into a standardized mold of preconceived ideas and procedures in such a way as to obviate all possibility of learning about that which is distinctive about Canada's second most popular sport. This has not happened. The following pages contain a history of the Canadian game; a discussion of Canadian amateurism and professionalism in the sport; a lengthy consideration of the daily, weekly, seasonal, and transseasonal routines and time perspectives of the players; and, finally, a treatment of their outlook on and adjustments to their community involvements and team-related problems. Not all of what is reported in this book is uniquely Canadian, but much of what is uniquely Canadian about football finds expression in these pages.

Acknowledgements

The indebtedness to those who made this study possible is substantial—without them this book would not exist. They include the players and coaches of the Calgary Colts and the University of Calgary Dinosaurs. They accepted me into their midst, spoke with me, sometimes at great length, about football, and in the case of fifty of their number, gave freely of their scarce time for interviews. Greg Mullen, coach at the time of the Colts and Peter Connellan, coach of the Dinosaurs, deserve special mention for their belief in the study and in me and their faith that I would do my fieldwork in such a way as to avoid upsetting team operations. Likewise thirty professionals gave freely of their time to be interviewed, some of whom took on the additional role of informal consultant. Thanks, too, to Steve Baratto who did what he could in difficult circumstances to give me partial access to the everyday routine of the professional player.

As important is another category of contributors to this study: the reviewers of the manuscript. The following read parts of it, offering comments that have improved it greatly: Peter Connellan, Frank Cosentino, Keith Evans, Frank E. Manning, John McCorquindale, and John Palazeti. Several anonymous reviewers also deserve acknowledgement for their valuable suggestions. Sonia Kuryliw Paine contributed to the project through her expertise as copy editor. Therese Khimasia rendered dedicated service as an editorial assistant, and Michele Drexler consistently demonstrated her efficient secretarial skills. Diane Parsons typed the manuscript and drew Figure 1, a set of tasks that combined to take far

Introduction

Several important issues have emerged since the three-year period between 1983 and 1986 when the study reported here was carried out and the manuscript resulting from it was sent to press. Two of the issues have generated a moderate amount of public concern in Canada. They are the use of anabolic steroids by athletes and the expansion of the Canadian Football League (CFL) into the United States. Three other issues remain hidden, known mostly to social scientists whose theories have made them problematic. The exploitation and alienation of professional athletes, the level of homosexuality and homophobia among all adult male athletes, and the nature of professionalism in sport have been under increased scientific scrutiny in recent years, mostly by sociologists. The public issues sprang from particular events, namely, the revelation of steroid use on the part of Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson during the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in Seoul, Korea, and the decision taken by the CFL late in 1992 to invite American teams to join the League. Although they have a much broader import than football, the three scientific issues were examined with reference to the Canadian game for the first time in this book. My observations in this regard were controversial enough to draw comment in two of the reviews that appeared subsequently.

The Johnson affair developed into a national scandal almost overnight, triggering a judicial inquiry into the general use of drugs in sport headed by Charles Dubin, Associate Chief Justice of the Ontario Supreme Court. All this happened the year following the release of *Canadian Football*, an unfortunate coincidence that suggested to some readers a certain naiveté on my part about the consumption of sports-related drugs. How could I and the other people whom I cited on page 60 argue that the biggest drug problem in adult Canadian football was alcohol and that it was a problem for only a few players, when it was observed shortly thereafter that steroid use had been widespread throughout the 1980s?[1]

In light of what we know today, the responses of football players at the time to surveys and interviews about drug use are instructive: They were saying that there was little drug use in their circles, apparently because they saw nothing wrong with using ergogenic, or performance enhancing, drugs, even though these steroids were as illegal then as they are now. Their illegality seemed irrelevant to the players in face of their belief (and that of the authorities) that many athletes in many different sports were using them with impunity, not to mention their use by nonathletes whose aim was to improve their appearance.[2] What the football players saw as reprehensible and dangerous to health, and therefore something to be avoided, were such drugs as cocaine, tobacco, and amphetamines. Alcohol was acceptable only when consumed at times and in amounts that would not interfere with athletic performance during games or practices.

And how might a sample of amateur and professional football players answer questions today about drug use? Would some of them now declare the use of steroids to be harmful and wrong? Do they now believe that the use of these substances is widespread? That would be in keeping with evidence suggesting that it is. For example, both high consumption of steroids and extensive ignorance about their deleterious effects have been found among bodybuilders.[3] Yet it may be inappropriate to generalize to football the patterns of drug use observed in bodybuilding. Whereas many football players train with weights to increase their strength and endurance as means to the end of performing well in each game, all bodybuilders train with weights to increase strength and enhance appearance as ends in themselves. As for their contests, which are run according to the prevailing standards of masculine beauty, winning or even placing there merely validates and publicizes what they have achieved through their work with weights.[4]

On 12 November 1992 the CFL announced its intention to invite an unspecified number of American teams to join the League. To this end the 1993 season included a team from Sacramento, which will be joined in 1994 by a team from Las Vegas and possibly teams from one or two other cities. With this change the problems discussed on pages 109-10 and 116-17 of the quality of Canadian players vis-à-vis that of American Players and the ratio of import players to Canadian players take on new

significance. Many Canadian sports journalists foresee the end of Canadian player quotas as well as the eventual disappearance of Canadians from their own game, although none of this is predicted to happen before the expiration in 1995 of the collective agreement between the players and the League.[5] American teams can hardly be morally or legally expected to be sympathetic with the Canadian anxiety about maintaining a certain balance of players from the two countries.

Behind this sobering forecast lies the assumption, held by all coaches and no small number of Canadian fans, that the typical Canadian football player is inferior to his typical American counterpart. The factual basis of this assumption is examined on page 188, where it is also noted that Canadian amateur football programs and their products have improved mightily in recent years. It could be that by 1996, the first year of the new contract between the players and the CFL, Canadian rookies will be sufficiently well trained to compete on an equal footing for many, perhaps even all, team positions, making import quotas unnecessary in any case.

Whatever happens, there clearly is, when viewed from the standpoint of Canadian popular culture, a great deal at stake in the CFL's decision to expand into the United States. The League believes the addition of several American teams will make the game more attractive for Canadians, while providing new sources of revenue at a time when many of its teams are in serious financial trouble. In the short run this hope seems remote, inasmuch as it is likely to exacerbate the ambivalence the fans have had toward the game from its inception.[6] As this book demonstrates Canadians have had to contend historically with two major conflicts, the one of rules (British rugby vs. American football) and the one of ideals (amateur sport vs. professional sport). Today they face three new, equally poignant conflicts: the conflict of rights (employment of Canadians vs. the employment of Americans), of quality (Canadian mediocrity of play vs. American excellence of play), and of familiarity (local, regional, or national Canadian talent vs. imported talent). Ambivalence restrains behavior which, in the case of Canadian football, appears to restrain the purchase of tickets. It is as if the typical Canadian fan is saying: "Although I like the game of

Canadian football, I am uncertain about those who play it professionally and at the same time I have other appealing leisure activities that I can engage in." Still, it is possible that either significant improvement in Canadian talent or wholesale domination of the CFL by American players could resolve the three modern conflicts, and in this manner increase the appeal of the game for Canadians. That could be the long-run effect of the League's expansion, which nevertheless rests on the assumption that the Americans will like the game well enough to make it profitable for CFL teams to operate in their country.

On pages 184-85 I note that, although the professionals are exploited by the teams who pay them and that they know and lament this practice, they are anything but alienated from their work, from the game they play. On the contrary, they intensely love it and badly want to continue in it until they are forced to quit. Rob Beamish, in his review of *Canadian Football*, found little comfort in this apparent contradiction of nonalienating exploitation.[7] He argued that my failure to conduct the study within the larger framework of standard sociology of sport theory, particularly the political economy of sport, explained why I accorded "minimal time" to such subjects as alienation and homosexuality.[8]

Apropos the problem of alienation, I simply wish to point out that, if the players experienced little or none of it, then all I could do was try to explain its absence. This I did by referring to their powerful attraction to the game itself. I reported their views (there were 75 players) and, if those views contradict theory then, assuming competent data collection, that is too bad for theory. One major weakness in the sociological theory of sport, and especially its political economy branch, is that no one has ever undertaken a proper exploratory-ethnographic study of either Canadian or American football. The study reported in this book is the first of this kind. Without a grounded empirical foundation such as we have here, these theories, at least when it comes to football, are fundamentally speculative. This means that sport sociologists must yield to the veracity of directly collected data when those data contradict their theoretical presuppositions.

The same logic applies to Beamish's complaint that I passed too quickly over the subjects of homosexuality and homophobia (see pages

147-49). Again, my respondents plainly did not see these matters as important, notwithstanding the claims of political economic theory and North American popular stereotype. It is unfortunate that *Canadian Football* had gone to press before Alan Klein's article on bodybuilders appeared. In this article he presents observations consonant with those reported in this book, namely, that homosexuality is not the problem that common stereotype and some social scientific theory would have us believe it is.[9] After citing a cross-cultural analysis showing how few societies are as fearful of homosexuality as American society, he observes that the need for money leads many an amateur bodybuilder through a complicated series of relationships to homosexual hustling. This is an "economic strategy," however, not a manifestation of sexual preference.[10] Moreover, in an effort to establish themselves socially as straight rather than gay, some of his bodybuiders vocally expressed on occasion their hatred for homosexuals, whereas I heard similar talk from some of my football players. Among both groups, then, it appears there is a certain degree of homophobia and intolerance of homosexuals, but little homosexuality behavior.

A third critique of *Canadian Football* comes from Jean Harvey who questioned the players' status as professional.[11] He challenged the overall validity of the nine attributes, which I present in chapter 2 during my attempt to define professionals, and particularly the ninth attribute, which centers on the autonomy of football players:

> In effect, his [Stebbins's] study abounds with examples demonstrating that the status of professional is rather one of proletarian, who instead does not have the chance to sell his labor to whomever he wants (the draft, the reserve clause, etc.). Not only does he not have control over that which he produces, but the work life of the professional seems to be subordinated to all sorts of constraints imposed by the employer [author's translation].[12]

Harvey's comments forced me to think further on the matter of the professionalism, not only of football players, but also of professionals

in all the art, science, sports, and entertainment fields. This resulted in a much more complete and complicated statement, wherein I distinguish public-centered professionals, who work in the four fields just mentioned, from client-centered professionals, who work in for example law, medicine, and engineering.[13] As the presence of amateurs convincingly demonstrates, the first lack the extensive power the second enjoy. Nonetheless the first do have autonomy, although those who work in teams, such as football players, symphony musicians, and ballet dancers, experience this autonomy collectively, as the distinct result of the concerted and coordinated actions of the individual specialists composing each team.

The five issues considered in this Introduction are far from settled. As for the three that concern social scientists more or less exclusively, professionalism and nonalienating exploitation will likely consume most of their attention in the future. As for the public issues the fate of the CFL will probably continue to be more important than whether amateur and professional football players use steroids. Although the latter will hardly go unnoticed, it would become virtually meaningless as an issue at the professional level should the CFL die.

NOTES

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3 McConnell, H., "Needle-exchange helps bodybuilders." *The Journal* 22 (May): 1, 1993.

4 Klein, A.M., "Pumping irony: Crisis and contradiction in bodybuilding." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 3: 112-33, 1986.

5 Taylor, S., "Football taking horrible bounce." *Winnipeg Free Press*. 8.11.92, p. C1. Daniels, C., "CFL sets the stage for a big-time labor dispute." *Financial Post*. 16.01.93, p. 50. Maki, A., "Canadian players sacrificed." *Calgary Herald*. 13.11.93, p. E1.

6 Stebbins, R.A., "Ambivalence at the 55-yard line: Transformation and resistance in Canadian football." In *Seeing Ourselves: Media*

Power and Policy in Canada, eds. H. Holmes and D. Taras (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada, 1992), 324-32.

7 Beamish, R., Review of *Canadian Football: A View from the Helmet* by R.A. Stebbins. *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 14: 413-14, 1989.

8 Beamish, Review of *Canadian Football*, 413.

9 Klein, "Pumping irony."

10 See also Reiss, A.J., "The social integration of peers and queers." *Social Problems* 9: 102-20, 1961.

11 Harvey, J., Review of *Canadian Football: A View from the Helmet* by R.A. Stebbins. *Loisir et Société*, 11: 185-86, 1988.

12 Harvey, Review of *Canadian Football*, 185.

13 See Stebbins, R.A., *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), chapter 2.

CHAPTER 1

What It Was, Was Football

It seems that Andy Griffith, a mid-twentieth-century American comedian, was still in a state of awe and confusion when he described the game he had just seen being played for the first time. Playing the role of a rural hick, he reported that its objective was to try to run with a pumpkin from one end of a pasture to the other without getting knocked down and without stepping in something. Though he was unaware of it, he had observed an instance of North America's second most popular sport. Only later did he realize that "what it was, was football."

Scholars sometimes try to discern the underlying nature of an activity by studying the historical development of the word by which it is known. For some reason this approach turns out to be rather unenlightening when tried with the word football. At least this was the outcome of the tongue-in-cheek analysis by Eric Nicol and Dave More:[1]

> The northerners did however contribute the words from which *football* derives, namely *foot* and, to put it plainly, *ball*. *Foot* comes from the Old English *fot*, the name given to the part of the leg turned up at the ankle, and *ball* comes from the even Older English *bealluc*, or testes, located at the opposite end of the leg. Etymologically, therefore, *football* means using one appendage to boot another, resulting in the Middle Ages.

On the serious side, an accurate definition of the sport of football is difficult to find, in part, because several games are referred to by this name. The original game is known in North America as soccer, in Britain as association football, and throughout the rest of the world simply as football. There are several recent offshoots of the ancient sport of soccer, or football (the first-known game was played in England, A.D. 217), namely, Australian football, Gaelic football, English rugby, American football, and Canadian football. With all these variations taken into

consideration, Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines football as "any of several games played with a football on a rectangular field having two goal posts at each end by two teams whose object is to get the ball over a goal line or between goal posts."

THE FOOTBALL PLAYER

This book presents the observations and interviews from a sociological study of the men who play tackle football in Canada for fun or for money or, in professional circles, for both. It is the "view from the helmet," as it were, on what it is like to practice football from day to day, to work toward the weekly application of "practice" in games, and to try to accumulate a record of wins sufficient to win a berth in the playoffs. This book is also about the amateur and professional careers that are pursued by these young adults in their chosen vocation or avocation. Because football is a highly visible sport in Canada, those players who take it seriously find that they have let themselves in for a variety of special involvements with the wider community. Their view of and adjustments to them are also presented here. Finally, and again as viewed from the helmet, critical problems must be faced by the typical player. These problems spring ultimately from two prominent facts: adult football in Canada is both a popular sport and an entertainment business; and it draws a significant proportion of its personnel from, patterns many of its managerial operations after, and models most of its athletic activities on football in the United States.

Working from the players' viewpoint on matters of football has its obvious limitations as far as the overall picture of the game is concerned. For the overall picture must include the views and actions of coaches, trainers, the press (both public and private views), the managers, and owners. The view of the fans is also significant.

Another part of the overall picture is that abstract form of analysis for which sociology is uniquely equipped; namely, the examination of the local, national, and international forces of business, history, popular culture, and the mass media as they play on the world of amateur and professional tackle football. Some of these forces will be touched upon in this book. The historical background of football in Canada is the subject of this chapter and of some of the next. However, a single monograph cannot do justice to all these topics.

One way, then, of diminishing the task of exploring the vast world of

Canadian football is to look upon it as the players do and build a sociological analysis on their outlook. Even this is a substantial undertaking. All aspects of their lives that the players see as important to their football existence must be studied at length.

Whatever the perspective — from the helmet, from the boardroom, or from the sports editor's desk — Canadian football has a unique history. At the popular level this history is the nostalgia of the great games and names of the past. At the scientific level it is an intricate blend of three themes: (1) The social organization of Canadian football is a chronology, chiefly of leagues and teams, some of which no longer exist but which together may be seen as attempts to develop a workable system of competition. These attempts are still being made today. In recent years, various levels of government have also entered the organizational picture. The social organization of football in Canada has been, and continues to be, heavily influenced by the other two themes. (2) In the evolution of the game itself, more than anywhere else, the Americanization and, at the professional level, the commercialization of Canadian football is felt. (3) The last theme is the interplay over the years of amateurism and professionalism, an interplay that is sometimes in conflict and sometimes in harmony. This chapter deals first with the social organization of football and then with the evolution of the game. Chapter 2 centers on the amateur/professional theme.

THE RUGBY YEARS[2]

Football is a serious activity for the Canadian men who make it their vocation or avocation. The games they play are seriously regarded by many fans. And this is a serious book about football. But those who make light of the game, as in two of the preceding definitions, have precedent on their side. For, according to the popular understanding of its origin — an understanding now regarded as unfounded — North American football began in a lighthearted way during an association football (soccer) match in 1823 at Rugby, a public school in England.[3] At that match, William Webb Ellis is said to have unwittingly founded the game of rugby when he picked up the ball and ran to the opponents' goal instead of kicking it as the rules required. In the short period of twenty-five years, rugby developed into a popular sport in many English secondary schools and universities.

In those days, rugby was chiefly an upper-middle-class game. The

men who played it while getting their education subsequently found work as professionals, civil servants, and military officers. For some of them, their work took them to the Commonwealth countries. It was probably by this route that rugby made its way to Canada. At any rate, members of an English garrison stationed in Montreal during the 1860s played rugby against civilian teams composed principally of McGill University students.[4] The game caught on quickly at McGill and in English-speaking Quebec. By the early 1870s, Quebec boasted the best rugby teams in Canada, if not in North America.

It must have been Quebec's reputation for rugby that led Harvard to challenge McGill to a two-game series in May, 1874. By this time, McGill students were playing with an egg-shaped ball. Their game consisted of running, kicking, passing, and tackling. There was a concept of off-sides and the use of free kicks and drop kicks. Harvard preferred the "Boston game," a variant of association football played with a round ball that could be run with. The Boston game was unpopular with other American schools, a sentiment that forced Harvard to search elsewhere for competition. Harvard won the first game using its rules and its ball. The second, played according to McGill's rules, wound up in a 0-0 tie.

This series is frequently cited as the most important turning point in the history of American football. The Harvard team greatly preferred McGill's rugby to their own modification of soccer. Another match was sought and was played in Montreal in September of the same year. This first game of intercollegiate football in Canada was won by Harvard, 3 to 0. Harvard had learned well and it set out at once to persuade the students at other northeastern colleges and universities in the United States that rugby was superior to soccer, the Boston Game included.

A game between Harvard and Yale in 1875 was sufficient to convert the latter to rugby. During the following year, the Intercollegiate Football Association was formed in the United States. The game it organized was rugby. The game it excluded was soccer, which, by 1877, had disappeared from American campuses, not to return until shortly after the turn of the century.

Although Harvard had introduced rugby to American collegiate circles, the early transition from rugby to present-day American football occurred at Yale. During the 1880s and '90s, Walter Camp, first a player and then a coach for the Yale team, either introduced or formalized the

use of the scrimmage line, the use of the quarterback, the calling of signals, the use of eleven men on a team, and the practice of giving up the ball unless it advanced five yards or more (later to become 10 yards) by the fourth down. Except for the number of players and downs, all these changes soon drifted up to Canada.

Thus, in the waning years of the nineteenth century, rugby in the United States was rapidly transformed into American football. In Canada, owing to the strong British influence, the transformation of rugby to Canadian football was slower. The English Rugby Union was established in 1871, an act that brought needed standardization to the rules of the game. This organization became a model for rugby unions in Quebec and Ontario. Now a set of official rules and regulations existed, backed by a bureaucracy to enforce them. Change was slowed, although it inevitably occurred.

The Canadian rugby unions organized competition among the adult senior, intermediate, and junior teams sponsored by various athletic clubs in the cities of Quebec and Ontario. Disagreements between them over certain rules and regulations continued until they became affiliated in the late nineteenth century with the Canadian Rugby Union (CRU). The CRU soon became the most powerful football body in Canada and remained so for the next sixty-five years.

During the 1880s and '90s games were played, sometimes sporadically, sometimes regularly, between various colleges and universities in Ontario and Quebec. A league, The Intercollegiate, was finally formed for them in the late nineteenth century. It also promptly became affiliated with the CRU. The Intercollegiate teams competed for the oldest annually awarded football trophy in Canada: the Yates Cup. The winner of the Yates Cup advanced to the CRU playoffs for the Dominion Championship against the senior winner of the rugby union playoffs.

The Intercollegiate teams won the majority of Dominion Championships through 1924. Even the "Big Four" — the four strongest senior teams from Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa and the forerunners of today's professional teams in these cities — were unable to dominate the major university teams. The Big Four were themselves a cut above the other senior teams in the rugby unions. Hence, the other unions were weakened beyond recovery when the Big Four pulled out in 1907 to form their own rugby union.

However, the university teams sometimes refused to compete in the

CRU playoffs. Between 1900 and 1904 they boycotted the Dominion Championship on the grounds that the rugby unions were using professionals. Further rule changes and hence further standardization were demanded of the CRU before the universities would return to the Dominion Championship in 1905. But professionalism continued to be a problem. A model already existed in the form of the English Rugby League, which commenced operation shortly before the turn of the century.

ENTER THE GREY CUP

The Grey Cup has been a treasured symbol in Canadian football for most of this century. The cup was donated in 1909 by Lord Grey, governor general of Canada, as an award for the winner of the Dominion Championship. He gave it explicitly for amateur competition. It was only a matter of a few years before the Grey Cup became emblematic of the best football team of the day. Once it had that meaning every team in the CRU coveted it. As a result, the Grey Cup had two profound effects on adult football in Canada. One, its very prominence in central Canada attracted the western teams, who longed to win it to prove their superiority over those east of them. Two, the strong drive by all teams to win the cup pushed the senior teams farther along the road to professionalism.

Football in the West

Until 1921, when the first western team played in a Grey Cup game, football developments outside central Canada went largely unnoticed by central Canadians. But there was football in western Canada. There were football unions in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, all of which affiliated eventually with the CRU. Starting in 1911 the rugby union in western Canada presented the Hugo Ross Trophy, to the western champions. As in central Canada, the university and senior teams of the region competed for this prize.

The western union did not affiliate with the CRU until 1921. The cost of travel prohibited a western team from challenging for the Grey Cup before 1921. Early competition for the cup was therefore confined to the four unions in Ontario and Quebec — the same competitors for the Dominion Championship as in pre-Grey Cup days.

The period from 1909 through 1924 was one of university dominance in Canadian football. University teams (University of Toronto and

Queen's University) won seven of the twelve Dominion Championships. Four of the remaining five were won by one of the Big Four teams. The remaining championship was won by a fifth senior team. No Grey Cup games were played during World War I. The university record during this period might have been even better had the McGill teams of 1912 and 1919, which were Intercollegiate champions, decided to play in the Dominion Championship.

University teams fared less well in the west. A football union was founded in 1927 to organize games among the four universities of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. They competed for the Hardy Cup, with the winner playing the winner of the western rugby union competition for the Ross Trophy. Since no western university team ever won that trophy, no western university team ever advanced to a Grey Cup game. The first team to represent the west in the Dominion Championship was the Edmonton Eskimos, which lost in 1921 to the Toronto Argonauts 23 to 0.

Both the Argonauts and the Eskimos were senior teams and both were harbingers of the future of Canadian football: the senior teams across the country were gradually growing stronger than their collegiate competitors, owing in good part to the increasing professionalization of the former. After 1924 a university team competed only once for the Grey Cup. This was the University of Toronto, which lost to the Ottawa Senators in 1926 by a score of 10 to 7. The eastern universities could see the growing competitive imbalance and withdrew from Grey Cup competition in 1934.

Western university teams, however, continued to compete sporadically with senior teams in their region until 1967, when the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union was founded. The western university teams have always faced the problem of having too few competitors stretched over too great a distance. Some teams, for example, Simon Fraser University, have solved this problem by joining a league in the United States, while others have solved it by playing preseason games or exhibition games, or both, with American teams.

Football in the west remained weaker than that in central Canada until the mid-1950s. Using Grey Cup championships as a measure, we note that western teams won only four national championships between 1921 and 1953 (Winnipeg teams won three times, a Calgary team once). The west's first Grey Cup victory came in 1935, when the Winnipegs upset

the Hamilton Tigers 18 to 12. Additionally, various eastern senior teams had been touring the west in the preceding years, usually winning against the teams they played by handsome scores. These facts were used to support the belief, held mostly in central Canada, that football in the west was of the minor league variety.

Tony Allan traces the initial weakness of western football to the lack of expert coaching.[5] Since the game was played in very few high schools or colleges, no team in the west had access to even partially trained players. Nor was there much significant contact with central Canadian teams, which employed more knowledgeable coaches. In fact, some western senior teams even operated without a coach, while the best teams in the region — namely, those in Winnipeg and Regina — managed to hire American coaches during at least some of their early years.

Still, the record for the west from 1921 through 1953 is not as dismal as it appears on the surface. During most of this period, senior teams from Winnipeg and Regina were the western senior champions. They had to travel by train to eastern Ontario (once to Montreal) to compete in the Grey Cup game. Getting time off from work, finding the money to travel such a distance, and arranging to get an entire team to and from the game were formidable problems. Nine times during the thirty-two- year period they were not solved sufficiently to allow the western champion to challenge for the Grey Cup. In these instances, the eastern team that the western champion would have played was declared the Grey Cup champion.

Possibly the most consistent early source of experienced players overall for both western and central senior teams was the junior teams. As previously mentioned, the athletic clubs that sponsored senior teams often sponsored junior teams as well. The junior teams appear to have been limited to men aged twenty and under, although the limit has since been raised to twenty-two. It was probably true then as it is now that there were more junior teams than university teams, and that the junior teams were distributed more evenly in the large and small cities of central and western Canada.

At any rate, there is record of Ontario and Quebec junior teams competing for a junior championship since 1908. East-west competition began in 1925, the year the Leader Post Trophy was donated to junior football by the Regina newspaper of the same name. As might be

expected, the west fared no better against the central teams here than it did at the senior level. Between 1925 and 1947, when a new national junior football championship series was started, the west won only twice. Teams from Regina won both times. Only once during this period was the championship game held in the west; it took place in Moose Jaw in 1929. Unlike the university and senior series, the junior national championship was cancelled during the Depression and World War II.

THE MODERN ERA

There are at least two reasons why the early 1930s can be identified as the beginning of the modern era of Canadian football. First, the nature of the game changed dramatically, because of official adoption by the CRU in 1931 of the forward pass. This innovation spawned many further changes, some of which are considered later. Among the things changed was the shape of the ball. To facilitate passing, the old rugby football had to be streamlined; its rounder and fatter shape had to be narrowed. The rugby ball lent itself well only to dropkicking. For some devotees the introduction of the forward pass represented still another instance of insidious americanization of the Canadian game.

Second, by the early 1930s the growing professionalization of Canadian football was a trend to be reckoned with. Professionalism of individual players, though not of teams as a whole, had become common. As we shall see in Chapter 2, professionalism is actually a far more complicated idea than common sense suggests. Historically, however, the common sense notion of professionalism was what stimulated discussion, some of it acrimonious, on whether professionalism in football is good or bad. One of the criteria used to differentiate amateurs from professionals from the late 1920s on has been excellence. It was generally believed that professionals were the better players.

Another criterion was player remuneration. Charges of football players being paid were made before the turn of the century. But these were isolated cases. By the early 1930s, however, it was widely believed that the senior teams were paying from two to five players on a per game basis. Most of these men were Americans. Since no contracts were signed, the fiction of amateurism could persist at the executive level of the rugby unions. Still, it was clear enough to the eastern universities, when they played the senior teams, that some of the men on these teams were professionals. The university teams quit Grey Cup competition in

1934. And there were other signs about that time to suggest that professionalism was a growing force in Canadian football: promoters tried to establish a professional league in 1932; a professional team called the Crosse and Blackwell Chefs actually competed for several seasons against professional teams in the United States; the Winnipegs, a senior team, had nine American players on its roster in 1935.

By the late 1940s, the ideal of amateurism, to which the CRU demanded allegiance by all member teams, was being ignored by the wealthiest of them. Publicly, the wealthy teams — the Big Four and the western senior teams — neither embraced professionalism nor renounced amateurism. Behind the scenes, they had the money to acquire more fine players than the teams in the other eastern senior teams. The latter two leagues, which by this time were composed mostly of teams from the smaller cities in Ontario and Quebec, suffered much the same fate from the late 1930s onward that the university teams had suffered ten to fifteen years earlier: a noticeable gap in excellence had developed between them and the big city teams, accompanied by a declining interest from the fans.

The CRU made three decisions in 1946 that unwittingly fostered further growth of professionalism. First, it abolished the rule that an imported player had to live a minimum of one year in Canada to qualify as a player for a member team. The new rule stated that he need only be a resident by the 21st of August of the year he played for his team. Second, it authorized five imports from the United States to each team. Third, all linemen were allowed to block up to ten yards beyond the line of scrimmage. Since earlier CRU rules had prohibited downfield blocking, Canadian linemen had little experience with it. Therefore, the further importation of American players was inadvertently encouraged, for they were familiar with this technique.

With contracts still a rarity, Canadian teams began to hire American players with increasing frequency in the early 1950s. The All-American conference had collapsed, throwing many good players out of work. The CRU responded to this situation by raising the number of imports allowed to seven. About the same time, Canadian teams began a bidding war with the National Football League (NFL) in a drive to acquire some of its more talented players. And, while NFL officials were protesting the "raids" by Canadian teams, certain NFL coaches and managers were trying to lure players from these same teams to play in the United States.

The demand for players had raised their value and hence their salaries. As a result, the financial gap between the rich teams and the poor teams in Canadian senior football grew still wider. And what Bruce Kidd refers to as the "Canadian dependence on and subordination to U.S. commercial football" was assured at this time.[6]

As the paying of Americans *and* Canadians to play football became more common, the need grew for revenue from ticket sales. But how could the stands be filled with paying customers? Although no one planned it that way, the annual Grey Cup game became the means to this end. It did so by heightening the visibility and appeal of professional football.

The turning point came in the 1948 Grey Cup game in Toronto, when the Calgary Stampeders beat the Ottawa Rough Riders 12 to 7. Although it was still rare at this time for a western team to win the national senior championship, the 1948 game meant less to professional football in Canada than the events surrounding it. Jack Sullivan describes these events:

> The architects in the change were a Calgary alderman who decided it was time to throw a party that the East, specifically Toronto, would never forget, and Calgary Stampeder Coach Les Lear.
>
> Calgary had made it to the Cup final for the first time and Alderman Don MacKay said it was time to inject some color into the event. Hundreds of cowboy-garbed citizens from the foothills city arrived in Toronto three days before the kickoff and hammed it up on Toronto streets with horses, chuckwagons, flapjacks, impromptu parades and dances.
>
> They roamed the streets in their ten-gallon hats, high boots and spurs. They hoisted Toronto Mayor Hiram (Buck) McCallum onto a horse. Hotel managers ordered their lobbies cleared of all movable furniture, flower pots and assortment of odds and ends. Downtown pubs were packed with celebrating Westerners in the red and white colors of the Stampeders — and gawking Easterners. Stampeder fans probably broke every liquor law in Ontario and the police, caught up in the festival atmosphere, looked the other way. . .
>
> Cup watchers realized that a little-known Calgary alderman had deposited a million-dollar baby in the CRU's lap. . .
>
> Things started to move. While officials East and West were counting their blessings for those wonderful Alberta fans, Alder-

> man MacKay and Lear, the Toronto Junior Board of Trade hopped on the bandwagon. Its members started the organization of pre-game festivities. They stuck to the Calgary script, added a few refinements here and there with Miss Grey Cup beauty contests, parties, dances.

The introduction of televised football in 1952 added still more allure to the game and its Grey Cup finale.

In 1954, the British Columbia Lions joined the western football union. The next year the Edmonton Eskimos defeated the Montreal Alouettes by a score of 34 to 19 in Vancouver's Empire Stadium in the first Grey Cup game played in the Canadian west. Edmonton won their third Grey Cup championship in a row in 1956. Western senior football had come of age, which set the stage for some major organizational changes.

During the early 1950s the Ontario senior champion played the western senior champion. The winner of this Grey Cup semifinal competed against the Big Four champion in the final. At this time, the Ontario union consisted of the following: the Toronto Balmy Beaches, Kitchener-Waterloo Dutchmen, Sarnia Imperials, and Brantford Redmen. The Toronto and Sarnia teams had played in and occasionally won Grey Cup games between 1920 and 1940. But, by the mid-1950s they, along with the others in their league, were but poor farm clubs of the big city teams in the central part of the country.

Moreover, by the early 1950s, the Grey Cup semifinal between the Ontario and western champions no longer provided much interest for football fans and little challenge for the western teams. For these reasons the western teams and the Big Four scheduled their 1955 season exclusively between their two leagues. The same year the Ontario teams announced that they were withdrawing temporarily from Grey Cup competition. But Ontario league officials vowed they would return; the Ontario union was an institution; it had been part of the Grey Cup playoffs since 1909. Nevertheless, the western teams and the Big Four, which had joined forces as the Canadian Football Council (formed within the CRU in 1956), were, with the help of various other football unions, able to control voting in the CRU to the extent needed to prevent the Ontario teams from challenging for the Cup ever again.

The Canadian Football Council was established to exempt the senior teams, which were by now openly professional, from the restrictions imposed on amateurs. Yet the council was part of the CRU, an amateur

organization. This lingering anomaly was eliminated in 1958 with the formation of the independent Canadian Football League (CFL).

Now professional football could run its own affairs. Meanwhile, the CRU continued as the national umbrella organization for all amateur football and rugby. To facilitate the development of high-quality amateur players, the CFL agreed to help subsidize the operating costs of amateur football with an annual grant from its professional profits. In 1984 the CFL donated $50,000 to this cause.[8]

Further organizational changes took place in 1966 when the Canadian Amateur Football Association (CAFA), assumed the responsibility for all football, youth and adult, and the CRU turned over the Grey Cup trusteeship to the CFL. The CAFA had been expanding its jurisdiction since its inception in 1882 as the national organization for youth and high school football. Over the years it has come to represent, and provide some of the funding for, flag and touch football and junior and intercollegiate tackle football.

As a hybrid, "Canadian rugby football" had run its course. Now there was rugby *and* football. By 1957 the hybrid was americanized beyond recognition when the CRU authorized changes in the names of player positions. At that time the rugby snaps became centers, inside wings became guards, middle wings became tackles, outside wings became ends, flying wings became wing backs. The organizational vestiges of rugby disappeared with the renaming in the early 1960s of the two major rugby football unions to the Eastern Football Conference and the Western Football Conference, respectively. The words rugby and union confused American recruits to the Canadian game and hardly served as accurate terms for the sport as it had evolved to that point in time.

Many of today's familiar institutions got their start in the early 1960s. The Reporters' Association was granted permission by the CFL in 1962 to choose an all-star team for each conference. The Canadian Football Hall of Fame was established the same year. The practice of stopping the game ninety seconds for television commercials also sprang up about this time. And, in 1965, the Canadian Football League Players' Association was founded. The most immediate reason for this development was a controversial decision by the CFL to allow each team only three players who had become Canadian citizens. But the need for a players' organization had been discussed since 1961 to give the players a united voice on such matters as starting a pension plan, revising the injury clause in the

player's contract, and increasing playoff and Grey Cup salaries. More will be said on these issues and others in later chapters.

The history of Canadian professional football since 1965 is familiar to even the most casual fan. Attendance figures, team budgets, and salaries of players and coaches have generally continued to grow. The celebration of Grey Cup Week is, for many Canadians, the entertainment event of the year. There is no doubt that professional football is now a big business. Although the game still lacks the level of appeal found in the United States, it is one of the most significant developments in Canadian sport.[9] Gerald Redmond notes that football reflects

> both the differences and similarities between Canada and the United States, symbolizing shared North American values as well as the tensions of some inevitable dissention between the two independent and neighbouring countries. In short, it is an integral part of Canadian culture, a remarkably durable mirror of the Canadian identity problem and inferiority complex. The hope must be that the CFL will survive and prosper in a more equitable future, and become more Canadian in fact as well as in title, without losing entirely the proven benefits of American experience.[10]

Postwar Amateur Football

In the Maritime provinces football took root during World War II, chiefly through the influence of servicemen stationed there from other parts of the country. The first college game was played in September 1947, between St. Mary's University and Dalhousie University, starting a rivalry that remained intense for nearly three decades. It was not until 1965, however, that the Bluenose Intercollegiate Football Conference was organized. Over the years, St. Francis Xavier University has won the distinction of being the gridiron powerhouse of the region, a region that lacks any other kind of adult participation in tackle football.

Intercollegiate competition has been reorganized several times to accommodate the increasing number of institutions who wanted to field teams. In 1983 twenty-three teams competed for the Vanier Cup in four conferences: Western Intercollegiate Football League, Ontario Universities Athletic Association, Ontario-Quebec Intercollegiate Football Conference, and the Bluenose Conference. Recently, the Vanier Cup game has generated the sort of festivities found in Grey Cup Week. Festival Week for Vanier Cup '84 included an official kickoff (of the week), a major parade, and an expensive dinner and dance. There were

also fund-raising events, special luncheons, and awards ceremonies. The Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) has controlled the Vanier Cup championship since 1967, the year this trophy was donated. The CIAU is an affiliate of, and hence receives part of its funding from, the CAFA.

A new national championship series for junior football was inaugurated in 1947 under the aegis of the CAFA. Teams from Montreal west continued to compete for the Leader Post Trophy until 1975, when the Canadian National Junior Football League (CNJFL) was established. That year the CNJFL became an affiliate of the CAFA and replaced the Leader Post Trophy with the Armadale Cup.[11] Like the CFL, the CNJFL has a commissioner who tends to the administration affairs of the League and acts as its spokesman. Since 1981 Schenley Awards have been given to the two outstanding offensive and defensive players of the year, as was already the practice at the intercollegiate and professional levels.

Many senior teams, of course, resisted entirely, or to a significant degree, the tendency to professionalize. Others, including some of the teams in Ontario, tried to professionalize, but failed and were forced to return to some semblance of amateur play. The result was that amateur senior football continued in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba alongside junior, university, and professional (also referred to at times as senior) football. Funding for the amateur senior teams was provided in part by their provincial football associations and by CAFA.

Today, Ontario has the strongest amateur senior football program. There are two leagues: The Northern Football Conference, which is composed of teams from Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Hamilton, Oakville, and Brampton, has no age or weight restrictions for its players. The Central Ontario Senior Football League, made up of five teams in the Toronto area, imposes a minimum weight limit of 185 pounds.

Manitoba had a senior football league from 1945 through 1972. The Senior St. Vital Mustangs got started in Winnipeg in 1983. They play five or six games with local junior teams and university teams in Canada and the United States. Although the Mustangs have no weight minimum, they require that players be at least 23 years of age (to avoid recruitment competition with junior teams). There is presently talk among organizers in Saskatoon and Calgary of forming a league that would comprise teams from these two cities and the Winnipeg team. By 1985 the number of senior teams in Alberta had grown to six.

At present, amateur senior football in Quebec is nonexistent. An

organized league functioned for many years, until its demise in 1967, following the loss of the Châteauguay Ramblers to the Bramalea Satellites in the eastern Canadian playoffs. Until 1984 four senior teams — funded, organized, and run by the players themselves — operated outside the jurisdiction of the Fédération de Football Amateur du Québec. But even they have folded.[12]

Beneath the general course of events in the history of Canadian football lie two trends: (1) the changing nature of the game and its equipment; and (2) the changing meaning of "amateur" and "professional." The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the first trend. The second is taken up in chapter 2.

WHAT IT WAS, WAS RUGBY

Both American and Canadian football stem from the game of rugby as it was played by McGill when it met Harvard on three occasions in 1874. The rugby "code," or set of rules of the game, had been standardized to a considerable degree in 1871 by the English Rugby Union. Rugby was then, as it is today, a cross between modern North American football and soccer.

In the late nineteenth century, a team of fifteen men — typically eight "forwards" (today's linemen) and seven "backs" — would dribble, pass (sideways or backwards), carry, or kick the ball toward the opponent's goal (today's endzone). A "try" (today's touchdown) was scored when a player "touched down" the ball in the defending team's goal. A try counted three points and a conversion, which was accomplished with a dropkick, another two. Field goals were also attempted and, if successful, worth three points. Rugby resembled soccer inasmuch as there was no blocking, and play was continuous; the team receiving the ball on the kickoff could carry, dribble, or "lateral" it until an opponent fell on a loose ball, intercepted a lateral, or tackled the ball carrier. When tackled, the carrier had to drop the ball. The first man to reach it put it into play by kicking it on the ground. Even today, the sense of possession is much less developed in rugby than in modern North American football.

Thus, in early rugby, play would continue without interruption until a rule infraction occurred or the ball went out of bounds. At this time, each team formed a "scrum." The typical scrum consisted of a 3-2-3 formation of forwards. The front three forwards crouched side by side, locked arms, and met shoulder to shoulder with the front three of the

Figure 1: Waiting to play. (photo by Dac Dang)

opposing team. The ball was then placed between these two lines, and the play was started by the forwards as they attempted to heel the ball to their backs. The seven backs — called "half," "three-quarter," and "full" — attempted to score a try by using one or more secret passing or running maneuvers. Rugby has always emphasized strategy and coordinated effort among teammates, and deemphasized exceptional individual play.

Rugby was played on a field 110 yards long by 75 yards wide, with an additional 25 yards at each end for the goals. Since play was continuous, there were neither downs nor huddles. Moreover, no substitutions were permitted. If play had to be stopped because someone was injured and the injured man taken off the field, then his team played shorthanded.

Football in Canada and the United States developed from this common base.[13] Perhaps it was due to Canada's closer ties with Britain that rugby changed more slowly here than in the United States. But modifications introduced south of the border soon reached Canada. This happened when American players and coaches were recruited to Canadian teams. It also happened when Canadian teams played American teams — a frequent occurrence because the latter were often closer and cost less to travel to than teams in Canada.

The history of changes in Canadian football is primarily about the outcome of the struggles between what Frank Cosentino calls the "traditionalists" and the "liberals."[14] The former wanted rugby to remain as it was in Britain; the liberals wanted the game to evolve more or less as it was evolving in the United States. Obviously, the liberals won most of these struggles, although they sometimes had to wait several years for success. Moreover, they did not win them all; the present Canadian game is distinguished in part by certain rugby features. Many of the liberals were in the west, where, particularly in the Prairie provinces, ties to Britain were comparatively weak, and ties to the United States comparatively strong.

It is not always known how quickly changes in the rugby game in the United States came to Canada. The snap back with the hand or foot from a single line of seven forwards was used by the University of Michigan against the University of Toronto in 1879.[15] Canadian teams were using quarterbacks in fourteen-player teams by the turn of the century. These innovations had spread from Walter Camp at Yale University to other American schools and subsequently to schools in Canada. A new scoring system was put into use in Canada in the 1880s, which consisted in part of

a four-point touchdown, two-point conversion, one-point safety touch, and one-point rouge. The rouge is awarded to the kicking team when it misses a field goal, or when the receiving team fails to run the ball out of its endzone following a punt.

The first three decades of the twentieth century saw numerous changes to the game and its equipment. By 1909, the first year of Grey Cup competition, teams were allowed substitutions for injured players during the first half of the game and, by 1915, during the entire game. By 1921, the number of men per side had dropped to twelve. Centers had dropped the practice of heeling the ball and were directly "snapping it back" between their legs. Thus the other two men of the front three forwards were no longer needed. And, despite its roughness, football in Canada was not played with built-in shoulder pads until the early 1920s. At this time headgear was still varied: some wore a helmet, some wore a cap, and some wore no protection whatsoever.

Frank Shaughnessy, the American-born-and-trained coach of the powerful McGill teams of 1912 to 1919, is usually credited with bringing the huddle to Canada. It was not used by any other team until 1925 and then only amid great controversy. Those opposed to this innovation held that it slowed the game too much. Those favoring it felt this disadvantage was outweighed by the secrecy it provided for calling signals. Before the huddle was adopted, signals were called at the line of scrimmage within earshot of the opposing team.

Rugby Football

The dawn of the modern era of Canadian football — the 1930s — is so described because it was during this period that the game came to look more like contemporary football and less like pure rugby. During the 1930s, it became "rugby football." As mentioned earlier, the adoption of the forward pass was a major factor in this transition. And those most intimately involved with Canadian football seemed to conceive of it as football rather than the rugby football of Britain, so-named as to distinguish it from association football there.

Why? Because when the American game of "football" changed, the Canadians sometimes followed suit. For example, in 1931 the CRU accepted the term touchdown for "try." A trend toward an American-type backfield was evident by 1937 (i.e., two halfbacks, one quarterback, one fullback). Moreover, blocking behind the line of scrimmage was introduced about this time. Linemen were allowed to "pull out" and

"trap-block" opposing players coming through the line. With this change halfbacks found themselves with the task of protecting the passer by blocking rushing defensive linemen. These innovations initially favored American players, since Canadians were unfamiliar with the techniques they required.

The forties was not a decade for significant change. Rather, the major problem was finding enough men to keep scheduled play going in theface of the manpower demands of World War II. By 1950 senior football was professional in every way but its name. Thus, it is hardly surprising that professional practices began to appear. The practice of trading players began that year, the first trade occurring between the Calgary Stampeders and the Saskatchewan Roughriders. It was also the year that the option clause was adopted by the CRU: once a player's contract expires, his team has the option to renew it for one more season, providing he is paid at least the salary stated in the contract.[16] A new regulation was approved, one that prevented players from switching teams without receiving permission to do so from the team they intended to leave. And 1950 was the year that the practice of firing coaches for losing too many games got its start. The western teams pioneered this innovation as well. The annual Grey Cup dinner was inaugurated in 1950 as a tribute to Ross Trimble, the coach of the Ottawa Rough Rider team that won the Grey Cup championship in 1940.

By 1956 the value of a touchdown had risen to six points. Four years later the CFL instituted the present numbering system, which has since been adopted by most, if not all, amateur teams across the country. This system indicates by means of the number on a player's jersey whether he is eligible to receive passes. Today, this number must be between 1 and 39, and 70 and 99.

CANADIAN FOOTBALL TODAY

Modern Canadian football is an extremely complicated sport, consisting of an intricate set of offensive and defensive plays or strategies, which are sometimes modified from game to game and sometimes substituted instantaneously at the line of scrimmage. Today's football players are as specialized as any set of athletes in contemporary sport. Supporting their highly strategic maneuvers against the opposition, especially at the professional level, is a vast supply of information gained from game films, electronic data processing, and direct observation. Players and coaches ponder this intelligence for many hours as they prepare to play

the next game. Canadian football has come a long way from the days of the rugby matches between McGill and Harvard.

Yet, the rugby heritage of the modern game is still very much in evidence, especially in its Canadian form. The Canadian game has retained the length of the rugby playing field and depth of its endzones. As in rugby, all backs can move in all directions behind the line of scrimmage (only one back can move either sideways or backward in U.S. football). And rugby-like features are found in the rules that define punts and unsuccessful field goals as live balls that may be recovered by the opposing team. The rouge, or extra point, is also still a part of the modern Canadian game, although there is talk from time to time of eliminating it in the CFL. In some of the areas where Canadians have modified rugby, they have not gone as far as the Americans, such as in the width of the playing field and the number of players per team. The Canadian field is eight yards wider than the American field, as well as being longer; both features put a premium on speed. The game is played in Canada with one player more. With the concept of downs being foreign to rugby, Canada strayed to only three, whereas the United States added a fourth.

Perhaps more than any other single factor it is the vestiges of rugby in modern Canadian football that gives it the open quality that distinguishes it from the American game. Canadians, while marveling at the precision and finesse of football in the United States, find it less exciting than the game they see played in Canada. For the present, at least, Canadians generally seem inclined to resist any further Americanization of their form of football, even though many of them have long forgotten about, or never knew of, its gradual and sometimes reluctant transition from the game of rugby that so enchanted the men from Harvard.

NOTES

1. Nicol, Eric and Dave More, *The Joy of Football* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1980).

2. This chapter draws extensively on the following sources: Cosentino, Frank. "A History of Canadian Football 1909-1968." M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, Faculty of Physical Education, 1969; Sullivan, Jack. *The Grey Cup Story* (Toronto: Pagurian Press, 1974).

3. Dunning, Eric and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen, and Players* (Oxford, England: Martin Robertson, 1979), 60-61.

4. Cosentino, *A History of Canadian Football*, 1.
5. Allan, Tony, *Grey Cup or Bust* (Winnipeg: Stoval-Advocate Press, 1954), 12.
6. Kidd, Bruce. "Sport, Dependency, and the Canadian State." In *Sport, Culture, and the Modern State*, eds. Hart Cantelon and Richard Gruneau (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 293.
7. Sullivan, *The Grey Cup Story*, 15-17.
8. Some professional teams make additional donations to junior football teams in their area.
9. Redmond, Gerald, "Developments in Sport from 1939 to 1976." In *History of Sport in Canada*, eds. Maxwell L. Howell and Reet A. Howell (Champaign, Il.: Stipes Publishing Co., 1981), 369.
10. Redmond, "Developments in Sport," 370.
11. The Leader Post Trophy was retired to the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 1975.
12. This information on amateur senior football comes from personal communications between the author and the Fédération de Football Amateur du Québec, the Ontario Amateur Football Association, and the Manitoba Amateur Football Association.
13. It appears that, although rugby was the game that Harvard disseminated among the colleges and universities in the eastern United States in 1874 and 1875, it was generally referred to there as football.
14. Cosentino, *A History of Canadian Football*, 11.
15. Howell, Nancy and Maxwell L. Howell, *Sports and Games in Canadian Life: 1700 to the Present* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), 80-81, 195.
16. Throughout this book references to football players in general will be made in masculine linguistic terms, for the simple reason that the majority of players are still male. Note, however, that young women are gaining entrance to Canadian high school teams (see *Globe and Mail*, 2.10.86, pp. A1-2).

CHAPTER 2

Amateur? Professional?

In Canada and the Western world today, the professional worker is a highly honored and highly visible occupational category. Considerably less visible to the public are the amateurs who pursue, as leisure, otherwise professional activities in the arts, sports, science, and entertainment fields. But, at one time, the difference in prominence between the two was different: the amateurs were more visible and honored than the professionals.

Eugene Glader traces the early usage of "amateur" in art and sport.[1] The original Latin and French roots of amateur refer to the fact that amateurs love, or appreciate something. In seventeenth-century France, amateurs were *appreciators* of fine arts. Later, the word came to include the lovers of sport, specifically those who enjoyed watching it. They were the people whom we call fans today.

Still later, when people began participating in a sport for side-bets or small purses put up by someone else, a distinction developed between those who accepted these rewards and those who did not. Those who professed an interest in making or trying to make some sort of living by sport, or who approached it as a calling or vocation came to be known as "professionals."

Whannel says the idea of amateur and professional *participants* in sport as separate categories of people emerged no earlier than the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was applied to rowing.[2] This distinction, however, failed to eliminate the older meaning of amateur as nonparticipant appreciator, or lover of a particular art or sport. In fact, to this day, the popular image of amateur includes the idea of love for the activity, while the image of professional lacks this idea.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, professionals were also distinguished from amateurs by social class. The amateurs were gentle-

men of aristocratic or bourgeois status, who had money and therefore no need to engage in sport as a livelihood or as a supplement to their livelihood. Clearly, financial return from sport continued to be an important criterion for differentiating the two, but one that had become linked to social class. Those who played for money were lower class while those who played for nothing were upper class. This distinction first appeared in Britain, where, along with other criteria, it helped people identify the social strata in their class-conscious society.

Yet, there was more to being a professional or an amateur than class standing and whether one should receive money from sport. The professionals were employed as mechanics, craftsmen, and laborers. The upper classes believed that such work kept the professionals in good physical condition and possibly developed useful sport skills, either or both of which gave them a competitive advantage.

Although there were no rules to prevent an amateur from competing with a professional, various social arrangements at that time discouraged this kind of association. For example, there were upper-class sports clubs that excluded mechanics, craftsmen, and laborers. The British elite also controlled access to the universities. This was accomplished by accepting only those students who had received their secondary education from one of the upper-class public schools, where rugby got its start.

Glader reports that before 1855, the term amateur seldom appeared in the sports literature. The distinction between amateur and professional existed, but it did not become a controversial issue until some upper-class amateurs began to compete with lower-class professionals, presumably because they enjoyed the challenge and could live with the ignominy of losing occasionally to someone whom they regarded as a social inferior. Soon after, the athletic clubs, public schools, and elite universities developed formal definitions of "amateur," which they used to exclude undesirable aspirants to their circles. By 1869, it was common for the amateur to be defined as "someone who (1) had not competed in athletics for money, (2) had not taught athletic skills as a means of livelihood, and (3) had not competed in an open race."[3]

There were also amateur athletes in the lower classes, but they were few since their work left little time for training and preparation.[4] By 1870 or so, they were beginning to show their resentment at being excluded from competition with the upper classes solely on the basis of social rank. Moreover, there were, as previously mentioned, those gentlemen

who wanted to compete with the professionals of the day. Thus, in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the social-class division separating amateurs from professionals began to disappear. What remained was the older distinction of appreciator: amateurs were once again primarily those who played a sport for its enjoyment free of the potential effects of money on that enjoyment.

The birth, in the 1890s, of the modern international Olympic movement encouraged sports organizers around the world to sharpen their definitions of "amateur."[5] The first modern Olympic Congress was convened in 1895 to prepare for the first modern games to be held the next year. By this time, national athletic associations had been established in Britain, Canada, and the United States. Sports leagues and multisports collegiate conferences were also being formed in these countries. Such developments required crisper, more universalistic definitions of amateur.

Crisper definitions were ordinarily long definitions, requiring a printed page or two. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century these definitions usually treated professionals as a residual category, simply as athletes who were not amateurs. By this time the social-class criterion had disappeared in official statements; there were no exclusionist references to mechanics, craftsmen, and laborers. Still, it is likely that these criteria continued to be applied informally. And, in rugby for example, the distinction lived on in the formation in Britain of the Nothern Union (which became the Rugby League in 1922) and the Rugby Union. The first was composed of working-class players who were supported by working-class fans, while the second took root in the upper-middle-class public schools, universities, and old-boys associations.[6]

The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, which was born during this period, was dissolved in 1970 and replaced by a set of bodies that govern separate sports (e.g., CAFA) and that receive their funding from the federal government. Today, each body determines its own rules of amateur eligibility as suited to the sport under their jurisdiction. Sports in which participants have long and complicated amateur-professional careers and in which there is Olympic competition need a more elaborate code of amateur eligibility than sports without these alternatives.

As I shall note later, football careers are short. Moreover, there is no opportunity for Olympic play. Consequently, the definitions of amateur

used in today's junior and collegiate football leagues seem almost flippant when compared with the lengthy definitions of the early 1900s. The Canadian National Junior Football League's (CNJFL) "Rules and Regulations" (1983) state only that "any player who has signed a professional contract and wishes to sign with a CNJFL team, must be reinstated by the Commissioner." Since September 1982, the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) has treated amateurs as the residual category by defining only professionals in its "Eligibility Rules." A professional is "any student who has at any time played in a recognized professional league, or participated as a professional in an individual type recreation, sport or athletic event or events." To be reinstated to amateur status and play in the interuniversity athletic program, a former professional must be a full-time student for one calendar year at a member educational institution.

Nevertheless, in many sports today's adult amateur is still expected to take no money for playing football or endorsing products, to avoid mixed professional-amateur competion, and to reject cash awards for outstanding play. Opportunities to benefit in these three ways are largely if not entirely unavailable to Canadian football players and so the ways need no mention in CIAU and CNJFL rule books. All this coincides with Lansley's observation that, especially since the turn of the century, the concept amateurism in Canada has changed much less than the organizational structures designed to promote and oversee it.[7]

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL?

In the practical world of football games, player recruitment, ticket sales, annual budgets, and the like, there is scant interest in defining "professional." At the operational level in professional football, the meaning of the word is obvious: a professional is a member of a team that pays its players to play football. In amateur football the concern has chiefly been, as noted earlier, one of defining the amateur. Professionals are, then, those participants in the sport who fail to qualify for inclusion in the category of amateur.

At first, the professional was simply someone who somehow made some money from playing football. As indicated, isolated cases of individual professionalism occurred in the late nineteenth century. But by far the most common practice was for players to spend their own money to play football as a form of leisure, rather than to earn money

from it as a partial or total livelihood. By the opening decade of the twentieth century, spectators were buying tickets to watch games played by men who bought their own uniforms, shoes, stockings, canvas pants and canvas jackets with a bit of shoulder padding.[8] The universities and the athletic clubs had modest budgets for their football teams, which helped them fund travel expenses, refreshments during games, and, if there were a surplus and the team won a championship, a souvenir for each player.

Cosentino describes the commercial and technological changes that contributed to the growth of professionalism in football and other sports in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Canada.[9] One set of changes resulted in improved rail and, later, automobile transportation within and between cities. Another set led to quicker radio and newspaper communication. These changes helped spectators and players get to more distant games more quickly and learn about the outcome of games sooner than previously. Technological advances of this sort ultimately helped raise the visibility of spectator sports in the community and promote their value as forms of participant leisure and as a genre of public entertainment. Later, radio broadcasts of sports events and, still later, telecasts of these events were to have a similar impact.

The increased visibility of sport through technological change would have gone unnoticed had the public cared little for sporting events. But, then as now, intercity rivalries and team loyalties ran high. There has always been an intense competitiveness between communities, which spectator sports has served as a main vehicle of its expression. Thus, between approximately 1890 and 1915 certain sports in Canada offered near-ideal soil for commercial growth. People were prepared to spend money to see their team compete against their rivals. The Grey Cup came to signify not only the superiority of the champion team, but also the superiority of the community it represented.

For the sports entrepreneur, the link between the commercialization of sport, or the selling of tickets, and the professionalization of players, or the payment of athletes, is simple: Support the athletes during their playing season so that they can devote their full attention to mastering skills, conditioning their bodies, and perfecting teamwork. They will then produce a significantly higher level of performance than if they had to work full-time at a nonsport job, especially if the job is sedentary. Their superiority will help them win games. A good record of wins will

attract fans eager to see their team win and the teams of their rival communities lose.

The commercialization and professionalization of sport in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Canada affected hockey, baseball, football, lacrosse, rowing, and running. The early and partial professionalization of football in Canada was stimulated by the still earlier professionalization of first baseball and then hockey in the United States. Yet, during this period in Canadian football, only a handful of players were being paid small sums to offset the loss of wages at work. As mentioned in chapter 1, widespread professionalization of individual football players began only in the 1930s.

POPULAR IMAGES

Professionalization of athletes had gone far enough by the turn of the century, however, for the public to adopt a simplistic distinction between professionals and amateurs. One of the criteria touched upon in the preceding chapter was that of excellence. According to common sense, professionals are better than amateurs because the former pursue sport full-time. And, at least in the case of football, they pursue it longer; that is to say, they pursue it after a collegiate career or a junior career. Even though the work week was growing shorter and transportation improvements were allowing additional time for leisure, amateur athletes were seen as novices or, more charitably, as not good enough to be professional.

During the decade of the 1930s, the popular image of excellence became tainted with another image, namely, degeneracy. This image emerged, in part, from the practice of paying athletes. People who embraced the ideal of amateurism believed that being paid to play a sport or even winning prize money was the principle motivation of the professional. His love of their sport and his pursuit of excellence in it were considered secondary (despite the counter-image that full-time pursuit leads to excellence).

Other people viewed the professional as an excellent athlete. But they also accepted a variant of the degeneracy image. They questioned the professional's moral character. In the days when professional sport was taking root in North America, there was some justification for this outlook. The early history of professional hockey and baseball is sprinkled with incidents of drunkenness and alcoholism among players. Some

players also accepted the occasional financial bribe to throw certain games. Further, there were accounts of fights and rowdyism off the playing field. Before it could succeed, professional sport had to live down this reputation. It had to demonstrate to the public that the outcomes of the games they paid to see were the results of the best efforts of excellent players in good physical condition engaging in teamwork — and nothing else.

Because professionalization came earlier to baseball and hockey than to football, football escaped some of the infamy that was associated with the first two. For instance, the first outright professional hockey league — the International Hockey League — was founded in 1904. The American Professional Football Association was not founded until 1920. (Its name was changed to the National Football League in 1922.) Nonetheless, the degeneracy image persisted among collegiate coaches in the United States and Canada, who were outspoken in their views that professional football was a corruption of the sports values learned in amateur play.

Cosentino notes that during the Great Depression, the demand for professional sporting events grew, especially because of the need for diversion among the many unemployed workers. With this growth came a new popular image of the professional athlete. He became the invincible man, someone who is unbeatable, powerful, and indefatigable as well as someone who has integrity and performs flawlessly. Professional sport *had* lived down its degeneracy image. The mass media and the sport entrepreneurs had also collaborated to create and communicate to the public the professional's new image.

But football, particularly Canadian football, was behind the times here, too (which some people called a blessing). Although a professional team operated in Canada for a few years in the early 1930s (see p. 10), most teams were professional in the remunerative sense only to the extent that they were secretly paying their imported American players and finding them offseason jobs in Canada. Because Canadian senior football was controlled by the Canadian Rugby Union, an amateur organization whose members could outvote the professional interests within it, movement toward open professional status was delayed until the 1950s.

Meanwhile, on the amateur scene, eligibility requirements for athletes have been growing somewhat less restrictive over the years. For example, in some amateur sports leagues today, players are permitted to earn

money as coaches or teachers in the sport they play as amateurs. In some sports, including collegiate and junior football, the team supplies its players with expensive equipment; pays for travel, room, and board; covers medical expenses incurred while playing; and provides locker rooms, and training services and facilities. Collegiate players may receive a scholarship, covering tuition and book expenses. The junior players in this study, who are enrolled in a university, college, or trade-school program, receive enough money from their team each year to pay for tuition and books for an academic term.

During the 1960s, Cosentino reports that professionals in sport had their image of invincibility tarnished. The demand for million-dollar contracts and the advent of players' strikes revived the old nineteenth-century image of the avaricious athlete whose interest in sport is largely extrinsic. More recently, news about drug use among professional athletes and the current CFL drug information program have suggested to some fans that the degeneracy image is not yet obsolete.

Still, the contemporary popular image of the professional is far from being all bad. High pay, mass media coverage of games and individual players, unbelievable displays of ability, seemingly effortless play, and the like are all reasons for regarding today's sports professionals in a favorable light. Perhaps the public sees them as it sees other types of professionals these days: Professionals everywhere are presently considered skilled, knowledgeable experts, who sometimes have character and occupational failings that remind their clients that professionals, too, are less than perfect.

SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGES

The popular image of the professional football player as expert, and the image of his adult amateur counterpart as inferior, while having some basis in fact, are still seriously incomplete pictures of these two kinds of athletes. Professionals and amateurs in sport, in general, and in football, in particular, are more than experts and inferiors, respectively. To complete these pictures, we turn to sociological images of professional and amateur.

In certain ways, amateur football players are no different from other adult amateurs who abound in art, science, sport, and entertainment. All amateurs engage in activities that are freely chosen because of their strong appeal (amateur as appreciator). Moreover, these activities are

genuine pursuits; the participant is motivated by seriousness and commitment, since these are expressed in regimentation (e.g., rehearsals, practice) and systematization (e.g., schedules, organization). This orientation towards leisure clearly distinguishes amateurs from players, dabblers, and novices in the activities they pursue.

I have discussed in detail the problems of defining amateur and professional elsewhere.[10] Suffice it to say here that amateurs and professionals and their publics (fans, in the case of football) can be defined by (1) the three-way system of relationships that holds them together, and (2) by the differences in key attitudes held by amateurs and professionals. Since a major portion of this book is about the attitudes of amateur and professionals in football and the relationships between them and between both groups and their fans, little more need be said here about scientific definitions. However, since the question sometimes arises in lay circles as well as in the scientific world whether or not football players and other full-time athletes are truly professional, I shall devote the remainder of this chapter to a discussion of this issue.

Professionalism in Football

Common sense has it that a category of workers is professional when its members work full-time and are paid enough to live on (i.e., it is their livelihood). Since professions of all sorts have these qualities, as do nonprofessional occupations, they are of no use in determining whether full-time football players are truly professional. Instead, a start in answering this question for the men who play in the CFL will be made by comparing them with the nine attributes that comprise the ideal-typical concept of professional.[11] Do these players meet these attributes within the same limits of variation found among most other types of professionals?

First, all professionals produce an unstandardized product. The product or performance produced by football players is always unique in some way. Every game is unique, as is the play of each player once the ball is snapped. No receiver, for example, has the ball thrown to him exactly the same way with each pass. Nor is he guarded by the defensive backs the same way from pass to pass. The receiver's field position is also different to some extent with each pass play he runs. In each play, every player on the field makes a set of unique, split-second decisions and reactions in response to the actions unfolding before him.

Second, professionals in general are well versed in an exclusive body of theoretical or abstract knowledge underlying their specialized technique. In football, each player is a specialist in his position of linebacker, defensive back, offensive guard, and so on. Furthermore, each must be able to "read," or identify the other team's offensive or defensive plays and how they are going to develop. He must then decide when and where to use certain techniques that will enable him to carry out his responsibilities. The player's ability to read a play is based on his "exclusive body of theoretical knowledge" of football offenses and defenses. True, this body of knowledge is neither as abstract nor as complicated as that of a lawyer, for instance. But many years of playing experience are needed for a player to learn to read well. And the player has only a few seconds to apply his knowledge, whereas the lawyer has hours, if not days, to apply his.

Third, professionals have a sense of identity with their colleagues, with whom they constitute a select ingroup. The sense of identity with colleagues in football is most evident at the team level. Team members share the poignant experiences of winning and losing. During each game, they share the satisfaction that comes from cooperating with each other to tackle the ball carrier, facilitate a pass, or prevent a pass reception. This cooperation may occur under such trying circumstances as personal injury, bad weather, poor officiating, or close games. In short, a local collegiality develops among members of a football team. It rests on intricate teamwork, significant shared experiences and, in the most successful teams, mutual respect for each others' athletic skills and knowledge.

Fourth, professionals have mastered a generalized cultural tradition associated with their profession. At the core of the cultural tradition mastered by today's football players is the game of football itself. Surrounding this core is the evolution of football from rugby, the place of football in Canadian society as a form of entertainment, the prominent players and coaches of the past, and the great teams in the history of the game. The cultural tradition of football also includes the major changes that have occurred through the years in the game's formal organization, its rules and regulations.

Fifth, professionals use institutionalized means of validating the adequacy of a lengthy period of training and the competence of trained individuals. The training of professional football players is certainly not

validated or certified in the same formal way as the training of, say, physicians and schoolteachers. But a rigorous form of validation does take place. Both rookies and veterans in football must demonstrate to the coaching staff in annual preseason training camps and against considerable competition that they are good enough "to make the team." Validation as professional is aided by assessments made of a prospective player from his game films and "statistics" (records of game performances) produced while playing on a junior or collegiate team. This information helps the coaching staff decide whether to invite the man to their training camp. To refuse to "sign" him for regular season play is tantamount to his failure to be validated as professional.

Sixth, professional work constitutes a "calling," in which professionals emphasize the consistent application of standards and service as framed in a code of ethics, rather than emphasizing material rewards. The emphasis on service among professionals is expressed in football in the drive, mentioned frequently by the players interviewed for this study, to experience the thrill of winning and avoid the pain of losing. In addition, the professional interviewees who played one or two years for a professional team often commented that they no longer play to impress their coaches so much as to meet the standards of professional performance for their particular position on the team. Coaches seem to encourage this orientation by limiting the number of emotional locker-room harangues before and during games, which would have the effect of focussing attention on them. Players also serve their team in a professional manner when they play regardless of a painful injury and anxiety over possible permanent, career-ending damage to the injured area.

Seventh, professionals are recognized by their clients as members of a profession with authority based on knowledge of and experience in their specialty. The previously mentioned popular image of the professional football player as expert is sufficient evidence of this ideal attribute.

Eighth, professionals' work provides an avenue for frequent, reliable attainment or realization of important social values of the society. At least three important social values are more or less frequently and reliably realized through adult football during the football season. One is the value of football as an entertainment form. Another is its value as a display of athletic prowess. Adult football is also valued for its contribution to community identity. A city's team helps put the town "on the

map," especially if the team is winning.[12] Participation in the Grey Cup championship is the ultimate realization of this value.

Ninth, professional work is self-regulated or autonomous. Are football players autonomous workers? The answer is a qualified "yes." Players are free to sell their services to the team making the most attractive bid, but only before a contract is signed with a team, when a contract expires, or when players ask and receive permission to be traded to another team. Moreover, players are sometimes assigned to positions other than those in which they have had the most experience and success. Whether a man's position is his first choice, he is free, however, to carry out its duties (i.e., block, punt, run, tackle, pass) in the way he believes will bring the best results. If the results are unfavorable, he will likely soon be benched, traded, cut, or moved to another position. Whatever the profession, its practitioners must face the consequences of inadequate performance, one of which is that their freedom to guide their own work is curtailed. Finally, football players are expected to prepare themselves for each game by remaining physically fit and by learning (usually through films) the relevant plays of the other team and the strengths and weaknesses of its individual players.

From what has been said so far, it appears that there are grounds for the claim that football players in the CFL are, sociologically speaking, professional. Since to be a professional is to live a certain kind of occupational life-style, evidence for this conclusion is also available in the remaining chapters. From the point of view of the player, football life is organized according to four major time perspectives. Thus, the next four chapters describe and explain the daily, weekly, seasonal, and transseasonal perspectives and associated routines of a sample of professionals and amateurs in Canada who make football their vocation or avocation. In chapters 7 and 8 the scope broadens to include their views of and adjustments to their involvements in the community and their team-related problems.

NOTES

1. Glader, Eugene A., *Amateurism and Athletics* (West Point, N.Y.: Leisure Press, 1978), Chapter 5.

2. Whannel, G., *Blowing the Whistle: The Politics of Sport* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 43.

3. Glader, *Amateurism and Athletics*, 103.
4. Whannel, G. *Blowing the Whistle*, 44.
5. Glader, *Amateurism and Athletics*, 123.
6. Whannel, *Blowing the Whistle*, 46.
7. Lansley, Keith L., "The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism." Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, Faculty of Physical Education, 1971.
8. Sullivan, Jack, *The Grey Cup Story* (Toronto: Pagurian Press, 1974), 21.
9. The remainder of this section and all of the next draw extensively on Consentino, Frank, "A History of the Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport." University of Alberta, Faculty of Physical Education, Ph.D. thesis, 1973.
10. Stebbins, Robert A., *Amateurs: On the Margin Between Work and Leisure* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979), Chapter 1.
11. The present statement of this ideal-type is an expanded version of the original published in Stebbins, *Amateurs*, p. 24. Subsequent research projects, including the present one, have made possible the revisions.
12. The frequent and reliable attainment of these three values provided by professional sport is one way of distinguishing it from elite amateur sport (e.g., Olympic competition), which is never a frequent, and often not even a reliable, attainment of these values.

CHAPTER 3

The Daily Round

Amateur or professional, the adult football player in Canada today is a main appreciator of his sport. It is clear that he enjoys watching as well as playing it, just as the appreciative amateurs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enjoyed viewing art. For instance, in 1983 the junior players attended an average of 3.5 professional games, while the university players averaged 3.66 games during the same year. There were eight regular season and preseason professional games played in Calgary in 1983. In addition, university players watched an average of 2 televised games per week, compared with the junior players who watched an average of 3 games. These included professional and college games in both Canada and the United States. The professionals, who play and travel during some of the time when televised games are available, were not asked about this form of appreciation of their sport.

Despite the considerable amount of time spent viewing football, today's serious player appreciates the game primarily as a participant. Appreciation through participation begins in childhood for the typical player. Games, both tackle and touch, involving from four to twenty or more boys (and more and more often, girls) emerge spontaneously at recess, during lunch hours, and after school in the crisp Canadian autumn on neighborhood playgrounds, fields, and streets. This is pick-up football. A great deal is learned from it, including an assortment of bad habits that coaches work long hours to try to eliminate when the boys join teams in their adolescence.

Possibly the most important acquisition in pick-up football is a passion for the game itself. As the hours of running, blocking, passing, and receiving accumulate, some boys realize that they can perform these skills better than their friends. This distinction, when combined with a deep fascination with the very nature of football as a game, is frequently

the only encouragement these boys need to try out for an organized bantam or high school team.

Life in organized teams, especially those in high school, is noticeably different from pick-up football. High school teams devote much time to conditioning their players and to drilling them in the skills and knowledge they need to perform effectively in games. The rigors of conditioning and drilling are foreign to street players. Nevertheless, the love for the game is strong enough to carry many of them through the seemingly endless days of arduous preparation that is part of the serious football player's athletic life from high school onward. This preparation occurs at football practice.

FOOTBALL PRACTICE

Football practice is one of four core activities that lie at the heart of the life-style of the adult football players. Practice, along with the core activities of *meetings* and *homework* make up the preparatory part of the sport, and are considered later in this chapter. The fourth core activity — the game — is examined in chapter 4. The several peripheral activities surrounding the core are discussed at various points in this book.

For both amateurs and professionals, practices are held almost daily. In a typical week, only the day of the game and, depending on the team, the first or second day after it are free. During the regular season, players commonly have one day a week in which there are no scheduled football responsibilities. And even this day off may be revoked if the time between the most recent game and the next game is less than seven days or the coach wants to punish the team for an unsatisfactory performance the week before. A team needs four days of heavy practice and a day of light practice to prepare for a game. During the preseason period, players practice twice daily (known as "two-a-days") for up to two weeks at the university and professional levels. The work commitments of the junior players preclude two-a-days for them.

Football's daily round centers on the practice. As must happen in athletics, practice begins on a level of low physical and mental intensity with the warm-up. The purpose of the warm-up is to prepare the body and the mind for the rigorous exercises and drills that follow in the next two hours or so, the length of a standard practice.

The Warm-up

The warm-up gets underway for the amateurs with the verbal command

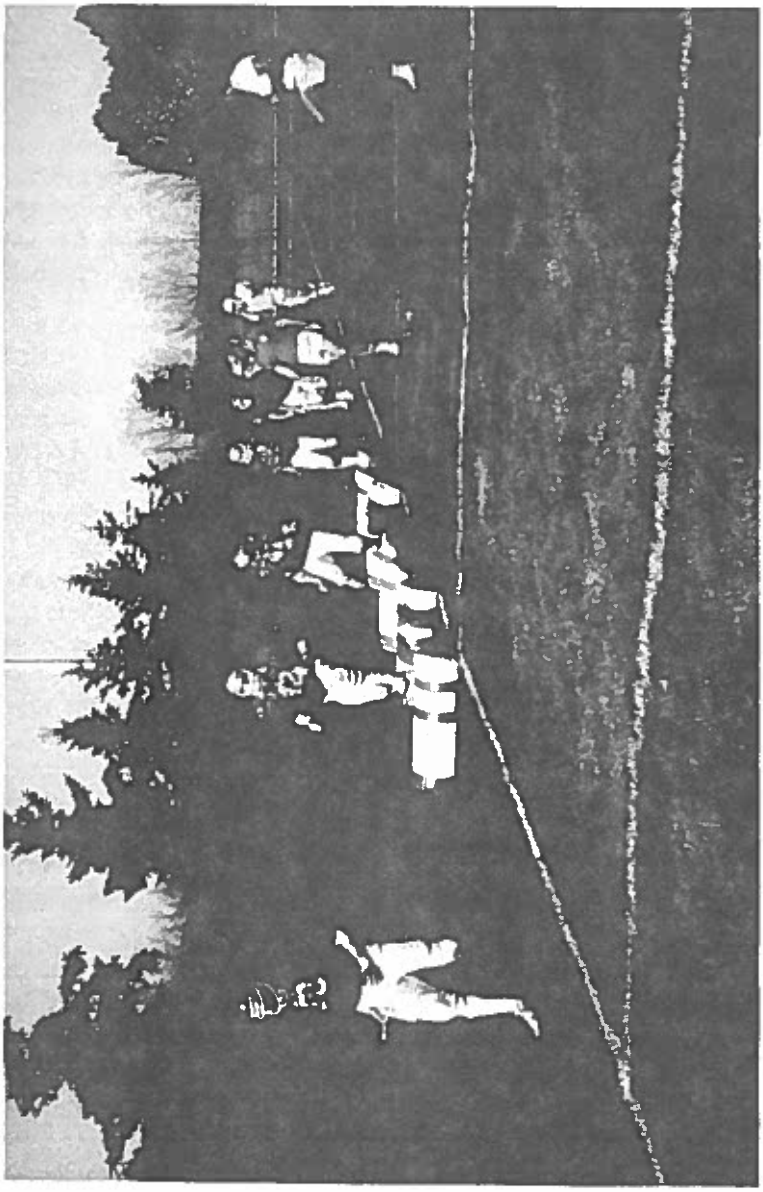

Figure 2: An agility exercise for defensive backs. (photo by R.A. Stebbins)

Figure 3: An agility exercise for running backs. (photo by R.A. Stebbins)

Figure 4: Hitting the sled. (photo by Dac Dang)

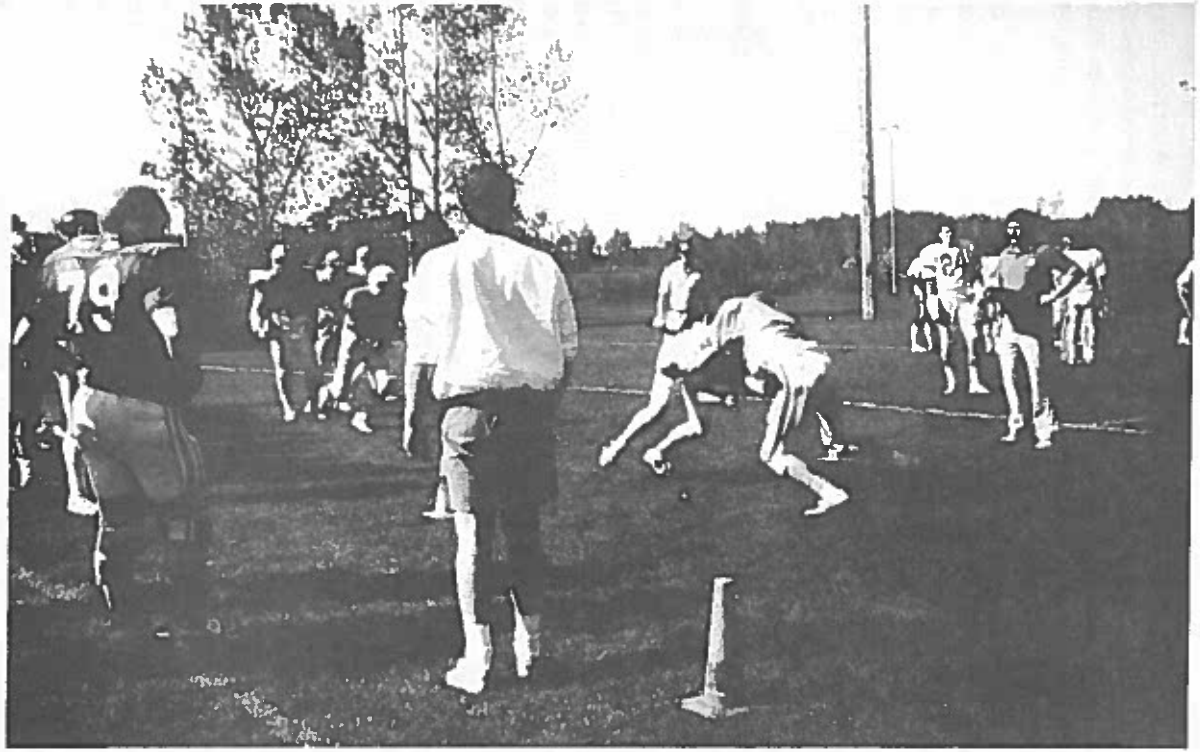

Figure 5: Under watchful eyes. (photo by R.A. Stebbins)

of "let's go!" — the signal for everyone to jog the length of the football field and back again. As the players return to the middle of the field, they form columns or rows for calisthenics, a variety of exercises designed to increase flexibility and prevent strains. They are done in unison and, where appropriate, to a cadence provided by one or more of the team's veterans. The warm-up lasts about ten minutes.

The warm-up is also a time for humor, which takes the forms of wisecracking, ribbing, and light-hearted antics. Furthermore, it is a time for reminders of the most important goal in contemporary adult football — winning the next game. The wisecracking is short and to the point: "My dog taught me this one," a player commented while lying on his back with his legs placed over his head. From amidst a formation of players sitting on the ground doing a leg-stretching exercise came the observation: "Hey, I hear that Carl got laid last night." Carl said that he wished it were true. "It's like taking a big dump in the woods," was the description given to an isometric squat exercise.

Antics are usually limited to those of the "guest speaker," as he is known among the Colts; a player, often a rookie, who is invited to the front of the warm-up formation to conduct an exercise of his choice. He is expected to lead the team in some exercise-like antic that is at once funny and easy to do. During one warm-up, the guest speaker led a finger exercise; at another he led his team in a series of sexually suggestive hip thrusts that imitated the bumps and grinds of a stripper. Humor during warm-up is evident on both junior and university teams, although it is somewhat more frequent and somewhat more likely to be off-color among junior players.

For the Stampeders the warm-up period lasts no more than four or five minutes. It, too, is carried out in columns as the first item on the practice agenda (these professionals seldom run as a group before the warm-up).[1] At this time there is less humor among them than among amateurs, although talking does occur and is usually informational or motivational. The latter consists of reminders of the importance of the upcoming game: "Got to get the Cats! Got to get the Cats [Hamilton Tigercats]:" chanted a Stampeder as he entered a warm-up column. A Colt urged his teammates to "get ready for the Rams [Regina Rams]." A Dino speculated: "how nice it would be to be six and zero [six wins, no losses]." The professionals terminate their warm-up with the jumping-jack exercise in which the name of the next opponent is vociferously

spelled out as the players' feet hit the ground: M-O-N-T-R-E-A-L.

The warm-up completed, players go directly to their "groups" — units composed of men playing the same or similar positions: defensive backs, running backs, quarterbacks, offensive linemen, defensive linemen, and pass receivers.[2] This is the beginning of a sequence of activities that reaches its final phase near the end of the practice. Over the sequence, each player tends to move from comparatively unrealistic, nongame-like agility exercises, to somewhat more realistic, game-like skills drills, to a very realistic and game-like scrimmage.

Agility Period

Like the warm-up exercises, the "agility period," as it is called, is primarily intended to condition the player. The differences between the two are that agility exercises are (1) designed for muscular strength and muscular and cardiorespiratory endurance, as well as to increase flexibility and agility; and (2) they are designed to do this within the somewhat more realistic framework of the player's position.

To this end, one sometimes sees running backs during this phase of practice, racing in and out of a line of traffic pylons set two to three yards apart to simulate the dodging that they must do in open field running. Defensive backs may be seen "backpedaling," or running backwards to simulate their defense against a pass. Offensive linemen spend some time each week doing a modified form of "grass drill." They start by "chugging" (a pass protection technique that resembles running in place while crouched), then flop on their stomachs, after which they return to chugging, as directed by a coach. This exercise simulates the situation in which a lineman is knocked down by a charging defensive player, but is still able to regain his feet to continue to protect his quarterback, who is trying to pass the ball.

These exercises and others of this type are considerably more tiring than the warm-up exercises. Players are expected to do them at full speed. Moreover, they are kept doing them until they "have had a good workout" (i.e., are breathless). Here, as much as in any phase of a typical football practice, is where the daily round comes to be viewed by some players as the "daily grind."

Individual Techniques or Skills Period

This is the home of the football drill. Taken literally, to drill means to fix

habits as deeply as if they were bored into one's head with a drill. Habituated actions and reactions are desirable in football, for there is usually little or no time to *reflect* about what to do next. When players start the skills period, their practices become significantly more realistic. While they continue the conditioning begun in the previous periods, their main purpose is to develop special techniques and movements, and habituate the player to them, so that he can fill well his position on the team.

Often there is an "opponent" in these drills, as in the grueling pit drill, where, on a signal from the coach, an offensive lineman tries to get around a defensive lineman to tag (a simulated tackle) the quarterback five yards or so behind the line of scrimmage. Likewise, receivers and defensive backs spar as the first tries to catch the ball while the second works to prevent this from happening. Linebackers and running backs are also pitted against each other in skills drills when, for example, the latter try to run between two blocking dummies (realistically spaced as offensive tackle and guard) and the former try to tackle them. But sometimes there is no opponent. For instance, quarterbacks practice handing off the ball to a halfback in a drill designed not only to habituate particular techniques and movements, but also to develop coordinated play (defined shortly).

On the whole, skills drills are as tiring as position-related exercises. Both are conducted at full speed and for as long as the players have the stamina to profit from them. Together, these two sets of activities take up roughly half the practice. Linemen are often kept doing them longer than the other groups of players, partly because they run much less here than the backs and receivers. But sooner or later all groups move to the next phase of practice, the play-related drills.

Coordinated play and cooperative play are two kinds of dependent play, where team success depends on each man doing his part. Coordinated play is a sequence of linked moves by two or more players, as in the snap and handoff of the ball from center to quarterback to halfback. In cooperative play there is no sequence of player moves, for they must occur simultaneously.

Play-Related Drills

Play-related drills help fix in the minds of the players the movements they must make and the techniques they must use to run each offensive

and defensive play — as well as continue the development, conditioning and habituation of previous phases of practice. But the primary purpose of the play-related drill is to perfect the coordination and cooperation so essential to a well-executed play. Players are required to integrate the techniques and movements they have learned with those of other players on their offensive or defensive team to carry out a complete play.

In their simplest form, these drills have no opponent, as when a quarterback and his running backs practice backfield shifting, blocking, and handing off the ball, or when the defensive backfield practices deploying into a zone type pass defense. The opponentless play-related drill may be expanded to the point where an entire offensive or defensive team (including linemen) runs particular plays.

Play-related drills become more complicated as opponents are added. For instance, pass plays may be run against a pass defense. Drills of this sort, which exclude linemen, are known as "skeleton" drills. They are somewhat less realistic than the "thud" drill, or scrimmage, wherein linemen are added but instructed to play at full speed only for their first two steps, read and react to the offense or defense, and refrain from tackling or hard blocking. The ultimate play-related drill is the "live" scrimmage, which is a full-scale tilt between the offensive and defensive teams and involves tackling, blocking, and running with game-like intensity. The two teams may also scrimmage "live" to sharpen their performance on "specialities": field goals, conversions, kickoffs, kickoff returns, punts, and punt returns.

In general, players are less physically active in the play-related drills than in the preceding drills and exercises. The nature of many of these drills is such that players must wait their turn to participate in them. Here, at last, is an opportunity to rest tired muscles and recover stamina sufficiently to get through the remainder of the practice. While on the sidelines, however, a player is expected to study the performance of the man who is playing his position and to learn from his successes and his failures. This break is sometimes a mixed blessing, however, for, in cold weather, a player's sweaty body cools quickly and muscles stiffen rapidly unless he remains active.

The time spent on the sidelines during this phase of practice is also used for purposes other than observing one's position. Players also take this opportunity to discuss what they and their teammates are supposed to do in certain plays. Sometimes these discussions are motivated by the

need for clarification. At other times they are initiated by one player who believes he must correct a misunderstanding of another player. This kind of sideline talk is not always welcome; it can become a source of momentary friction between players:

> "You're supposed to be over there," a middle linebacker instructed an outside linebacker at a university practice.
> "No I'm not," responded his teammate.
> "Yes you are."
> "Says who?" The outside linebacker was becoming annoyed at the unwanted advice.
> "That's what coach _____ said," replied the middle linebacker, who was now getting angry with the other player's reluctance to see his point.
> "O.K., so I made a mistake."
> "Well, I'm just telling you."

Despite the expectation of studying the events on the practice field, this is also the time and place for talk about women, parties, coaches, and other players and teams. It is the time for idly performing stunts with a football, such as bouncing it on its longitudinal surface, spinning it like a top, or "tossing it" with both feet into one's hands. There was much more of this sort of activity among the junior players than among the university players or the professionals (see discussion of seriousness, chapter 4).

Several observations can be made about the sequence of exercises and drills just described. First, it helps the player see how the exercises and drills relate to his position. Second, he learns how his efforts at that position fit into the broader pattern of each offensive or defensive play.

Third, although the trend is toward greater realism (the progression from warm-ups to play-related drills), the actual sequence on a particular day may deviate somewhat. Occasionally, a skills drill precedes an agility exercise; or a skills drill may be run after a play-related drill. These deviations are most common among the amateurs. Sometimes deviations are forced by external factors such as a key player arriving late or leaving early, or by the threat of rain. But a coach may alter the usual sequence to drill his players in an area where they are weak, the drill taking place near the beginning of the practice when they are freshest.

Fourth, while play-related drills of some kind are part of every

practice, the amateur teams avoid live scrimmage two or three days before a game. During the regular season, the professionals scrimmage live only when no game is scheduled for the next weekend. That amateurs only conduct such drills early in the practice week, and that professionals conduct them rarely, point to their potential for injury. Coaches reason that, if one must lose a player through injury, it is better that this should happen in a game than while preparing for one.

Fifth, despite the threat of injury, live scrimmage is the most attractive part of practice sessions for most players. They enter football because they love the game. Live scrimmage is as close as they come to playing it during the week. Moreover, these scrimmages help bridge the gap between the comparatively dull routine of daily practice and the excitement of the weekly game. For players who sit on the bench throughout much of the season, the live scrimmage is the sole touch of realism in an athletic life otherwise composed of less interesting drills and exercises. At any rate, the decision of whether they will scrimmage live lies with the coach, not the players.

More Conditioning

Practices at the professional level inevitably end with the thud scrimmage. In the amateur ranks, the next event after the drills is a short talk by the head coach. In these sessions, he may list the accomplishments of the practice, make announcements, iron out administrative details, and most importantly, make a statement or two on the importance of winning the next game, with stress on the strong points of the team they will meet.

Football practices end for amateurs as they begin: with more conditioning, which focuses as much on developing muscular strength and muscular and cardiorespiratory endurance, as it does on maintaining flexibility. Both professional and amateur teams tend to start this phase of practice with a punishing set of sprints, with each sprint covering forty to sixty-five yards and separated by a scant few seconds of rest. The university players are then required to "cool down" with a set of unsupervised strengthening exercises. Only half the university team sprints each evening; the other half heads indoors for twenty minutes of weight training. The next night this final conditioning routine is reversed.

The junior team, because it lacked weight-training facilities at the time of the study, used a variety of exercises to accomplish this further

conditioning.[3] Sometimes the team formed two circles from the centers of which a veteran led a series of exercises designed to increase strength, endurance, and flexibility. At other times, the players were directed through a series of exercises on a nearby hill, up which they ran; they carried one another piggyback, raced wheelbarrow fashion, did the "crab," or "bear crawl" (racing on hands and feet), and the like. Early in the practice week, the entire team "ran the stairs," a fifteen-minute marathon of ascending and descending all the aisles on both sides of Calgary's McMahon football stadium. A record was kept of those players who completed the ordeal in fifteen minutes or less.

Practice Before a Game

Practices on the days before games are noticeably lighter and shorter than those earlier in the week. The usual warm-up routine is followed, but the arduous exercises are omitted. Instead, players are run through drills that maintain flexibility and muscular tone without tiring them. This practice is also used to rehearse the various offensive and defensive plays.

Overall, it is a restful day; the workout is light enough for the players to recover from the more strenuous practices of the preceding four days and leave them fresh for the game. In addition to running plays, the quarterbacks keep limber by throwing to their receivers, while punters and kickers practice their skills. The speciality teams engage in a few minutes of thud scrimmage. For the amateurs these practices invariably end with a spirited pep talk by the head coach. He emphasizes the importance of the game and of maintaining good training habits prior to it; for example, getting a good night's sleep, eating a proper meal several hours before the game, and drinking little or no alcohol.

MEETINGS

In football, a "meeting" is an occasion when a portion of the team (e.g., offensive, defensive, quarterbacks) comes together for the purpose of considering certain technical aspects of their positions, often with reference to the offense or defense of the next team they will play. The professional team meets every practice day, and the university team meets daily before school starts and two or three times each week after that. The junior team, which lacks facilities to hold meetings for large numbers of players, assembles smaller groups in the coach's office or on the field throughout the week.

Meetings can be considered a core activity because it is here that players learn, chiefly through videotape, about the offensive and defensive plays of the team with whom they have their next game. That is, they learn about that team's strengths and weaknesses. Conference rules require amateur and professional teams to videotape their games and send a copy to the team they are scheduled to play next. These tapes usually reach their destination within a couple of days of their production, in time for the coaches of the receiving team to study them, show them to their players, and work up a set of strategies based on what they have seen.

Thus, meetings also consist of instruction on new plays and modifications of existing ones. It is not enough for a player to learn the "playbook," that is, learn the code numbers and letters of the plays, and what he and his teammates must do in them. He must also learn many opportunistic modifications of those plays. The modifications are offensive and defensive strategies expressly designed to capitalize on the weaknesses and counter the strengths of the other team, as these are observed on the videotapes or gleaned from on-the-spot scouting reports. A new play may even be introduced to meet an anticipated contingency in the forthcoming game or eliminate a critical team weakness that has developed recently.

Meetings, for amateurs, may be as short as ten or fifteen minutes, or as long as an hour. Professionals' meetings usually run an hour or so. Whatever their length, the ones I observed (among amateurs) were generally convivial affairs conducted in a relaxed manner. This stands in contrast to the military-like atmosphere of the practice field, where coaches bark orders, summon players by their last names, demand undivided attention, and become impatient with what seems to be lethargy or denseness on the part of some individuals. This contrast is greater in the amateur than in the professional sphere. Even in the meetings players may have to confront failure. Sometimes videotapes of a previous game with the approaching competition are also shown. To the extent that they bear on the next game with that particular team, a player's inadequacies as seen on film may be pointed out, possibly accompanied by the warning that they had better be eliminated. Even meetings, then, can have their unpleasant moments, especially when the team is suffering through a losing season.

HOMEWORK

The term homework is not one used by the players themselves. Still, it is an accurate label for the expectations held by coaches that there is important extracurricular work for their players to do beyond the several hours consumed by meetings, practices, and games. This work is of two general types: conditioning and positional. To the extent that practices are insufficient to keep players in the physical condition necessary for effective play over an entire football game, they must also train at other times of the day. In addition, players must learn the plays for their positions and the strategic modifications that are made to them from game to game.

All coaches expect their players to train on their own outside practice, though the responsibility for doing so is left to the players. The professionals had the best record in this regard, reporting an average of 4.37 hours of extra training per week; 4 of the 22 respondents said they trained little outside practice. The 25 interviewees from the university team trained an average of 3.31 hours weekly; 9 of them seldom, if ever, worked out beyond practice. The junior players averaged 0.68 hours weekly, with 20 of the 25 players interviewed training little or not at all.

Lifting weights is the chosen activity for the majority of players who do conditioning homework. The rigorous practices and games cause many players to lose weight during the season. By eating big meals and lifting weights, they try to counteract this trend (usually with partial success). Although the subject never came up in the interviews, some players undoubtedly turn to steroid drugs for this reason. Of eighty interviewees, ten did some cardiorespiratory ("aerobic") activity such as jogging or playing squash or tennis as a supplement to weight training. The meaning of these averages is discussed in the next chapter. For now, they point to the importance of homework as a component of the player's daily athletic round.

Positional homework consists partly of learning plays and their opportunistic modifications to the point where the player knows what he and the others, whose movements affect him, are supposed to do. He should also know the signal system by which the plays are referred. Finally, he should know both in detail and be able to recall them immediately. There is no time in a game to try to recall a play or to try to reason what one should do because one has forgotten what a particular signal means. Of course, some players do their positional homework better than others. To

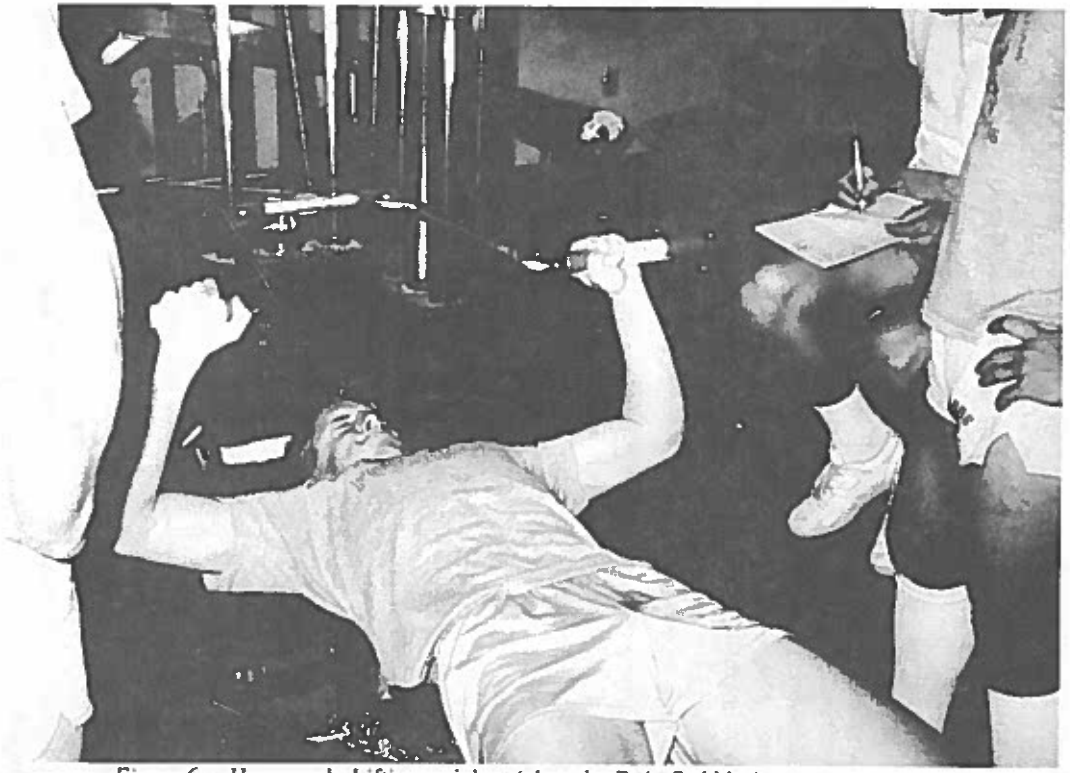

Figure 6: Homework: Lifting weights. (photo by R.A. Stebbins)

the extent that the playbook remains unchanged from year to year, there is less of this requirement for veterans than for rookies. Both categories of player, however, must spend time studying the available videotapes of the team they will meet next.

THE PLAYER'S VIEW

The player's view of the daily round develops around two sets of processes: (1) learning and improvement, and (2) competition and evaluation. They unfold within the context of the football team as a social group which, in turn, operates within a distinct physical environment.

Learning and Improvement

In describing the skills and play-related drills, I have already mentioned some of the things a player learns in practice. The acquisition of knowledge and technique from these drills is continuous, even for the most senior veterans on a professional team. Interviewees frequently commented on how much they learned when they joined the junior or the university teams. And many players said, "It was a big step," when they left the university to play professionally. Like other professional fields, there is always something new to learn, even for the most seasoned practitioner.

By the time one reaches the status of seasoned professional practitioner in football, however, one is mostly learning through experience. This form of learning is more subtle than that involved in learning a skill or an item of information. For example, it is experience that teaches a player how to "read" (i.e., predict) the opponent's plays and the future movements of individual runners, receivers, blockers, and defensive players. Both practices and games give players experience in these matters.

A sense of personal improvement develops from these different kinds of learning. Respondents were presented with a list of nine possible rewards, or benefits, of football, and each was asked to select those that applied to himself and to rank his selections from most to least rewarding. (The rewards and the ways they were ranked are considered in chapter 8.) Self-actualization — the acquisition and development of skills and knowledge — was ranked second by the Colts and fourth by the Dinosaurs and the professionals; in other words, a sense of personal

improvement is seen as strongly rewarding by the junior players and as moderately rewarding by the professional and university players. A veteran professional defensive back had this to say about improvement:

> Yes, you can take home the [game] films. You can spend a lot of time studying the films and that's what makes you a better ball player . . . You get familiar with things; you get familiar with the team you are playing, you see. You know the personnel there; you know what they're capable of; you know what kind of speed one guy's got; you know what patterns he runs well and what patterns he doesn't run well . . . You can [also] be critical about yourself. That's what improves a person: when you're a little critical of yourself and don't always accept what you do. I mean, what I do is fine, but I can always improve no matter how old I get or what. That way I don't worry about getting better, because I know I will if I read that [film] over.

Competition and Evaluation

To the casual spectator, competition is what he or she sees when two teams come together to play football. The casual spectator is often unaware of the competition that take place both in practice and in games: competition for a particular position and competition with a certain standard of play. All players experience the first; only some experience the second.

Competition for positions begins in the spring training camps for amateurs, and the preseason training camps for professionals. Across Canada, these camps, both amateur and professional, are held in May of each year. One of the first activities "in camp" is the testing of players. Each is measured for his running speed and endurance; his strength of arms, legs, and shoulders; and his ability to jump horizontally and vertically. Each is also tested for his flexibility and agility (e.g., how quickly he can change directions). The professionals are tested once only, whereas the amateurs are tested twice. To determine if the amateur player has improved, the results of these tests are compared with the results obtained from a second set of tests. They are given in the latter part of July for junior players and in mid-August for university players, at which times the two-week amateur preseason training camps begin.

Although seasoned amateurs and professionals argue among themselves about the importance of such tests, the results are one set of

indicators used by coaches to help them decide if a man will play on a team, what position he will play, and when he will start. Not knowing exactly how important the results of the testing are for their future with a team, serious-minded amateurs and professionals are inclined to take no chances; as tiring as the testing may be, they strive to do their best. Moreover, even seasoned veterans with secure positions on the team, particularly amateur veterans, want to impress the coaches with their commitment to the game. This commitment is demonstrated by "giving it all they've got" during the testing and during the exercises and drills in practice.

Professionals and amateurs alike feel the competition and evaluation most intensely in training camp. Only after a player has survived two or three seasons and is reasonably secure in his knowledge that few if any newcomers are good enough to take over his position does the threat of competition and evaluation diminish. For the occasional player who began his professional or adult amateur football career in a position different from the one he played previously, this period of insecurity lasts longer, perhaps four to five years for professionals.

Some professionals have ways of reducing the likelihood that a newcomer, whether he arrives in training camp or during the regular season, will embarrass them with a superior performance. They intimidate him by roughing him up during one or more of the practice drills. A professional with seven years experience in the offensive line described his attitude toward competition from newcomers:

> Competition, tense? No, that's what you thrive on. I always look for the top rookie they pick out and go after him first thing. Make him a hero, or you find out just how good he is. But that's the name of this game. Who is better than whom? If I win, I am great. When I was a rookie I had to go through it. It [intimidating newcomers] is one of the rewards for me now. You have an opportunity to be admired by your peer group and your coaches because they now know you're good enough.

An elbow in the ribs, a jarring tackle, an aggressive block are among the ways of telling a newcomer to try less hard. Some heed this message, perhaps because they have no choice:

> When I was in Toronto, a friend of mine [Tommy] had just finished at the University of _____. He then returned to Toronto. The Argos heard he's pretty good; he's a sprinter. So they said 'come on

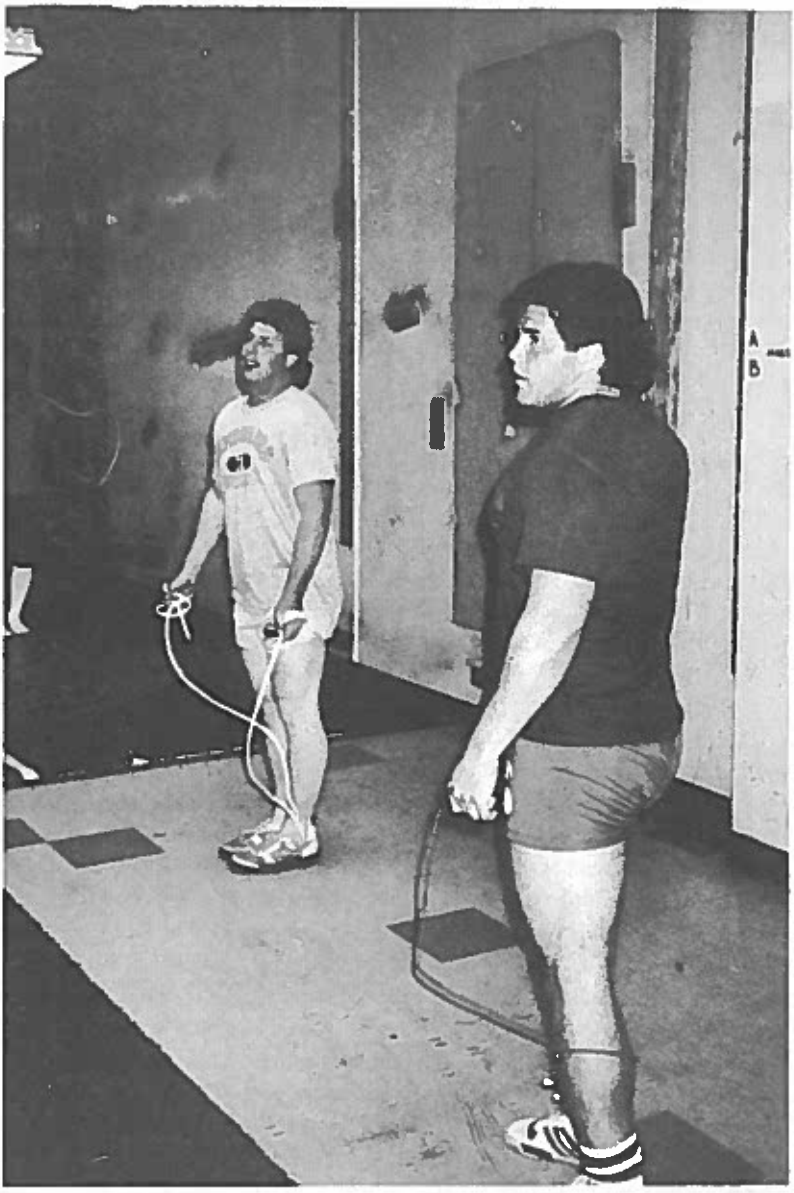

Figure 7: Testing: Skipping rope. (photo by R.A. Stebbins)

> out.' Well, it's all new to him; he never played football before.
> "Why don't you get some insurance, Tommy?"
> "For what?"
> "Because I'm going to mess you up out there." You see Tommy's trying out as a wide-receiver and I'm a cornerback.
> "But I got so much speed that I'm going to go by you," said Tommy. So Tommy was out there and some of the guys messed him up. He and I went out for a drink afterward.
> "Pete, you know I don't think I want to play this game."
> "It's not what you've seen on TV, Tommy. If you beat me, we're going to get you, we're going to beat on you. You make us look bad in the eyes of the coaches." I saw him go up for the ball and the next thing you know two guys crushed him, and this was just a dummy drill. They were supposed to just cover him. He was so fast and those guys so mad that he'd beat them that they just beat him right into the turf. At the same time he sprained his wrist and thumb.
> Later, I said: "Tommy get a job. And sure enough he's now working."
> "I don't know how you played so long."
> "Tommy, you got to keep your smarts about you. You just don't go in there and say, 'I'm the baddest dude that ever put on football equipment.' You keep your mouth shut until you can do some damage and get away with it."

Competition in football occurs not only for a position that one or two out of, say, six or eight contenders can fill as starter and backup, but also for a favorable evaluation of one's abilities by the coaches. The two foregoing cases exemplify this kind of competition. Evaluation by coaches is constant. Once the team roster is set, once training camp has ended and the number of competitors for a position is reduced to two or three players, the starting player is secure only as long as he plays at the level expected of him by his coach. Since all games are filmed and practices watched closely by coaches, lapses in performance are easily spotted.

This constant evaluation was listed by half the sample of professionals as one of the "pressures" of the game. It appears to be most intense and widespread at the professional level, for the professional interviewees were especially inclined to comment on it. The fact is that, although the ideal professional performs consistently well (see chapter 2), the actual professional in football, as in many other lines of professional work,

suffers through the occasional day of poor performance. If such a day occurs during a game, the player is likely to be under closer than usual scrutiny during the practices of the following week. If it occurs in a practice, then he is likely to hear dire predictions about his performance in the next game, as the following remarks indicate:

> "Now, you can be cut or traded anytime. There's no security. There are always the rumors and you may be in them." (Backup linebacker, four years professional experience)
>
> "You feel you're being graded every week." (Starting offensive lineman, four years professional experience)
>
> "You *are* evaluated. You get the 'eye in the sky' — the camera — every game day. In practice . . . that was one of the problems with the _____ team. There was tension on you everyday. I played between four and five years. I was a good football player. I didn't have to prove myself every day in practice since I proved it come game day. (Starting offensive lineman, five years professional experience)

Other professionals did not see constant evaluation as a pressure. An import linebacker with nearly six years experience put it this way for American players:

> Constant evaluation should not bother any American athlete at all, ever. You're evaluated constantly through high school, you're constantly evaluated through university; you're evaluated moreso through university than you are in professional athletics in Canada. Everything is filmed in university [in the U.S.], because there is so much more money [for athletic projects]. We filmed all the scrimmages, we filmed drills . . . It gets to a point where you laugh over an evaluation; there's the eye in the sky. If you make a mistake, you try to hide your number. In the back of your mind you're saying "Aw crap! Is that going to look like hell on the film." That is the way of life in professional football, but you have gone through this system and you have done extremely well through that system. If not, you wouldn't have gone as far as you have [in professional football]. Evaluation is something you should have acclimatized yourself to by that time.

Several Canadian players felt much the same way.

In fact, whether constant evaluation is experienced as a pressure depends on other conditions besides one's ability to adjust to it. Some players mentioned that evaluation becomes tension-ridden only when

they are negotiating a contract during the season. And there are coaches and personnel managers who try to sign a player to a new contract after he has played a bad game or two and is, at that moment, in a weak position to argue that his excellence should bring him a high salary or an attractive signing bonus.

The level of tension from constant evaluation also rises when a player gets injured, but not seriously enough to be sidelined. Playing under less-than-optimal physical conditions, he is not apt to perform at his best some of the time. Coaches notice this drop in performance and may indicate to him directly or indirectly that he will wind up on the bench if he continues to play poorly. Finally, evaluation is tension-producing for some players when their team is suffering through a losing season. Slack performance is often seen as one of the causes of its unimpressive record.

Although coaches at the amateur level are generally more forgiving than professional-level coaches of the sporadic day of poor performance by good players, they too must field the best team they can in order to win. In addition, because of the voluntary nature of amateur sport (a player can quit anytime), there is always the need to keep interest high among all members of the team. Hence, backup players who are nearly as good as the starters are also given a good deal of playing time, sometimes even as temporary starters. This practice puts evaluative and competitive pressure on both the starter and the backups.

Team Culture

The culture of a football team has many components. Its members recognize that they share special goals, norms, routines, humor, and language. They also share traditions, symbols, and morale. The first five components are discussed below, and the last three are considered in the next chapter.

The main goal of tackle football teams is to win games. Professional teams pursue the subsidiary goal of earning enough money to remain in operation and, in the case of most of those in the Eastern Conference of the CFL, to make a profit.[4] It is conceivable that, among the amateurs, the main goals might be to play football games and to play them well, but not particularly to win. Here the enjoyment of each game would lie primarily in its interesting nature — in the fun of running with the ball, passing it, catching it, blocking and tackling — with winning being the result of these activities and of secondary importance. This, however, is

not the way any of the players whom I met described their own goals in football or those of their team. Players practice hard through the week with the intention of winning the game on the weekend. If they lose that game, they can usually recall its enjoyable moments, but, to a man, they would say that they failed to reach their most important goal, the goal of winning. Practices following a loss provide support for the observation that the main goal in adult football is winning: these practices center on, among other things, eliminating the weaknesses that led to the loss.

There are a variety of norms in adult football. Punctual attendance is expected at all times. Illness, classes, family crises, and work commitments are the major acceptable excuses in junior football for missing a practice or arriving late for one. Work should not interfere in any way for university players. Certainly, the limp excuse that one did not feel like coming to practice, or that one got absorbed in the games at the local video parlor and lost track of the time would not be tolerated even once by either team. Consider the following incident concerning a player named Dick:

> The players were gathering for their departure for a road trip to Saskatoon, when Dick arrived to get his equipment and board the bus. He was summoned immediately to the head coach's office to explain why he had missed practice the night before. There was no choice, Dick explained. He had to move from his apartment by that weekend and would be out of town Friday and Saturday with the team. The coach found the excuse unacceptable. After considerable deliberation by the coaching staff, Dick was allowed to travel with the team to Saskatoon and play the game there the next day. At the game a week later, he sat on the bench.

Among the professionals, severe illness and family crises are the only acceptable excuses for missing a practice or game. Being late to anything officially scheduled (meetings, practices, meals, games), or violating the evening curfew during training camps or before games are grounds for a fine. For both amateurs and professionals the sanctions are stiff. To be sure, these norms of punctuality and attendance are sometimes violated, as the presence of stiff penalities suggests.

It is further expected that players will come to practices and games free of the effects of alcohol and other recreational drugs. Determining adherence to this norm is clearly difficult. As near as I could tell, no one was ever under the influence of these substances at the practices and games I observed. The problem of alcoholic hangovers from too much

consumption the night before arose on a couple of occasions in the junior team. Alcohol and drugs are enough of a threat to the coaches of all teams to encourage them to remind their players from time to time of this expectation.

Casual discussion with five of the professional respondents about excessive drinking among their colleagues, suggests that this problem is somewhat less acute today than previously. It is no problem whatsoever for the majority of professionals. I made no inquiries about what might be called fitness drugs: amphetamines, painkillers, anti-inflammatory medications, and steroids. Goodman's 1982 study suggests that most players avoid these drugs and disapprove of their use.[5] More recently, the *Globe and Mail* quoted the executive director of the Canadian Football League Players Association as saying that alcohol is probably the biggest drug problem.[6]

A third norm, applicable only at the amateur level, is that players show their commitment in practices and games by running to and from their assignments (e.g., from one drill location to the next, from the sidelines to the huddle). Members of both amateur teams tend to live up to this expectation during games, although by the end of the third quarter, their running slows to a jog. Despite more or less equal insistence by coaches of both teams that this rule also be followed in practice, university players were observed to run at these times more than the junior players.

Practices are filled with routines: the standard ways of conducting a practice that help the team reach its main goal of winning games. Thus, routines have both a present and a future orientation to them. In football, they can become boring by the time the season has reached its midpoint (see chapter 4). The problem of tedious routines is most acute for professionals since they have twice as many games to play as amateurs (16 games vs. 8, respectively, excluding playoffs). Several practice routines have already been described, namely, meetings, warm-up exercises, agility exercises, skills drills, play-related drills, end-of-practice exercises, daily talks from the coach, among others. There is also the usual light practice the day before the game. Professional teams hold their most strenuous practice on the first or second day following each game to work out bruises and strains incurred in the game and to determine whose injuries will keep them from playing the next contest.

That there are many routines in the daily life of an adult football player and that these can become boring are not necessarily signs that practices in general become boring. There is always the next game to anticipate

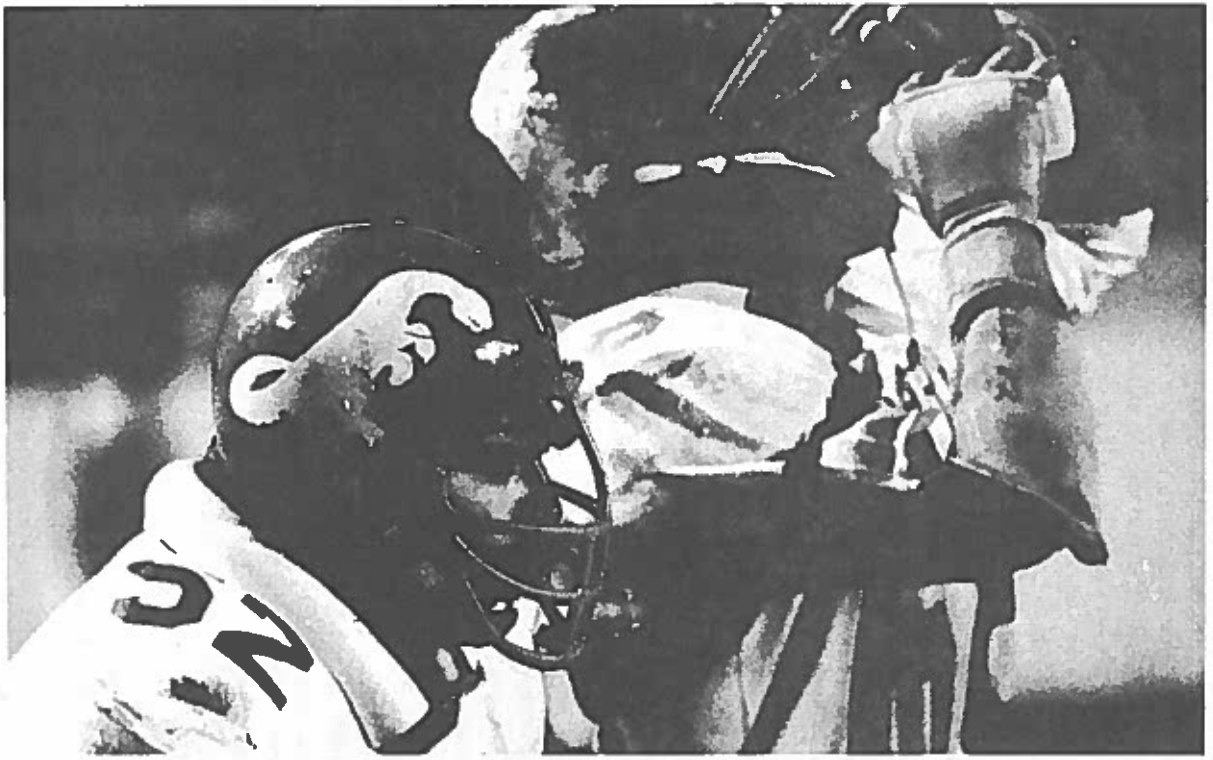

Figure 8: Attention and refreshment. (photo by Dac Dang)

against a team with a unique combination of strengths and weaknesses. There are also weaknesses in the player's own team that have become apparent during the previous week or two. These must be corrected. Injury or illness may have sidelined certain starting players, which brings new faces into the lineup for that week. And new drills and exercises add variety to practice.

It is at the professional level that the daily and weekly routines are colored with a large number of new events. Despite the boredom engendered by the routines, players said that practice, as an occasion, is actually interesting, exciting. "Something new happens daily at practice," an eight-year CFL veteran observed. For example, frequent cuts and trades in personnel are made. New players turn up from time to time for fourteen-day trials. Some players serve their team in a quasi-utility fashion and are shuffled between two or three positions (e.g., play guard one game and tackle the next; play fullback one week and linebacker the next). Feuds between players or between players and coaches, though uncommon, do enliven a practice when they flare up. Finally, commentary by the press, because it is often seen by the players as slanted or inaccurate (see chapter 7), is subject to spirited analysis.

Humor is a prominent way for players to cope with the tedium of drills and exercises. Wisecracks, antics, and narrative jokes are the most common forms seen on the practice field. Mention has already been made of humor in warm-up sessions. Despite the coaches' insistence that seriousness prevail, they and the players do and say humorous things. These actions rarely disrupt the businesslike atmosphere of practice. Indeed, they may even enhance it by providing comic relief when tension is high.[7] A weary defensive back panted to his coach when the exercise in which he and his group were participating seemed as if it would never end: "Hey coach, we don't want to play anymore." On another occasion, "What the hell is this, gymnastics?" snorted a lineman as he and his colleagues went through a tumbling and rolling exercise. A retired professional described some of the antics he saw during his days in the CFL:

> They used to do weird things in practice. There was the day of the duck. Instead of getting the game ball, the guy got a duck. Or you get the rookie who, after training camp had made it [made the team], but was a real shit and a nuisance to everybody. So what they did was to say that the most famous rookie would get a check

of one-thousand dollars and a trophy. But he got a cream pie in the face instead.

The culture of football is enriched immeasurably by the language associated with the sport. Some of this language is technical, referring to movements, plays, skills, and situations in football. A number of these have already been considered earlier in the chapter. A second category of football language is imperative, or the special terms used to express a command. For instance, players are told to "suck it up!" (be tough, work hard), "huddle up!" "get in the game!" (concentrate on playing football), "listen up!" (be quiet and listen to the coach), and "drive-drive-drive!" (said in practice to linemen pushing the "sled," or heavy steel blocking apparatus). Still other terms and phrases are used to motivate players, as when, among the amateurs, players chant "T-D-O" from the sidelines to encourage their offensive team to score. In a similar vein, phrases such as "good job," "way to go," and "good ball" (for a good pass) are among the spontaneous compliments heard in football.

Part of the language of football is silent, consisting of gestures, or their absence. A slap on the shoulders, helmet, or backsides or a handshake are signs to a player coming off the playing field that he has won the approval of his teammates. The absence of these and other complimentary gestures may tell him the opposite: that his teammates think he could have done better.

Physical Environment

The dominant experience in football is sensory feeling, including breathlessness, thirst, concussion, aching muscles, physical speed, and forceful contact with the ground or other players. These bodily sensations are the player's most immediate physical environment. More than any other sensation, the player feels the game of football.

For some positions, the sense of sight is nearly as important as feeling. The visual part of the physical environment includes different arrangements of offensive and defensive players, within which each player must carry out his duties. Players "read" and "react" to a defensive blitz on the quarterback, man-to-man pass defense, screen pass, or faked kick as primarily visual matters.

Then there are sensations generated by the external physical environment. For instance, high wind is a problem not only for passers and receivers, but also for some of the other players who say it whistles

through the earholes of their helmets and deafens them to signals from the quarterback and vital information about the action yelled by their teammates. Or a man's equipment may fall apart, or the taping job on his ankle may require repair. Hard-hitting play causes wear on both. Mosquitos, though not quite the nuisance in arid Calgary that they are in other parts of Canada, do occasionally bother players to the point where every well-stocked trainer's kit includes a can of insect repellent. Rain, snow, mud, fog, cold, and heat are also part of the external environment of Canadian football.

And that environment includes a number of distinct sounds. Shoulder pads rattle noisily as the team jogs around the field or runs forty-yard sprints. During position-related exercises and drills, coaches are heard shouting various commands. From one end of the field comes the sound of the linemen "popping" the sled of blocking dummies. Elsewhere one hears the defensive backs shouting "ball" to warn of an imminent pass, the stylized signal calling of a quarterback with his emphasis on the last digit (e.g., Blue 298!), and, from almost everywhere, expressions of commendation and/or encouragement to those who have just succeeded or failed at a drill.

As the exhausted player drags himself off the field after another run through the daily round, he steps over the remnants of the day's practice: lost mouthpieces, broken equipment, discarded elbow pads, and strips of used adhesive tape. In the locker room he encounters still another familiar aspect of his external physical environment: the acrid smell of perspiration. Though people with little or no athletic history find it repulsive, this odor, for the player, is an agreeable one. It reminds him of football — the game he loves — and the locker room where he enters and leaves the world in which it is played.

NOTES

1. Most CFL teams assume that their players will warm-up on their own before practice formally begins. According to the respondents in this study who played for the Toronto Argonauts, their team is an exception. It has a mandatory, strenuous conditioning program and a warm-up period similar to those of the amateur teams. Although most of the professionals I interviewed believe they are in sufficiently good physical condition to play an entire CFL game, the occasional respondent admitted that university players are generally in better "shape" than he is.

2. The term lineman in this book refers strictly to the "down lineman" — or the player who goes into a three- or four-point crouch along the line of scrimmage. Guards, tackles, and centers are down linemen.

3. This team has since bought weight-training equipment and moved into new facilities, which may change its final conditioning routine.

4. The teams in the Western Conference of the CFL are community-owned nonprofit organizations.

5. Goodman, J., *Huddling up: The Inside Story of the Canadian Football League*, rev.ed. (Don Mills, Ont.: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1982), 216-17.

6. *Globe and Mail*. 22.11.85, p. A17.

7. Stebbins, R.A., "Comic relief in everyday life: Dramaturgic observations on a function of humor." *Symbolic Interaction* 2: 95-104, 1979.

CHAPTER 4

Games and Seasons

The most important time perspective in the immediate present of the serious football player is the six- or seven-day period between games. This *short-term* perspective is overwhelmingly on the future; that is, although a player may cast an occasional glance over his shoulder at the game played the previous weekend, it is the following weekend that he and his coaches agree is the most important event in his life as a player. As we shall see in chapters 5 and 6, this perspective is so strong that it can sometimes lead to serious shortsightedness in connection with such matters as injuries and trading players with other teams.

One might think that the only reasonable perspective in competitive sport is one where sights are set on the championship game. In fact, players and coaches do this, too. This is part of their *long-term* perspective, the part they conceive of as the season. But, from day to day, they dare not speculate about playing in the championship.

Why? Getting to the championship means that the team must win every game it possibly can. At least it must win more games than the other teams in the conference do. Winning this week's game requires, among other things, strict concentration by every player on the responsibilities of his position. To think about next week's game or the more distant championship game while preparing for and playing this week's game is to invite lapses in concentration. When one fails to concentrate in a performance activity, mistakes are sure to follow. Many mistakes made by several players could amount to a loss. With too many losses, the team will be ineligible for the championship. Hence the importance of the short-term perspective.

PRE-GAME TRAVEL

Except for players who are so immersed in thoughts of the game that they do something like smash into the back of a truck (as one amateur did),

travel to home games is of little importance. Travel to games out of town, however, is another story. The Colts, whose games are played in Alberta and Saskatchewan, reach them by chartered bus (i.e., coach). The Dinosaurs also travel by bus to games in these two provinces, but fly to those in British Columbia and Manitoba. The professional teams fly to all games away from home except those between Toronto and Hamilton, Calgary and Edmonton, and Montreal and Ottawa.

Unless a team charters a plane, which is how professionals generally reach their out-of-town games, air travel is much the same for football players as it is for other passengers. And like some other passengers, some players suffer from a fear of flying. But, it is when the trip lasts several hours in a conveyance reserved for team members, usually a bus, that travel to games becomes a significant experience for all players. Lengthy bus trips of six to eight hours or more are commonplace for junior and university players in western Canada.

These bus trips bring out distinctive patterns of behavior. Consider the seating arrangement, for example. As far as I could observe, no one ever told anyone where to sit. Still, trainers and coaches seem invariably to occupy the front seats of the bus. The backs (defensive and offensive) tend to fill the next several rows and the linemen sit in the seats toward the rear. There are always a few players who violate tradition, so to speak, by sitting in another section. Players also move temporarily to other parts of the bus for an hour or two (if there are vacancies) . But the overall seating arrangement generally holds throughout the pre-game and post-game trips.

The back of the bus is the scene of a card game of some sort. The junior players have a board that stretches across the backs of two seats, which is of sufficient size to accommodate a four- or five-man poker game. In the course of an eight-hour trip, many different players participate, making the game and the excitement it generates a more or less permanent aspect of the travel environment. Amid the hubbub of the poker game and the rock music from a "ghetto blaster", other players read, sleep, converse with teammates, or listen to tape players through their own headsets. Food, juice, and pop brought on board at the start of the trip or purchased at one of the few rest stops help pass the time and supply perpetually hungry and thirsty athletes with minimum sustenance until they reach their destination.

Life is similar, though somewhat less boisterous, on the university

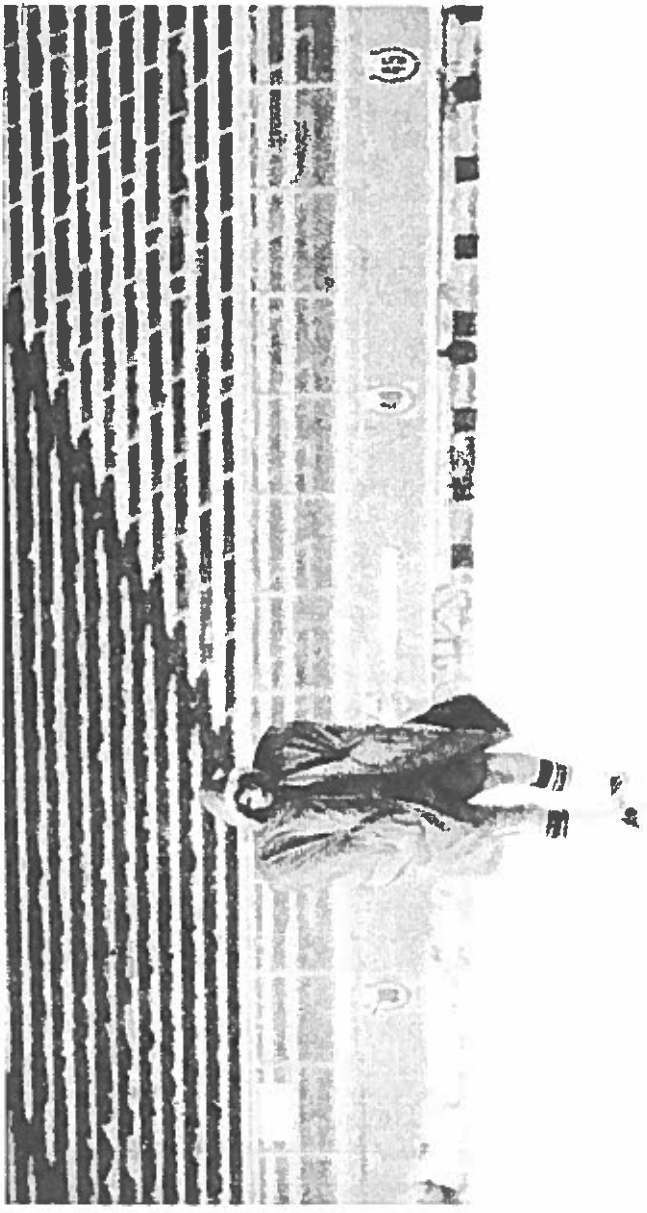

Figure 9: Checking field conditions. (photo by Dac Dang)

bus. Cribbage or gin rummy may be played instead of poker but, as on the junior bus, lively commentary from the kibitzers and the participants themselves dominates the atmosphere. Music from a ghetto blaster may add to the clamor, but the need to study tends to discourage even bringing one along. Football players who are also serious students find they have too little time for schoolwork during the football season. They cannot afford the luxury of a leisurely trip to an out of town game.

Despite the interest in card games for some of the players, the majority regard the pre-game trip as transportation and little else, as a means to an end to be accomplished as quickly as possible. The seats are uncomfortable for large men and the prairie scenery is dull, which is impossible to see anyway when the windows steam up in the fall. Junior teams, who play some of their games in August, occasionally have to endure a ride with little or no cool air because the air conditioner on the bus is inadequate for the job, if it is working at all. Few players can sleep for long sitting up, a problem that the smaller ones try to solve by stretching out on the luggage racks overhead. By the end of the trip, the men have run out of things to say to one another, except to ask how much longer it is to their destination. Thus, there is unmistakable enthusiasm when the bus pulls up to the hotel, and the players are instructed to change into practice equipment and be ready to reboard for a short ride to a practice field. Here they loosen up and hold a thud scrimmage for an hour or so. In other words, they follow the same routine as that the day before a home game.

It is not always possible for amateurs to practice on the game field, but when they do, they take considerable interest in its condition. Ground that is muddy, frozen, dry, or hard, and with holes or dips can affect one's performance in the game. Some university playing fields are rounded at the corners by a running track and have end zones containing a high-jump pit or a hard-surfaced shot-put ring. When the game is played on artificial turf, which is most of the time for professionals and some of the time for amateurs, many of these concerns are irrelevant.

After the light practice, players are generally free to do as they please, within the limits of team-training rules. Professional and amateur teams have an evening curfew of 11:00 o'clock, with actual or threatened bed checks to enforce it. It is also expected that the consumption of alcoholic beverages will be kept to a bare minimum, preferably none whatsoever. Violations of these rules result in fines for the professionals. First-time

amateur offenders may be admonished or, worse, benched. Subsequent offenses could lead to expulsion from the team. Given these restrictions, it is hardly surprising that the popular evening recreation is watching television or going to a movie. During the period between the practice and bedtime, there may also be meetings for the quarterbacks and perhaps other players concerning particular offensive strategies for the next day. Players may also be required to attend game films, which some of them feel are intentionally placed in the middle of the evening to discourage anyone from wandering far from the hotel. The professionals sometimes follow up this event with a light team meal.

GAME DAY

Whenever feasible, clubs arrange a "team meal" roughly five hours prior to kickoff. Players come together to eat a team breakfast, if the game is in the afternoon, or a team lunch, if the game is at night. The main purpose of these gatherings is to heighten team awareness and belonging. Energy-storing carbohydrates are sought in the repasts consumed, with the larger players downing double orders of pancakes, waffles, or French toast at breakfast, or a mountain of spaghetti or lasagna at lunch. Players pay for these meals at home. On the road, CFL players receive allowances for each meal totalling 35 dollars per day. In 1983 the players in the Western Intercollegiate Football League received a daily sum of 10 dollars for meals and 12 dollars for lodging, a subsidy to which they clearly had to add considerably to satisfy their needs. The junior team purchases a standard breakfast, lunch, or dinner at a restaurant or takeout facility for all members of the team. No allowances are given.

Since the professionals are sometimes unwilling to go to the team meals held at home, the threat of a fine is necessary to ensure full attendance. The university players, even though they must pay their own way when at home, willingly go to the team lunch if no scholastic obligations intervene. Attendance is automatic at meals away from home for the junior players, since it is the only free meal they can obtain. They hold no team meals before home games.

When out of town, players use the time between the meal and the ride to the stadium to relax in their hotel room, watch game films, and think about the forthcoming contest. Meetings are sometimes held during these hours if there has been no time for them beforehand. Players on

Figure 10: Pregame taping in a hotel room. (photo by Dac Dang)

many, if not all, CFL teams go voluntarily to chapel, which is held after breakfast or lunch. It is run by a member of the team and attended by some nonreligious players as well. Those who participate say they find that the serenity of the occasion helps produce the frame of mind one needs to play football with intensity.

At the Stadium

Taping, which often begins in a hotel room even before the players depart for the stadium, is the first undertaking once the team arrives. A small group of trainers work for a couple of hours or more wrapping sprains and minor fractures in adhesive tape. They also tape various kinds of shock-absorbing devices and braces on some of the players. Finally, certain joints and other parts of the body are taped as a preventive measure, parts that players fear will become injured unless properly supported.

The locker room at this point is a place of quiet contemplation. I shall describe later how players react differently to pre-game tension, or the jitters. In general, jocular, boisterous behavior is taboo. Playing a football game is a serious commitment, the mental preparation for which begins long before the men reach the stadium. Walking into the stadium and its locker room intensifies this process of preparation.The game is no longer a distant thought, an imaginary event in the future. The player is now at the place where the game will occur, donning the equipment and the uniform in which he will play. The imminence, reality, and importance of the contest grows on him as kickoff time approaches. During this time offensive and defensive players often meet separately to rehearse the plays they will use and to answer last-minute questions.

An hour or so before kickoff, the first players begin warming up on the field. The same routine is followed by all three teams and probably by all adult teams in Canada. The punters and kickers are the first to warm up. The punts are fielded by the runners who will field punts during the game. Next, the entire team comes on the field, where they do warm-up exercises in formation for several minutes. Since the other team is following the same routine on the other half of the field, there is a tendency at the amateur level for the two groups to try to impress each other with the strength of their team spirit by lustily counting the cadence of each exercise.

This is also the point in the countdown to game time when what might

be called rallying slogans are heard — punchy phrases used to stir the team to their greatest readiness to play football. A player sitting on the bench in the locker room or warming up on the field might say, for example, "this is when it counts," "we've got to win this one," "give it everything you've got," or "we can beat these guys." These slogans are more common among amateurs than professionals.

Following the warm-up in formation, the players report to their separate groups, much as they do in practice, for a brief stint of position-related exercises and play-related drills. Shouts of encouragement punctuate their paces while blocking, defending, passing, receiving, and so on. In this regard the professionals are as vociferous as the amateurs. Confidence and purpose are nourished by these shouts and by the rallying slogans, and they continue through the final phase of the warm-up period: the thud scrimmage rehearsal of the key offensive and defensive plays that will be used in the game. When it is finished, the teams return to their locker rooms, where they have a five- to ten-minute wait before the game starts.

What happens next varies from team to team. The junior team was invariably given an impassioned harangue by the head coach, in which he reminded them of the importance of playing with intensity, of concentrating on the game, of refraining from getting unnecessary penalties, and the like. (If the head coach of the university team delivered a harangue, it was at a meeting before the game rather than immediately before the kickoff.) Coaches of both teams walked among the players during the pre-game warm-up, encouraging them to do their best. The different methods of firing up players seem to have more to do with style of coaching than with category of amateur football. The members of the junior team also try to fire themselves up by shouting rallying slogans, chanting team yells, and giving each other last-minute slaps of encouragement to the point where they pour out of the locker room and onto the field in a highly inspired state.

Emotional talk on the part of players and coaches is least evident in professional locker rooms, although some occurs. It is generally assumed that professionals know what they must do and that impassioned reminders are unnecessary. The main inspirational source for them is the prayer led by one of the players just before going on the field or a moment of silence. The coach of the junior team leads a prayer on the field immediately before kickoff. The university team holds no prayers.

The remaining pre-game activities are familiar to most fans. The players are introduced to the crowd. Team captains meet with the officials to determine who will kick off. At the amateur level a team huddle takes place, in which the coach leads a final rousing yell. With the last three or four bars of the national anthem, the players are putting on their helmets and cheering on the starting lineup as it moves onto the field for the game.

The Game

The game itself is a public event that requires no description here. Rather, we examine the activities that occur during a game that fans usually overlook, but that are of vital importance to the players.

These activities take place on the sidelines. There, an offensive coach and a defensive coach are separately connected by telephone to two or more coaches, or "spotters," located in a booth at the top of the stadium. The spotters have a bird's-eye view of the action below. They pass down information and advice to the sidelines. Players returning to the sidelines bring back another kind of information: about the way the game is going from their perspective, such as how a certain opponent is easily blocked, or how a certain pass pattern always leaves one receiver open. These two kinds of information help the coaches on the sidelines make on-the-spot changes to the pre-established game plan.

While these exchanges are taking place, players who have returned to the sidelines talk among themselves about the problems they are having on the field, good or bad instances of play, referees' calls, field conditions, and related matters. Coaches also talk to these players about their performances on the field. The tension of the game can lead a coach to heatedly upbraid a man for alleged bad play or compliment him for good play. Throughout the game, the equipment manager is called on from time to time to adjust or repair apparatus and scrape mud from cleats. On the bench, the trainers retape players and examine those who have just been injured. The above scene unfolds amidst a barrage of team yells, rallying slogans, and shouts of encouragement.

Half-time is a period of rest for the players and strategizing for the coaches. After the latter have decided what changes, if any, are needed, they meet separately with the offensive and defensive players to pass on their ideas. If the team is losing, some amateur coaches use the half-time to deliver a heated lecture to the players for their slack play, which is

believed to be the cause of the team's poor showing. Heated lectures from coaches at the professional level, though rarer, do occur.

When the game is played at home, the mood on the sidelines is much the same as it is in the stands. If the team is winning, exhilaration, joy, and excitement reign. If the team is losing, gloom, anger, and sluggishness prevail. While the outcome is in doubt, there is rapt attention. At the end of the game, the teams line up and shake hands, if it is an amateur contest, or simply walk off the field, if it is professional. At both levels, players seize the opportunity to talk with friends on the other team before they return to their locker room. This is possibly their only opportunity for fraternization, since the bus carrying the visiting team will leave within the next hour for the return trip. Even the professional teams remain in town overnight only if they are playing an evening game. The cost of room and board is to be avoided if at all possible.

The scene in the locker room following a victory is one of exhuberant revelry: handshakes, whoops of joy, slaps on the back, lively descriptions of great plays (usually with outcomes favorable to the speakers), talk about the next game, discussion of plays that worked and ones that failed, and on and on. Both the university and junior teams have rowdy victory yells, led by the head coach in the first instance and any veteran player in the second. The first veteran of the junior team to enter the dressing room would start the following lines:

> Colts once, Colts twice,
> Holy jumpin' Jesus Christ.
> Rim Ram God Damn,
> Son of a bitch, shit!

Following a win this cheer would be repeated three or four times. At the same time as the players are making merry, they are freeing themselves from the yards of tape that have held them and their equipment together and, perhaps along with the trainer, contemplate their injuries and bruises. Never far from their reach is a cold can of pop or juice, for the university and professional players, and these two beverages plus beer for the junior players.

The coaches who mingle with the players in the locker room following a victory spend less time with them when the team has been defeated. The gloom of impending defeat that emerges on the field is carried into the locker room, where it festers in the reality of actual loss. Amateurs and professionals in Canadian football play to win, not to lose. The game

they have just lost may have some redeeming aspects for some of the players, but nothing can wholly compensate for team defeat. The locker room resembles a wake. Among amateurs and professional alike, the loss of a playoff or championship game elicits crying in some and swearing in others.

Post-game visits to the locker room by the press, which the amateurs usually experience only after championship games, are a regular occurrence for many professionals. Some CFL teams have a policy forbidding the press from entering the locker room after games, whereas others allow them access following a post-game prayer. Depending on the significance of the game, reporters from the local and perhaps the national media interview selected players about aspects of the game just completed. This is one of several points of contact between Canadian football players and the press — a relationship that may be broadly described as a troubled one. This relationship is examined in chapter 7, as well as players' views of locker-room interviews.

AFTER THE GAME

For the team that has travelled to play the game, the normal procedure is to head for home as soon as possible following the game with a brief stop for food and drink. The ride home following a win is livelier than that following a loss, but, either way, everyone is thirsty and eager to unwind from the tension of the game. The favorite beverage is beer, and plenty is available when the players return via chartered means (some losing teams may be denied their beer). For amateur teams, beer (and soft drinks) is largely, if not entirely, purchased by the players within limits imposed by the coach. The ensuing party is characterized first by a running post-mortem of the game and, later, a card game at the back of the bus. Both unfold in the festive atmosphere of sociable talk, drinking songs, and rock music.

On long return trips by bus, fatigue eventually overtakes all but the most zealous revelers. The exuberance subsides, and the players, especially the larger ones, begin to cope with sleeping in what, for them, is undersized seating. This is one of the few times when these tired, aching athletes wonder if football is worth it — a monetary consideration to be sure, but real enough at 3:00 o'clock on a cold, fall morning. If the bus ride is the last of the season, the final game having just been played, and the next day is Sunday, then the partying is apt to be more vigorous

and enduring. Concern with sleep and pain is put off to the next day.

Partying after a home game is a peripheral activity in the life of the adult football player. Team parties are common among the amateurs. Players and their wives or girlfriends gather at someone's home for an evening of drinking, eating, dancing and, of course, discussion of the game.

> The Colts had convincingly beaten the Saskatoon Hilltops by a score of 30 to 14. Perhaps because it was one of the few wins in an otherwise lack-lustre season, the players were still in an exceptional state of exhilaration when they converged on the home of Fred Jackson, one of the team's quarterbacks whose parents had kindly vacated the premises to make way for the celebration. Once inside each man sought a cooler for his beer and then gathered with one or more teammates to discuss the game. Here, in competition with the music, they reviewed specific plays, referees' decisions, coaches' strategies, conference standings, making the playoffs, and a number of other related concerns. While this was going on, wives and girlfriends were left to arrange their own interchanges among themselves. Later, when the postmortem of the game had run its course, they would drift together again for more general conversation and dancing.

After a home game, professional players are likely to scatter in a number of directions with the common intention of relaxing after a stressful, wearing day. Cliques form among the players on a professional team along such lines as race, player longevity, marital status, and player group (e.g., defensive backs, offensive backs, linemen). Attendance at their parties often reflect these divisions. Following home games, many young, single players head for one or more of the local nightclubs patronized by professional athletes from various sports. On the occasions when the visiting team is forced to stay overnight, it is common for old friends and new acquaintances to join the local players at these haunts or at private parties around the city.[1] Given the large number of players traded among CFL teams each year, every veteran sees, at each game he plays, many former teammates, some of whom continue to be close friends.

THE PLAYERS' VIEWS

What has been described so far is seen as routine by the players; traveling to and from games out of town and celebrating wins are "no

big deal," although they are enjoyable peripheral activities. Understandably, the players' richest views of football are of the game itself and are considered here under the headings of pre-game jitters, seriousness, and a three-sided view of the game.

Pre-game Jitters

Stage fright, or pre-game jitters or "nerves" as athletes refer to them, develops from trying to sustain an identity in the face of apprehension about one's ability to do so.[2] Any role that requires of those who fill it the performance of a physically or mentally difficult activity before a critical audience contains the potential for stage fright.[3] People in these roles would like to create and maintain the impression, or identity, that they are capable of performing the role requirements. But these requirements are difficult enough to contain the possibility that, when enacted before a critical audience, they may not be performed to the expected standard. That possibility is what causes stage fright in musicians, thespians, athletes, dancers, entertainers, and public speakers.

Twenty-seven of the 30 professionals interviewed, 22 of the 25 university players, and 13 of the 25 junior players reported always getting the jitters before a game. Another six junior players said they sometimes get the jitters, but only before special games (e.g., a playoff game). A player's confidence in his ability to play his position reduces the magnitude of his nervousness, but only in a few individuals does confidence eliminate it.

Moreover, confidence can be shaken in a number of ways in football. A player may know in advance what he will be up against: that he will be responsible for defending against the league's leading pass receiver, blocking an outstanding defensive guard, or trying to stop one of the finest running backs of the day. Quarterbacks get exceptionally nervous when they have less information than usual about the defense of the team they are about to meet. Knowing that he will be playing with a painful injury or playing under the critical eye of a general manager who wants to trade him, may also undermine a professional's confidence and intensify his apprehension.

On the one hand, excessive nervousness reduces the player's effectiveness: he moves prematurely, drops the ball, throws with less than accustomed accuracy, forgets what he is supposed to do, and the like. On the other hand, many players hold that no nervousness at all leads to

undermotivation, to slower reaction time and insufficient intensity. The trick is to control the jitters, to reach and maintain the optimum level of alertness, recall, and manual dexterity. This process of gaining control is the familiar "psyching up," or "getting mentally prepared" and lasts anywhere from a couple of hours before the game to a whole day.

Football players rely on various means to control their jitters. Some are rational, in that there is a demonstrable link between them and the players' control of nervousness. For instance, some players think intensely about what they are going to do in the game. Such thoughts constitute a rehearsal that builds confidence and focuses concentration exclusively on one's role, thereby raising the possibility of consistently good play. A player may also set personal goals at this time, such as making a certain number of tackles, running with the ball a certain number of yards, or completing a certain number of passes. Other players try to avoid thinking about the game altogether, because doing so makes them too apprehensive.

Players also think about the game by relaxing (lying down at home, sitting on a bench in the locker room), walking alone on the field, or watching game films. Or they avoid thoughts of the game by reading, sleeping, playing cards, listening to music, talking with other players, watching television, and the like. Some players combine these control procedures. They may sleep at home and think on the bench in the locker room, or walk on the field and then throw a football. One of the disadvantages of being on the road is that some of their favorite procedures are difficult or impossible to carry out there.

Other means of controlling nerves are nonrational, in that there is no demonstrable link between the players' actions and the control of the jitters. Here one finds the variety of superstitions common to all high-pressure sports.[4] For instance, some players wear the same clothing to the locker room, put on their equipment in the same sequence (e.g., first the left elbow pad, then the right elbow pad), get taped by the same trainer, listen to their good-luck song, or eat the same meal before the game. The inclination to practice such rituals is found among professionals and amateurs alike: 20 to 25 percent of each of the three samples.

Another major nonrational means of control, at least from a scientific standpoint, is achieved through religious practice. A small number of players — some amateur, some professional — say a quiet prayer to themselves or read a passage from the Bible. Some attend the pre-game chapel service. These acts are nonrational when done expressly for the

purpose of seeking supernatural help to boost one's confidence or enhance performance on the field. A second-year professional described the combination of rational and nonrational procedures he uses to deal with the jitters:

> Oh yah! Oh yah! I have the jitters. And everybody has their little ritual to control them. I don't get them until the day of the game. My little ritual is to read a couple of verses out of the Bible. I listen to a little music. You get to the stadium . . . about an hour before the kickoff. I put the right sock on first, then I put on the left sock. After that I put my pants on a certain way. I do the same thing every game. I like to be by myself when I get really nervous. I just kind of sit and try to think about anything else but football — be off in space and stuff. I like to sleep too.

Although my evidence at this point is sketchier than desirable, it appears that those who think about the game versus those who do not are in a ratio of approximately 2.5 to 1 for the professionals, 2 to 1 for the university players, and 1 to 1 for the junior players. Consider this low ratio for the junior players in connection with the aforementioned observation that fewer players in this sample have the jitters than in the university and professional samples. The two observations suggest that a significantly larger number of junior players have a low level of nervousness, which they maintain by avoiding preliminary thoughts of the game. We shall return to this proposition in the next section.

Whatever the control procedures, the jitters disappear for some players when they start warming up on the field. For others this activity only makes them more nervous. Some find that their jitters subside a bit during the warm-up period only to return in more acute form with the playing of the national anthem. The majority lose their nervousness once they are in the game, and especially once they have "made their first hit." A small number of players, however, say the jitters disappear only gradually over the course of the game. Others say they get them again when they come under severe pressure: during a critical pass, field goal attempt, or snap from center.

The jitters are a form of fear, and it is a natural human reaction to try to avoid or escape a frightening situation. The football players of this study take no such measures, however, because they are committed to their teammates and the game that day, and because past experience tells them that their jitters will disappear once the game begins. Furthermore, the

game is their reason for being a player. Before the game players also eagerly anticipate getting onto the field to do what they have looked forward to all week. In the hour or two before the contest begins, then, players typically have a bittersweet orientation toward their obligations as athletes. And nearly every one psychs himself up to the point where the orientation is considerably more sweet than bitter.

Seriousness

The amateurs occasionally describe themselves and others as "serious" football players. The implication is that players outside this category are, by comparison, significantly less serious about football. Seriousness is a frame of mind, an attitude. When someone is serious about a sport, it is seen as so important to that person that he or she is willing to commit the time and effort needed to do his or her best at it in practices and games, even at the expense of other interests. The person is also willing to abide by the training rules of the team. Football is a "central life interest" for the amateurs of this study (and for the professionals as well), inasmuch as it is a segment of their lives in which they have made a substantial emotional investment.[5]

The fact is that all the amateur respondents and all the players on the teams observed are serious about football. Amateurs, hobbyists, and career volunteers are participants in serious leisure (as opposed to casual leisure). Theirs is leisure at which they must persevere if they are to enjoy it and in which they must invest considerable personal effort to reap uncommon rewards. It is leisure with which they can identify proudly and experience a career composed of contingencies and turning points and stages of achievement and involvement.[6] Within the realm of serious leisure, there are *participants*, or those who are mildly serious about the activity (but significantly moreso than dabblers in it), and *devotees*, or those who are highly dedicated to it.[7] Moreover, some amateur groups appear to have significantly more devotees than other amateur groups pursuing the same activity.[8]

In line with this last observation, some junior and some university players believe that junior football is less serious than university football. The comparison applies predominantly to Calgary, where there are thought to be significantly more devotees on the university team than on the junior team. This study has turned up four indicators that support this belief.

First, some junior players (6 out of 25) acknowledged that they were not as good as their counterparts on the university team. Eight players from the junior team believed that, when compared with their team, the university team was either better or more serious or both. By contrast, all but one university player, who was undecided on this question, said they were as good as or better than the junior players. Six university players also stated that their team was better or more serious than the junior team. In short, whereas the majority of players from both teams felt that, as individuals, they were as good as their counterparts on the other team, a minority from both teams held that the university team was better or more serious. No university player said the junior players were better than him or that the junior team was better or more serious than the university team. Four university players did indicate, however, that there were some good players on the junior team. A junior player and a university player, respectively, describe the differences they see between the two teams:

> *Question*: Do you think the typical university player could play your position any better than you?
> *Junior Player*: No, not any better. The university as a team would probably be better, because they are stronger in some areas of play. But . . . there are players on the Colts who are better at some positions and vice versa. But there are probably more "better" players at the university . . . The Colts have a lot looser atmosphere. You're in junior football, you're there to have a good time. The way they put it across in the university is that it's more business-like. I'm on the Colts for myself, doing it for myself. At the university you're playing for them . . . That's probably why a few guys come over to us; they feel freer. But that's not to say that we're undisciplined. But you're in the Colts for a good time.
> *University Player*: The year that I took off, I went to the [junior team]. I figured it was smart not to miss a season. After playing with the university, it wasn't the same. There was the odd guy, for instance a guy named _____, he was a real good player. He shouldn't have been playing junior as far as I was concerned. I have had friends who couldn't get back into school who played junior, and they said the same thing; the university is better.[9]

Second, it was mentioned in chapter 3 that players are expected to train on their own time in addition to the training received in practice. It may be taken as another indicator of the difference in seriousness

between the university team and the junior team to repeat here that members of the former worked out an average of 3.31 hours weekly compared with an average of 0.68 hours weekly for the latter. Nine of the 25 university players worked out little or none at all compared with 20 of the 25 junior players. Even practices were taken less seriously: some junior players, rather than endure the 15-minute stadium workout, skipped practice the day it was scheduled. It is doubtful that a university player would remain on his team if he casually skipped a practice.

Third, it was noted that junior players are less likely than university players to have the jitters before a game — an indication of the degree of importance they attach to the game they are about to play. Some junior players admitted they would probably be nervous were they on the university team. Likewise, some university players indicated that, since having professional experience (mostly in preseason games), they were less tense about their university games.

Finally, many junior players are aware that there are nonserious players in their midst. Fifteen players said the presence of teammates with a casual attitude towards the game is one of their principal dislikes of football. Indeed, nothing is disliked more. By contrast, only one university player complained about nonserious colleagues, the implication being that such players are simply nonexistent for the other twenty-four respondents. A junior lineman in his final year of eligibility put it this way:

> I dislike it when you're out there busting your ass all the time and you get these players giving it a half-assed effort . . . There is always a time for goofing around when playing football, but when you get down to it, you must get serious. I really despise people like that. Winning isn't everything, but it wouldn't be fun if you never won.

Games: Emotional view

Many of the amateurs and professionals interviewed mentioned that football is an emotional sport, some even maintaining that it is the most emotional sport. The emotions generated by football include fear, anger, dislike, sorrow, joy, pride, humility, envy, admiration, fondness, and attachment. It is arguable whether these combine to make football more emotional than other sports. But there can be no doubt that they make it as an emotional a sport as many others.

We have already considered one fearful aspect of football, namely, pre-game jitters. In addition, fear is experienced momentarily by some players when they are about to be tackled or blocked by a man much larger than them or by a man approaching them at a terrific speed. Obviously, what is feared here is the possibility of pain and incapacitating injury; indeed, many players use fear as a means of controlling opponents. This, in part, is what it means to play with "intensity." Opponents are intimidated with bruising tackles, bone-crushing blocks, and other kinds of rough treatment that have the effect of encouraging them to get out of the way, give little or no resistance, or at least become "rattled" enough to forget to concentrate on their assignments in the game. Consider the following job description in the *Globe and Mail* of Earl Wilson and Franklin King, two defensive linemen for the Toronto Argonauts:

> Defensive tackles King and Wilson, all 540 pounds of them testing the table in the corridor where they are perched, do not look at their mission in life as a stroll through the daisies.
>
> King, 26, a fullback in his youth, remembers the logic his high school coach employed in persuading him that the future lay in stopping the ball carrier instead of being stopped.
>
> "I'd rather give punishment than receive it," he says a decade later, a large smile on his face, but not in his eyes. "They put me on defense and then said, 'Now it's your turn.' I never thought it could be so much fun."
>
> Wilson, thigh to thigh with King when they buddy upon the defensive line, says a "nasty attitude" is a prerequisite for the job.
>
> "You want to mug the guy opposite you," he says, matter-of-factly. "That's what you make up your mind to do before you go out there. And you can bet the other guy is psyching himself up to do the same to you."
>
> As the heart of the front four, the role of the defensive tackles in this era of pass-happy CFL offenses is to break down the shell around the quarterback — "make him feel your presence." King says, chuckling — and prod him into hasty mistakes.[10]

But one of the greatest fears in serious sport is not physical at all; rather, it is the fear of losing the game, and is most poignant in the fourth quarter in football.

Attempts to intimidate the other player occur at nearly every position. Although quarterbacks are often intimidated, only they lack the oppor-

tunity to intimidate others. But intimidation does not always succeed, for the chances are that the opposing player is also tough. He may respond to his opponent's intimidating actions with anger and with his own acts of intimidation. Anger may also be the response to a referee's call that players feel is bad. Or it may develop when a player makes what he considers a stupid mistake. Ideally, the professionals and the best amateurs remain cool, they keep their anger under control. In practice, even the most experienced professionals occasionally get mad.

Maddening experiences in other games or earlier in the ongoing one may result in dislike for another player or an official. A man who takes "cheap shots" — engages in underhanded illegal tactics such as kneeing, gouging with the fist, pulling on the facemask — invites his opponents to dislike him. Threats and insults hurled across the line of scrimmage by offensive and defensive linemen incur dislike, as are such acts as throwing grass in the other man's face. Officials whose calls appear to be biased towards one team are soon scorned by players on the other team. Yet, despite all the possibilities for feeling and eliciting hatred, most players seem to play most games without experiencing this emotion.

The foundation of some emotions lies in the absence of the opposite emotion. For instance, there are moments of sorrow and joy in the course of a game, as when a receiver drops a pass that was in his hands, or catches a ball that lights on his outstretched finger tips. More poignant is the sorrow or joy that accompanies losing or winning, and especially that of winning or losing a playoff or championship game.

Pride and humility are also experienced in football games. The spectacular catch or the dropped pass stir up pride and humility, respectively. Further, one can feel proud or humiliated by the performance of one's team in a game, by the behavior of a coach in dealing with a referee, or by the actions of players in an actual or potential fight with members of the opposing team.

Envy and admiration may also be experienced on the playing field. A fine athletic display by a member of one team elicits admiration from many members of both teams. Or a brilliant quarterback sack by the left defensive end may spark envy in his opposite number on the right end who begrudges the first man's talent.

The emotion of fondness, which is found in all friendships, seems to be felt in football games only at special times. A friend may get injured

or get into a fight with an opposing player. Or two friends may play especially well together, as in a quarterback throwing to a certain receiver, or a fullback blocking for a certain running back. There is no evidence in this study or others to support the hypothesis that when many players are close friends their team will win more games than when few close friendships exist on the team.[11]

Finally, there is the attachment to — that is, the love for — the game of football itself. For most players, it is the most commonly felt and enduring emotion of the game. It may be momentarily overridden by another emotion and it may be felt along with other emotions such as pride and joy.

This discussion of emotions in football raises the question of what has happened to the cool professional. The serious player, amateur or professional, is expected by himself, his coaches, and his fans to be composed. But composure means being in control only of the negative emotions that could weaken performance should control lapse. Blinding anger, fear, and hate can have this effect, and the best players manage to keep them in check most of the time. All players, however, are quite ready to feel joy, pride, fondness, and attachment. These are among the experiences sought in football. In short, the so-called cool professional says that football is as emotional and exciting when he is being paid to play as it was when, as an amateur, he received no pay for playing.

Games: Team view

The team view of the game has at least three components: coordinated and cooperative play, morale, and the team as a special group. A comparative study would likely show that serious adult football involves the most complicated instances of coordinated play of any team sport. Especially on offense, much of what happens in each play is prearranged. Players know what they are to do in each play as well as what every other player is supposed to do. Many hours of practice are needed to coordinate the running of the plays a team will use. To the extent that coordination is achieved, it can be stopped only by an accident (e.g., a player slips), a lapse in concentration, or a weak performance of a player against a member of the other team. The same can be said for cooperative play as well, although it is less intricate in its execution (i.e., no coordination problems).

For the player, a profound sense of any football game comes from

experiencing the successful coordinated and cooperative action of a single play. In such a play (i.e., one not weakened by the aforementioned conditions), the offensive team might advance the ball eight yards. In such a play, the defensive team might hold the other team to a one-yard gain. When they succeed collectively this way, they experience a deep sense of accomplishment.

An accumulation of instances of successful coordinated play leads, naturally, to a march down the field, possibly to a touchdown or, on defense, to forcing the opponent to give up the ball by punting it or by failing to make the ten yards necessary for a first down. A string of successes of this sort breeds high team morale. Adler defines morale in this way:

> When goals are set, the effect of inspired motivation is evidenced by the individual's or team's social attitude, otherwise known as *morale*. By this I refer to the dominant mental and behavioral stance, taken in approaching a given endeavor: resolution, positive spirit, confidence, concentration, seriousness, self-control, and the determination to apply total effort.[12]

Morale is high and collective (found in virtually all team members) when each member knows that he and his teammates share the resolution, positive spirit, confidence, and other attitudes mentioned by Adler.

Team morale may already be high because of earlier successes. High morale within and between games gives players positive momentum toward their goal of winning the present game.[13] It is epitomized by a remark made in an interview with a former member of the Edmonton Eskimos, Grey Cup champions from 1978 through 1982: "It was assumed on that team that you would go to the Grey Cup."[14]

A player's involvement in a game includes a sense of his team as a special social group. This sense is fostered in several ways, two of which are symbolic: the team uniform and the team name. The distinctiveness of the uniform is also practical, separating players from the opposing team during the game. The team name may be worked into the system of code words by which the various plays are known. And the university team hears its name from time to time in the cheers that issue from the stands.

There are other practices by which a feeling of team specialness is promoted. Team yells and unison cheering by the spectators have this effect. The university defensive team holds hands in the huddle. The

Edmonton Huskies, a junior team, run onto the field just before the kickoff, barking and howling. Perhaps the occasional glimpses the players get of their team mascot cavorting before the fans to whip up enthusiasm gives them a sense of specialness. Finally, certain traditions may have this effect, such as the sounding of a siren when the Regina Rams (junior team) or Saskatchewan Roughriders (professional team) score a touchdown. In Calgary a horse and rider race the length of the field to celebrate a Stampeder touchdown and race back again to celebrate the extra point.

Games: Uniqueness view

Individual games are remembered by players for many reasons. Some reasons are seen as beyond the players' control — as good or bad luck. There are times when the officiating is, in the players' opinion, outrageously poor. A game remembered for this reason usually contains several large penalties, which are defined as unfair and a factor in the team's loss. Although I observed only one multiplayer fight on the playing field, stories circulated about such incidents in the past. Some games that stand out for this reason also stand out for their poor officiating and a causal connection drawn between the two.

Games may also be known for their good or bad breaks. Bad breaks consist of such unfortunate occurrences as the football hitting the crossbar on a field goal attempt, the receiver slipping and falling after catching a pass in the open, and the punt being blown short by a sudden gust of wind. Bad breaks remembered as such by one team are often remembered as good breaks by the other. The bad luck is more or less equally distributed when unfavorable climatic conditions prevail, such as fog, high wind, excessive heat, driving snow, or bitter cold.

Other reasons for remembering particular games are seen as more or less within the control of the players. These are the thrills and disappointments of football. Thrills are the sharply exciting events or occasions that stand out in a player's memory. Some of the thrills of his athletic life are covered in chapters 5 and 6. Game-related thrills include participation in playoff, championship, and special games and exceptional play in any game. In summarizing the views of all players, professional and amateur, it is clear that they prefer to win these critical games, but that even when they lose, they are still thought of as thrilling at the time. Furthermore, the thrill of participating in a playoff, championship, or

special game is usually an extension of the thrill of playing on a winning team, a team that wins the majority of games during the season.

A major thrill in football, cited by both amateurs and professionals, are the games in which they played exceptionally well or had exceptional experiences. A small number of professionals mentioned the thrill, experienced when they were rookies, of playing next to a famous player or tackling a famous quarterback or running back. More often, however, it is a single act that stands out in the mind of the player: an interception, a touchdown on a punt return, or a field goal from the 55-yard line. It is also common to remember a game for a number of reasons. A Canadian veteran with five years experience as a running back recalled his days at an American university: "Well, getting the scholarship was the big thing and then getting there and, as a freshman, making the varsity squad in college. I guess the big thrill was the first three times I carried the ball I scored touchdowns on it. They were short runs, but still . . ." A first-year university player described his feats as a linebacker in a championship game in high school:

> One play I was coming in on a blitz because I knew the quarterback was going the other way and the whole line was following him. All of a sudden I see _____ [running back from other team] coming my way . . . I thought, "Oh my God, I have missed the play." But he was coming at me . . . so I hit him and he went down and had the ball . . . Then they were driving on our 20. One of the halfbacks was supposed to take me. I hesitated for a second and he stopped. Then I ran right by him to the quarterback who was about to throw. I sacked him. The fans stood up and howled. Later on in the same series, they tried a field goal. I went in and blocked that one too.

For some players a game stands out, not from dramatic plays such as those just described, but from an accumulation of an impressive level of routine acts. A defensive guard might make far more tackles than usual; a running back might rush many more yards than he normally does; or a punter might kick a remarkable string of good punts. These players' "stats" (accumulated statistics on one or more measurable aspects of performance at a position) would be noteworthy, even though no single play was outstanding.

A game may also be remembered as a *disappointment*: the absence of expected rewards. Some players find it thrilling to play in a playoff, championship, or special games even when they lose. Others react to the

loss with disappointment and remember the game in this light. It is no surprise that losing such contests is the most prevalent disappointment among all players, professional and amateur. The junior player in the following illustration wanted badly to beat a rival team:

> Losing the first game against Regina when we were so close, that was one of my bigger disappointments. Being in Saskatoon [when a member of the junior team there], that was always the big rival, between Saskatoon and Regina. I had never won a game against them. Then we lose in the last minute and-a-half. That brought me down. I was sitting on a curb in tears. I was hurting.

Another unforgettable disappointment associated with a specific game, but sometimes affecting subsequent games as well, is injury. Many of the players who related this disappointment were playing a good game when they were injured or were playing in an especially important game (e.g., playoff, championship). The psychological impact is often as strong as, if not worse than, the physical impact. Suddenly a player who has been at the center of attention is completely removed from view in a matter of the few minutes needed to get him off the field. He plummets from the limelight to obscurity. Except for the trainers and possibly the team physician, he is effectively out of sight and out of mind for those responsible for winning the game. And this may not be the only unwanted consequence of his misfortune. A retired professional recalls his college days in the United States:

> A tremendous disappointment to me was in my senior year, my last bowl game in which I was knocked out. I did not finish the game. I was knocked out in the first quarter . . . My senior year was very successful for me. I had a chance to play one time on national television in front of a lot of professional scouts. And I might have had a chance to show that I could do extremely well.

Although only a handful of respondents — amateur and professional — mentioned it, games sometimes stand out for bad play as well. It is particularly agonizing as well as embarrassing to miss an easy field goal, drop a well-thrown pass, or muff a sure tackle, with no extenuating circumstances available on which to blame the failing. That these situations are commonly visible to coaches, fans, and players only magnifies the disappointment the player feels in himself. Other miscues may be less conspicuous, at least to the fans, but they remain etched in the player's mind.

Figure 11: Icing an injury. (photo by R.A. Stebbins)

Bad play is usually traced to a failure to concentrate. Because it can sometimes make the difference between winning and losing, coaches will substitute a starter with a backup when they believe the former is playing poorly for this reason. The temporary demotion and the game in which it occurred are remembered, though hardly with fondness. For example, an offensive tackle, a professional of many years experience, had a momentary lapse of concentration and tried to block a pass across the line of scrimmage from his own quarterback. He tipped the ball into the hands of a linebacker who promptly ran for a touchdown. To this day, the tackle is unable to explain what possessed him to make such a move. A university player recalled his days as a running back in high school when, as his mind wandered to his girl in the stands, he slowed up slightly while carrying the ball and was tackled. Had he continued running at full speed, he believed he would have reached the end zone.

SEASONS

A season is a series of practices and games. It runs from training camp to the last game the team plays that year, the championship if it progresses that far. For the junior and university teams, seasons last two and-a-half to three months; for the professionals they last nearly six months.

Each season is unique. It is remembered for its special characteristics which, though not always unique in themselves, combine into a singular picture. First, and most important, is the success of the season: teams have winning, losing, or middling seasons. We have already seen that a winning season with its positive momentum and high morale is one of the thrills cherished by all players who have this experience.

Conversely, a losing season was one of the most prominent disappointments mentioned in the interviews. Momentum is negative, while morale sags further with every team misfortune. Players often remember such seasons as full of recrimination and bitterness. Coaches blame players (sometimes specific ones, sometimes the entire team) for the unenviable record. The players are said to be playing and practicing with too little intensity, concentration, and seriousness. As the season wears on, certain professionals begin to hear rumors that management wants to trade or cut them. Indeed, some find that their losing season is shortened because the rumors become facts.[15] The players invariably respond by blaming some or all of their coaches. The coaches may be faulted for

their offenses or defenses, game plans, recruitment efforts, player relations, or choice of starters.

These patterns of blame are much the same for amateurs and professionals. But, as pointed out in chapter 8, the two differ in the other adjustments they make to a losing season. For the present, it need only be noted that the tension of working in a negatively charged environment builds for both players and coaches as the team's record worsens and both groups struggle to halt the downward spiral. Consider this account of the atmosphere in which the Hamilton Tiger-cats worked during a part of their 1984 season:

> After last week's 48-16 loss to Winnipeg Blue Bombers, defensive back Howard Fields engaged in a shouting match with secondary coach Rich Stubler. Fields charged that the Ticats played all the wrong coverages against Winnipeg and were subsequently bombed.
>
> Then yesterday, linebacker Ben Zambiasi let loose with his best shots of the season.
>
> "We have coaches here who couldn't coach my high school football team," Zambiasi told *The Toronto Star*. "We've been making things very difficult for ourselves. It's frustrating. There's a right way and a wrong way to do things, but, inevitably, we do it the wrong way . . ."
>
> Several Ticats also were fuming yesterday over the team's reluctance to acquire all-Canadian rover Paul Bennett, who was traded by Toronto to Edmonton late Thursday.
>
> Ticats' personnel director Monte Charles wanted Bennett, but was told by general manager Joe Zuger to forget the idea . . .[16]

A middling season, in which the team wins some games and loses some, has its own characteristics. It unfolds in an atmosphere of hope: the team hopes to win enough games to get into the playoffs. For teams with a middling record, this hope may remain alive until the last regularly scheduled game. The hope is not unrealistic. Junior, university, and professional teams with so-so seasons have reached the playoffs and even wound up in the championship game.[17]

The level of morale in teams with middling records depends on the nature of their wins and losses. Team confidence, resolution, and positive spirit can remain rather high if the losses are only by a few points to the top teams of the conference, and if the wins are by large margins over the other teams. Morale could be significantly lower if the team loses by sizeable scores to weak opponents.

The Individual and the Season

Several things can happen to an individual player during a season to color his perception of that season in his athletic career. For one, he may find his status changed. For instance, the coach may believe that he can play left offensive guard as well as he can play right offensive guard, and that the team needs him in the first position. This may or may not be a welcome change for the player. Or a coach may conclude that a starter is playing poorly and, since he has a capable backup, decide to start the latter. On one of the teams at mid-season, the coaches talked of giving the job of calling defensive signals to another player. Although this proposal was never implemented, it stands as another example of the ways in which a season may change in meaning for individual players.

Secondly, a player may get injured seriously enough to be forced to sit out several games. The sense of isolation and unimportance felt at the game in which the injury occurred persists for as long as the player is on the sidelines. Moreover, he may worry about competition. If his backup is good or, in professional circles, management decides to hire a replacement (because his injury is long-term), then he may wonder if he will start once he is off the disabled list. Thus, the player may try to resume active play before he is completely or even sufficiently healed ("you can't make the club in the tub"). His concerns may extend still further to the nagging possibility that recovery from the injury may never be complete and that he will play less effectively from thereon. A season, indeed a career, is seen in a new light when incapacitating injury occurs.

Players on a losing team may adjust to its failure, in part, by trying to improve their personal status. Whatever the reason for the failure of their team, these players hope to salvage something from their efforts for the year by trying to put in their finest individual performance of their career. As seen in chapter 8, the pursuit of individual excellence, as measured by the usual statistics collected in adult amateur and professional football, is not always in the team's best interest. But if a player regards his team as beyond help for the current season, then striving for personal goals is a sensible alternative, one that could create a favorable impression when his contract is renegotiated, or improve an amateur's chances of getting drafted by a professional team (see chapters 5 and 6).

Thus, when possible, the player turns a losing season into an opportunity to amass evidence of his personal excellence in the number of interceptions, yards rushed, passes completed, and the like. Unfor-

tunately for some players, their position does not lend itself to such quantitative demonstrations of worth. Offensive linemen offer an example, as do defensive backs who may cover receivers so well that no passes are thrown their way for them to intercept.

This adjustment is also denied another type of player about whom we have said little so far. This is the backup, who, it should be noted, is usually a Canadian. Some backups start on one of the speciality teams and so see action on kickoffs, punts, kickoff returns, and so on. Backups with no starting position whatsoever are few on professional teams (they have to be paid even though they render no direct service).[18] Only amateur clubs can afford to keep many players on the bench for one or more seasons.

Being a nonstarter is definitely a kind of athletic second-class citizenship. Nonstarting backups are like a first-aid kit: something you must have handy, but hope you will never need. They and other nonstarters also act as a kind of support staff by holding blocking dummies in practice, providing the opposition in thud scrimmages, and rendering similar services. On the whole, nonstarters approach the nonperson status of the player with an incapacitating injury.

The nonstarter survives one or more seasons with the help of the dream that someday he, too, will start, because he will outperform the man he backs up, or because the latter will retire, graduate, quit, or become ineligible to play on the team. This dream must be strong enough to pull the nonstarter through the rigors of practice and the oft-repeated disappointment of not playing in the weekend game. He loves football no less than his starting colleagues. But if his team consistently wins or loses by small margins, he may see no action the entire season.

For amateurs in this position, the only possible solace is to "make the travelling team." This is the group of starters and backups selected to go to out-of-town games, a group necessarily kept to minimum size by financial considerations. This recognition distinguishes those nonstarters from the rest and offers them the benefit of a small number of partly subsidized trips to other cities.

While it is undoubtedly more enjoyable to be a nonstarter on a winning team than on a losing team, a team victory is often only a vicarious experience for such a player. Unless he can play a little in the game, he will have done nothing directly to help his team succeed. For instance, the Dinosaurs won the 1983 Vanier Cup. All interviewees who played in

that game or who, as backups, flew to Toronto where it was held but never played defined it as the biggest or one of the biggest thrills of their career in football. Four of the twenty-five interviewees remained in Calgary for that game. None of them defined the Vanier Cup championship as a thrill.

Even as starters, many of the amateurs and professionals who were interviewed said they become saturated with football as the season draws to a close. The professionals in particular, with their long season, find that the practice routine becomes tedious. Both professionals and amateurs noted that saturation is much less a problem if their team is winning. And, to the very end, the games are as exciting as ever. But they often mentioned that they become jaded with talking football with their friends and acquaintances and that postponed domestic, occupational, and educational responsibilities begin to weigh heavily.

Yet many players described the end of the season as a "letdown," as an abrupt separation from the game they love. What they miss, of course, are the games. But there is also the sudden slackening of the daily pace and effort enforced by the season's end. Frequently, the final game they play is a crucial one: if won, the team will go to the playoffs or the championship; if won, the team will play football for at least another week. Intense concentration focuses on this game, which means there is little inclination to think about losing it, and about what life will be like in the offseason. Thus, if the team does lose, the reality that football is finished until next year hits the players hard.

At this point, there are decisions to be made. For the professionals with full-time jobs awaiting them in the community, the decision is easy: go to work. Others may have to seek work and, like many of their colleagues, may first want to holiday for a few weeks (typically in a warm resort) before settling in to an offseason routine. An unfortunate few can select none of these alternatives. They must immediately enter a hospital where they will undergo surgery to correct a major injury. This must be done promptly, so that they will recover in time for the next season. For many professionals, the end of the season means that they can go home to towns and cities elsewhere in Canada and the United States. Here they may work full-time or part-time, or take an extended vacation. Whatever they do, they will work out periodically to keep in condition for the opening of training camp in the spring.

The amateurs, because of work or school commitments, or both, find

it more difficult to leave immediately for two weeks or more of postseason vacationing. This must wait for a couple of months until the Christmas break or thereabouts. Then groups of junior and university players (in the west) drift to various beaches in California or Hawaii.

NOTES

1. Declining revenues are responsible for the disappearance of at least one post-game event: the dinner for players and wives that used to be given by some of the CFL teams.
2. Lyman, S.M. and M.B. Scott. *A Sociology of the Absurd* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970).
3. Stebbins, R.A. "Toward a social psychology of stage fright." In *Sport in the Sociocultural Process*, 3rd ed., eds. M. Hart and S. Birrell, pp. 156-63 (Dubuque, IA: W.C. Brown, 1981).
4. Snyder, E.E. and E.A. Spreitzer. *Social Aspects of Sport*, 2nd ed., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 272-75.
5. Dubin, R. "Central life interest." *Pacific Sociological Review* 22:405-26, 1979.
6. Stebbins, R.A. "Serious leisure: A conceptual statement." *Pacific Sociological Review* 25: 251-72, 1982.
7. Stebbins, R.A., *Amateurs: On the Margin Between Work and Leisure*. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979), 35.
8. Respondents in my earlier studies of amateurs in theatre, archeology, baseball, astronomy, and entertainment magic indicated occasionally that their group or a group they knew of had more serious participants (i.e., devotees) than other such groups with which they were familiar.
9. Some respondents have had experience with both types of teams and can therefore make a direct comparison; 6 university players had played for a junior team earlier in their career; 13 junior players had played for a university team, tried out for it and got cut, or made the team, but only as a nonstarter.
10. *Globe and Mail*. 3.11.83, p. 25.

11. Martens, R. and J.A. Peterson, "Group cohesiveness as a determinant of success and member satisfaction in team performance." *International Review of Sport Sociology* 6: 49-59, 1971.

12. Adler, P. *Momentum: A Theory of Social Action*. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1981), 71.

13. Adler, Momentum, Ch. 2.

14. The Eskimos played in the Grey Cup championships of 1977 through 1982, winning five times in that period. The player was interviewed in 1983.

15. No trades can be made after 1 October.

16. *Calgary Herald*. 22.9.84, p. F1.

17. For example, the Hamilton Tiger-cats, with a win-loss-tie record of 6-9-1, played in, but lost, the Grey Cup championship of 1984.

18. Still, professional teams need backups. This problem is solved, among other ways, by the clandestine arrangement of the "taxi squad": a set of players not officially contracted to any CFL team who are nonetheless paid a reduced salary to stay in town should they be needed on short notice. Each club is also allowed to contract players in a "reserve" capacity who may be declared on the active roster upon official notification.

CHAPTER 5

Career: From Amateur to Professional

In the preceding chapter I noted that football players have both a short-term and long-term view of their vocation or avocation. The sequence of practices and games that make up each season are the basis for part of the long-term view. Another part is based on the football career. That career begins in the informal spontaneous play of pickup football and gathers momentum as a boy joins his first formally organized team and moves on to play high school football. Later he becomes a member of a junior team or university team or, in sequence, both. Depending on a variety of factors, he may eventually play professional football. Before we consider this sequence in detail, however, we must first review the sociological conception of the sports career on which this chapter and the next are based.

THE CONCEPT SPORTS CAREER

The *sports career* is the typical course or passage of a type of athlete through the various stages that carry him or her into and through a leisure role and possibly a work role. This career also includes the adjustments made to, and the interpretations made of, the contingencies and turning points encountered while in each stage. The essence of career lies in the temporal continuity of the activities associated with it. We are accustomed to thinking of this continuity as one of accumulating rewards and prestige — as progress along these lines from some starting point. But continuity may also include career retrogress. In sport, as in some other vocational and avocational pursuits, athletes may reach performance peaks, after which prestige and rewards diminish as the limelight shifts to younger, sometimes more capable athletes.

Moreover, continuity in the work histories of individuals may occur

predominantly within, between, or outside organizations. Careers in organizations such as the military, the government, or the business firm commonly unfold as workers move up through a hierarchy of positions or ranks, each of which offers the incumbent more attractive rewards and prestige. Downward mobility, though rarer, also takes place.

Athletes, however, typically have careers either between or outside organizations. As professionals, they are independent professionals. For them career continuity comes from their growing reputations as skilled players and, based on this image, from finding increasingly better playing and paying opportunities available through certain teams, tournaments, meets, and the like. Although some athletes are members of teams, which are small-scale organizations, their careers do not usually unfold within them. Other athletes who participate in nonteam sports such as tennis, golf, or track and field are free of even this marginal affiliation with a work organization.

In short, the continuity of an individual's athletic history is similar to that of many independent physicians, lawyers, artists, small businessmen, symphony musicians, and university professors. It is substantially different from that of many police officers, civil servants, corporation managers, military personnel, and clergy in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches.

Continuity in a career can be viewed from two perspectives: (1) from the *career history*, or the chronological, descriptive, objective view of the sports career as it unfolds over the athletic years of the typical athlete in one kind of sport; or (2) from the *subjective career*, — the career as seen through the eyes of the people pursuing it. The subjective career focuses on their interpretation of what has happened, is happening, and will happen to them at various times during their life as an athlete.

CAREER HISTORY

Most career histories have five stages: beginning, development, establishment, maintenance, and decline.[1] In this chapter, we explore the first three stages in connection with Canadian adult football. The final two stages are considered in chapter 6. At each stage of his career history the player encounters special contingencies. A *career contingency* is an unintended event, process, or situation that occurs by chance; that is, it lies beyond the control of the people pursuing the career. Career contingencies emanate from changes in their leisure or work environ-

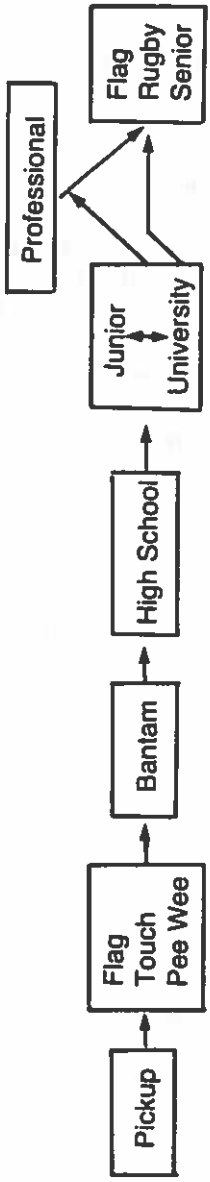

Figure 12: Careers in Canadian Football

ment, or their personal circumstances, or both. The movement of people (progressive or retrogressive) through their career is affected by the contingencies they meet along the way. Figure 1 summarizes the careers in amateur and professional football that are possible in Canada.

The Beginning

Most athletic careers begin in childhood or early adolescence.[2] While playing pickup football and other childhood sports, youngsters gain considerable satisfaction from expressing their athletic interests, from experiencing the admiration of others (both adults and peers), and from enjoying various sports because of their inherently interesting nature. At this time, they discover their aptitude for sport: by pitting their skills against their peers', these youngsters learn that they can excel in physical activities. For all respondents in this study at this stage, football was one of several athletic interests. Even in high school (part of the development stage), all but a few played at least one and usually two or three other sports besides football.

The respondents recalled three contingencies during this period in their life. All relate to leaving the first stage to begin their development as an athlete. Parental reactions to their son's serious interest in sport in general and football in particular is the first contingency. A small number of the respondents had to contend with parental resistance to their plans to join a tackle football team during their youth. Seven professionals (23.3 percent), 5 university players (20 percent) and 4 junior players (16 percent) met with direct opposition from one or both parents. Another 5 professionals (16.6 percent) and 2 players, each from the junior and university teams (8 percent), said their parents were neutral: "If that is what you want to do, go ahead."[3]

These parents, especially mothers, believed the organized game to be too rough. In fact, pickup football, which is usually played with little or no protective equipment, is probably more dangerous than the organized form of the sport where such equipment is provided. For those players' parents who immigrated to Canada from Europe, football was an unfamiliar game which they felt was trivial. The judgment of triviality applied to older boys whose proper interest, the parents felt, ought to be in school and a part-time job. Despite such beliefs, however, the parents who tried to discourage their sons' interest in football eventually signed the consent forms permitting them to play. This occurred only after

pressure from the youngster became intolerable and, in some instances, later in his life than he would have liked.

Most parents, however, were moderately to strongly in favor of their son joining a team (60 percent, 72 percent, and 76 percent for professional, university, and junior players, respectively). This meant that they signed the consent forms without resistance, provided transportation when it was needed, attended games, and in other ways indicated their acceptance of their son's athletic status. Many mothers worried about injuries, even while they accepted and even fostered his interest in football. Some mothers who were initially opposed to their son's playing football came to favor it when they saw how much it meant to him and how well he was progressing in it. Some immigrant parents had a similar change of heart.

The second contingency, which is closely related to the first, is the presence in the family of a father or brother who played football. Encouragement from these sources is powerful, since the father or brother can share in vivid detail the experiences, hopes, and fears of the younger player. Fifty-three percent of the professionals, 56 percent of the university players, and 32 percent of the junior players had adult or adolescent males in their family or neighborhood who played in high school or beyond. The majority of these individuals were fathers or brothers, although two to three respondents in each sample mentioned a cousin, uncle, or neighbor in this connection. Another set of parents who encouraged the respondent had athletic careers in a sport other than football. Several mothers were cited here, including one who, though never on a team, knew enough about the game to teach the neighborhood boys how to play it.

Encouragement from these sources may help explain why substantially more boys with such a background end up in university football than in junior football. Parents, brothers, and others who have played on a team can speak of the importance of taking football seriously and of the ensuing rewards. Differences in seriousness, we noted in chapter 4, help distinguish junior players from university football players.

The third contingency, which is faced only by Canadian youth, is the availability of a tackle football team to join. For example, there are no football teams in Newfoundland and no high school teams in British Columbia, although junior football is well developed in the latter province. Several Canadian respondents had to wait until university to

play organized football. For others, even when teams existed, they were unaware of them during some or all of the years in which they were eligible to play for them. Finally, some players were too heavy to play, since youth leagues often enforce weight restrictions.

This availability contingency springs from the presence or absence of community teams for youth of ages fifteen and younger. This contingency was actually or potentially faced by 52 to 53 percent of the Canadian-raised amateur and professional respondents who wanted to join a community youth team and managed to do so by grade nine. The contingency was never mentioned by the six American professionals in the sample, all but one of whom (83 percent) had joined a formal team by grade nine. Four of the six respondents played for junior-high-school teams in grades seven, eight, and/or nine — an opportunity Canadians rarely have. Many Canadians, however, have available to them at this age community-run bantam programs.

Development

In sports careers, the development stage commences once the initial interest in athletics has taken root. It lasts until the decision is made to pursue a particular sport full-time. This period, which runs from childhood or early adolescence to late adolescence or early adulthood, is the time for polishing skills, gaining experience applying them, learning about the nature and lore of various sports, and becoming committed to sport in general, instead of some other activity. During this stage many young athletes continue to experiment with several sports, often finding enjoyment, recognition, and self-fulfillment in all of them.

Joining an organized team is an important contingency for a number of reasons. If the coaching is good, the youngster starts to unlearn some of the inferior techniques acquired in pickup football (e.g., bad throwing, catching, and blocking habits) and to replace them with techniques that will develop him as a player. Further, he will be socialized by the other players and the coach into the values, norms and behavior patterns connected with football. Finally, he will start gaining experience in coordinated and cooperative play and in reading offenses and defenses.

Thus, in football, development may be said to commence with the joining of a formal team. It is certainly to the youngster's benefit to join earlier in his youth rather than later. Still, two professionals (including one American) joined their first team in grade eleven and twoothers

immediately after finishing high school (one joined a university team, the other a junior team). Two university and two junior players joined their first team in grade eleven, a third university player started in grade 12 and a fourth started at age 18 on a junior team. Obviously, it is possible in the development stage — given natural talent, good coaching, and team vacancies — to overcome the lack of experience that comes from taking up football later than is typical.

There can be no doubt about the quality of coaching as a development contingency. Coaches, both good and bad, were remembered by all the respondents. Several professionals, even though they are influenced least by coaches, mentioned those whom they remember as outstanding, from whom, as professionals, they had learned a great deal and had received fair treatment. Good coaches inspire confidence in a player, whatever his level. In turn, the player, even if he is a professional, wants to please these rare individuals by playing the best football of which he is capable. According to a professional linebacker,

> Even more exciting, as a rookie, was starting that many games [six] and especially after training camp, where you are relying mostly on your natural abilities. Yet the coaches were a great bunch of coaches at that time. I guess they saw something and believed in my abilities. They gave all the confidence they could, because I was out there looking after the defense . . . Along with that, at [team X] I was told that I couldn't help them, so I go to this team and make a major contribution to it. That made me feel really good.

Among adult amateurs respect for a coach comes not only from his demonstrated knowledge and his ability to handle players, but also from his playing experience. Other things being equal, the higher the level of playing experience achieved by a coach, the greater the weight given to his advice by players. Unless he has an established reputation in coaching, a man with only high school playing experience (even though he may have taken many courses in coaching), must be exceptionally persuasive and tactful if he is to get adult players to accept his advice.

Amateurs have other leisure options. They can and do quit teams if the coaching is weak. They sometimes argue with their coaches about the fine points of technique and strategy. For example, during a passing and receiving drill, several junior players and a coach argued the pros and cons of catching the ball over the head or shoulders with palms facing the player's head versus catching the ball by facing it with the upper body,

palms pointed towards the ball and away from the face. The coach recommended the first technique. His authority was contradicted by the play book, which described as the "ideal position" the second technique, and by the professionals who are observed using both.

The contingency of team availability continues into the development stage. That is, a player who has been able to play for a high school team may have no junior or university team in his area. If he wants to play collegiate football, he will have to find enough money to pay for room, board, tuition, and books during his first year at an institution elsewhere in Canada, or try to get a scholarship at an American school. If he makes the team, if his school is a member of the CIAU, and if the province offers athletic scholarhsips, he may receive an award of up to one thousand dollars. Depending on the province, this is more or less enough to cover tuition and books for each season that he is a full-time student beyond the first year of his five-years of eligibility. But financial support must be competed for: it goes to the players with the best academic and athletic records.

Junior and senior players are likewise limited if there is no junior or senior team in a player's hometown. They must then either relocate or abandon their goal of a further career in football. In cities with two or more junior teams, a team may be assigned a district in which it has exclusive recruitment rights. Although this arrangement eliminates recruitment competition among the teams and helps equalize the distribution of talented players, it also limits player choice. A player must join the team in the district in which he went to high school. In Calgary, during the years when this arrangement was in effect, players had the formal right to petition for a release from the team of their district in order to join another team.[4] In actuality, however, getting released was sometime difficult, especially when the player was valuable.

Through their rules and regulations, the organizations associated with football create several more contingencies for the players. In most jurisdictions, one can play junior football only until age 22. One can play university football for no more than five years. One can play bantam football only within a certain age range and only under a specified maximum weight. Players become ineligible for football and other collegiate sports if they are failing courses. The CIAU requires that former professionals returning to university amateur status maintain the classification of full-time student for twelve months and refrain, during

that period, from competing in the sport in which they were professional. Chapter 4 contains evidence that training rules and their violation can affect the course of a man's playing career.

Still another contingency in the football career found at all stages from development onward is the position one plays. Height, weight, speed, and agility are among the factors that determine where in the offensive or defensive team a man will find the position at which he can excel and therefore come to prefer over all the positions he is physically capable of playing. Nearly all the respondents had a favorite position or two, their preference usually based on their experience in high school where, by playing as many as four or five different positions, they could determine their favorite through comparison. But the team may need a player at a position that is not his favorite. Forty-three percent of the professionals (13 of 30), 21 percent of the university players (5 of 24), and 33 percent of the junior players (8 of 24) said, when interviewed, that they were playing positions other than their favorite. These findings do not necessarily indicate that the players in question were dissatisfied with their present lot in football. Nonetheless, it is instructive to note that in the amateur ranks, where there is much more freedom to abandon football for another activity, the proportion of dissatisfied players (whatever the degree of their dissatisfaction) is lower than among professionals.

A final contingency in the development stage of the football career is finding an opportunity to talk with the professionals. When amateurs and professionals meet, the former have the opportunity to question the latter about technique, life-style, adjustments to professional standards, and the like. Moreover, face-to-face contact of this sort makes it possible for the professional to serve, however briefly, as a role model for the amateur, as a model of the kind of person and athlete the aspiring amateur could and perhaps should become.

The majority of amateurs in this study had some contact with professionals, with five junior players and one university player having no contact at all. Roughly 70 percent of both amateur samples said they met (through a friend or relative) one or more professionals whom they presently regard as either friends or acquaintances. For the university players, these contacts occurred primarily through former teammates, who are at present professionals and who introduced them to still other professionals. In addition, ten university players (40 percent) said they were in brief contact with one or more professionals in a health club or

weight room. Only four junior players met professionals this way, however; instead, junior players were more likely to meet them in a lounge or restaurant where professionals are known to pass their leisure time (8 or 32 percent). Only two university players said they met professionals here. Approximately 18 percent of both samples also met one or two professionals during a high school football camp.

Meeting professionals is an important contingency in the development stage, for contact between them and the amateurs is largely accidental. Only one university player and two junior players intentionally sought out a professional to ask his advice on technique or his opinions on football as an occupation and a way of life. Four university players sought the most effective contact of all: attendance at a professional camp during their fourth or "draft" year at university.

Establishment

Athletes in the establishment stage select a sport as their vocation and seek full-time participation in it. It is at this time that the athlete crosses the line from amateur to professional or from local amateur to elite amateur (e.g., the national Olympic team). The present study suggests that establishment lasts from two to five years for CFL players. Most players reach maintenance, the next stage, in two or three years. But those who must learn a new position or who have entered football from another sport, such as track and field, need more time.

Establishment is without doubt the period of greatest insecurity in any football career. Many players never get beyond it, for the average length of time in the CFL is four years.[5] It is not known how many players voluntarily leave football during this stage because they are disenchanted or wish to pursue another occupation. What is known is that many leave involuntarily, owing to the contingencies of being "cut" (being fired), or being unable to get "signed" (hired) with another team. Such was the fate of this second-year professional:

> In my second season, I moved into a very competitive situation and lasted with the team only through training camp. This was my concern during training camp: I didn't think I was getting the opportunity to show myself. I was having run-ins with this other coach, a guest coach. That was bothering me, and not being given time to practice properly. One practice, early in camp, I only stepped on the field three times. So what can you accomplish in a

> practice like that? Just knowing that I wasn't being given the opportunity, not even as good an opportunity as in my rookie year, was tense. I was unhappy over that situation. I couldn't get a feel for what I was doing and what I was doing wrong. Some of the mistakes I would make were mental mistakes, because my mind wasn't just right in there.

As we shall see later in this chapter, being "cut" is, to some extent, within the player's control. That is, being cut is usually somehow related to the player's ability as an athlete and management's perception of it. Nevertheless, there are also forces affecting the player that lie beyond his control, that affect him by chance and that give being cut its contingent character. For first- and second-year professionals, the two main contingencies are the number and quality of players competing for the same position and getting injured. We turn first to the contingency of competition.

Early professionals are most vulnerable in training camp, which lasts six weeks and, at the time of this study, included four preseason games. During this period CFL teams will tryout anywhere from 45 to 90 players, selecting for their 35-man active rosters those whom they consider the best. Of course, not all aspirants are competing with each other. For example, 15 to 20 of them may be hoping to secure one of the 4 wide-receiver positions. But there is competition. And, when a player signs a contract with a team during the offseason, there is no guarantee that he will be employed until it expires (typically three years later) by that team or any other team. The coaches and the personnel manager may find another man in camp whom they believe will fill the position he seeks better than he can.

Competition is affected by another contingency that straddles the development and establishment stages of the football career, a sort of *pre-establishment contingency*. This contingency is the position a man has played in junior or university football, to which he hopes to get signed as a professional in Canada. Although there are occasional exceptions, the general rule is that Canadians hoping to play professionally are much less likely than Americans to be invited to a training camp as quarterbacks and somewhat less likely than Americans to be invited as defensive backs or wide receivers. Likewise, with certain exceptions, Americans are much less likely to be invited to a training camp in the position of kicker and the positions in the offensive line.[6] The regulation stating that a team have no more than thirteen import players on its active

roster (plus three quarterbacks, all of whom may be imports) suggests that this pre-establishment contingency might be different were there no such restriction. The regulation exists, however, and it gives an advantage to professional linemen willing to serve as utility players. When the size of a team's roster is limited (which happens on amateur teams, too), utility players provide a valuable flexibility that may be used to fill the vacancy left by an injured player and, in the CFL, to strike the proper balance of imported and Canadian players.

Another pre-establishment contingency affecting competition is that of physical limitations. These are weight, height, and injuries that have not healed and probably will not heal completely. Some players, although equal to their competitors in ability and experience, are lighter or smaller. Depending on the positions they seek, these men receive few invitations to try out for the professional clubs or, if they do somehow get to a professional camp, they quickly get cut. Several interviewees pointed out that many Americans in the CFL were unable to pursue a career in the NFL, not because of a lack of ability, but because of weight or height limitations. Canadians who are eliminated from the professional ranks for these reasons, of course, have no other professional league to turn to. Unhealed and unhealable injuries are, however, no respecter of nationality. No professional team in North America wants a player who can only perform at three-quarters of his potential. An incapacitating injury sustained in junior or university play usually signals the end of the man's football career once his eligibility there expires (unless there is a local senior team to join).

This brings us to the second contingency in the establishment stage, namely, injury. Injury is obviously part of the football experience in all stages. What is unique about injuries during establishment is that they often sideline rookies precisely at the time they are trying to prove themselves to the coaching staff. A rookie who is injured early in training camp and forced to convalesce for several weeks will likely get lost in the shuffle of some eighty others, one of whom may replace him. Assuming that his injury eventually heals well, there is an outside chance that he may be signed on during the regular season by that team or another one that suddenly finds itself shorthanded in the position he plays. Beyond this possibility, however, there is no choice but to wait for the training camp of the following season and try again.

SUBJECTIVE CAREER

The idea of subjective career refers to the player's recognition and interpretation of events — past, present, and future — that are associated with his role as a player.[7] Especially important in an analysis of the subjective side of career is the player's interpretation of the turning points he has encountered or expects to encounter. It is in the player's subjective career that we learn how he finds continuity in his sports life — how he sees himself as progressing or declining.

A *turning point* is a juncture at which the nature or direction of the man's career is seen by him as having changed significantly. The players tended to define as turning points the critical events and decisions they were involved in as adults, seldom searching back into their adolescent and childhood years to identify turning points. In other words, they saw the most significant events of their football career as occurring from late development onward.

Certain career contingencies are interpreted by the players as turning points, including some already considered, namely, being cut, getting injured, and receiving financial support. Other events such as winning an award, making the team, and making a major decision are not contingent, though they are seen as turning points. They fail to qualify as contingencies because they are, to a significant degree, caused, and controlled, by the players themselves. Some turning points, then, are contingent; some are not.

Contingent Turning Points

An important contingent turning point in the development and establishment stages is "making the team." The competition among a large number of talented players for a small number of positions is what lends it contingency. Yet, making the team is within the player's control to the extent that rigorous conditioning, work on fundamental skills, and acquisition of technique and experience help him "beat out" his competitors.

Training Camp. Although football players are always being evaluated — in a way, they are always trying to make the team — they have to prove themselves only once a year at training camp. Even veterans, whether junior, university, or professional, must compete. But we shall see later in this chapter and in the next, that they normally have little to

worry about and that the professionals have ways of controlling their younger challengers. Training camp for veterans at the peak of their career, except for occasional personality clashes with a coach, poses little other strain. It is the rookie and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the second-year player who suffer the most psychological tension at camp.

True to the general meaning of "camp," professional football training camps are temporary arrangements that enforce a degree of isolation by removing the players from their daily routine for the purpose of accomplishing specific goals with reference to the upcoming regular season: notably, conditioning, learning the playbook, and establishing the thirty-five-man active roster. The workouts are strenuous, occurring twice daily (the dreaded "two-a-days") during the first two weeks of camp. At the professional level, players are expected to adhere to an evening curfew during this period. They are also required to stay in a university residence rented by the team and eat the meals served there. On some teams married players whose home is in the city where the camp is located may be permitted to sleep there. Other teams deny this comfort and further forbid their players from even seeing their wives or girlfriends until the two-week period has elapsed and the preseason games have begun. Interspersed between the workouts and the meals are numerous meetings to discuss the playbook.

Adult amateur teams strive to reach the same goals, but impose fewer camp-like conditions. They lack the money to sequester players in special quarters. The university team, because it holds two-a-days (its players do not work year around at full-time jobs) can offer but does not require attendance at a noon meal.

Professional training camps get a mixed review from those who participate. Eight professionals listed them as a disagreeable part of their athletic life. What is scorned are the arduous two-a-days in the heat of late May or early June, the inconvenience and lack of privacy of university residence living, and the general regimentation. The residences may be hot, the beds uncomfortable, and the entire place permeated with loud music and talk from nearby rooms and hallways. Given the anxiety of the majority of players (for all but the veterans who are sure of their positions) over whether they will make the team, tempers are often short. But the rules prohibit one from relieving tension with a drink or two or taking one's mind off the situation by having a female visitor. Gambling (in fact, even being in a gambling establish-

ment) is also forbidden. It is wise to respect these norms. A professional linebacker with three years experience noted:

> Training camp, it has to be done, but its tough. You sleep and eat football. And it gets pretty tough on the mind. You're definitely glad when you get home and into the regular routine of the season. I like it because the season starts up and that's a good feeling. But there's the monotony and the tediousness and the life you go through. Your knock on the door comes at 7 o'clock and your curfew is at 11 o'clock. That makes for a long day. Especially since this is nonstop with maybe two hours at night for yourself . . . It's a drag.

Nearly every player identified one aspect of camp or another as disagreeable. Nonetheless, the majority of the professionals and all of the amateurs avoided classifying it as a dislike. For them the favorable aspects of camp outweighed its unfavorable aspects. First, the rigor of the two-a-days varies from team to team in the CFL and so they are less fatiguing for some players than for others. Second, for amateurs and professionals, the start of camp heralds the commencement of the football season. By May, the players interviewed are eager to return to football, even if they dislike camp. Camp reunites them with old friends. It gives veterans an opportunity to look over the new crop of rookies. It enables all players to do what they like to do best: play football. Third, for the veteran, camp is a stage upon which he can strut his skill and experience before an admiring (and frequently threatened) set of newcomers.

Fourth, camp is "fun" at times. Much of the fun focuses on hazing rookies. For the duration of the camp, but especially during the first two weeks, rookies must withstand a certain amount of good-natured harassment. At amateur and professional camps alike, rookies are commonly asked to stand (possibly on a chair) and sing their school song, tell a joke, or in some other way provide entertainment at team lunches and dinners. To avoid having to perform in this manner, some rookies on the university team eat their lunches at home. Rookies are also the objects of an assortment of practical jokes, such as being taped to a locker room bench or having their shoes hung from the crossbar of a goalpost. They perform certain services, too, such as carrying blocking dummies (on amateur teams where players must do this), cleaning up the locker room,

and fetching milk at team meals or pizza in the evening.

The hazing of rookies today is largely confined to these practices. My observations suggest that its frequency and intensity diminishes but by no means disappears as one rises from junior to university to professional status. The "rookie night" where first-year players are made to sing and dance, put on skits, and entertain veterans in other ways is now a custom that is waning on some adult football teams in Canada.

What has not diminished is the "pounding" that rookies get on the practice field from veterans who want to see "if they can take it" — to see if they can bear up under the punishment that an amateur or professional must take in a game. As mentioned earlier, veterans also try to dampen rookie enthusiasm, which may make them (the veterans) look bad in the eyes of the coach. A six-year professional receiver recalled his rookie days when he had to try to "beat" a veteran defensive back:

> I'm a receiver. I noticed when I was a rookie that all of us rookie receivers were just getting the shit kicked out of us by guys like _____. You had to go against him every day and he feels his job is on the line. He doesn't want you beating him. He tries to intimidate you. Being teammates and so forth, he still does it. But moreso with rookies, because he doesn't want them to come out and make him look bad. If the guy makes the team, he wants him to be intimidated two months down the road. So he strikes right off the bat. He'll take a rookie's head off the very first time he runs a pattern.

We shall return to the practice of intimidation in the next chapter.

Making the Team. It is in this atmosphere that rookies work to make the team. For many of them, it is a trying situation, indeed. Added to the hazing, the intimidation, and the tests of resilience are the problems of being a stranger on the team and in the community, meeting a new and more exacting set of athletic standards, and, for the professionals, being treated as a commodity in the world of big business. Professional football is generally faster and more complex offensively and defensively than amateur football. Many professional respondents commented on the scope of the adjustment they had to make in moving from amateur to professional play. This adjustment is said to be bigger for players from Canadian university and junior teams than for those from American college teams.

In fact, camp may be their first time away from home on their own. Homesickness can sometimes weaken the resolve of the strongest man,

as an article in the *Calgary Herald* pointed out.

> Whatever the reason, Calgary Stampeders' No. 1 draft pick Sean McKeown practised with the Canadian Football League team Monday and then left training camp.
>
> The mammoth defensive lineman from the University of Western Ontario stunned his teammates, coaches and agent with his surprising disappearing act. He packed his gear, spoke briefly with personnel director Ed Alsman and then left on a plane for Toronto.
>
> The problem now is convincing the six-foot-five, 265-pound McKeown to return to McMahon Stadium and try again.
>
> According to Stamps' coach Steve Buratto, that won't be easy.
>
> "We've suspended him until he comes back, but I'm not optimistic. The kid was homesick . . . not unusual for someone who's 21 and away from home for the first time. My feeling is that Sean won't be back because he can return and play at university."*

Rookies would like to mingle with the veterans, some of whom are well known and many of whom, as these newcomers see them, are models of excellence. Yet, particularly at the professional level, where 50 percent or more of the players in camp will be cut, veterans avoid all but the required interaction with rookies. Veterans have too many domestic, community, and athletic obligations to allow them to fraternize with even a small number of the many new players, especially when it is likely that they will be gone in less than six weeks. Thus, well into their first year with the team, even after they have made the active roster, rookies are forced to associate largely with each other or be alone altogether.

Being more or less pushed into interaction with his peers is not all bad for a rookie. He and the others are in the same boat: newcomers with the team, shunned by veterans, and probably new to the city. Rookies are approximately the same age and at the same stage of the family life cycle (generally unmarried or married with no children). With so much in common and with limited opportunities for association with other people who share their interest, it is little wonder that rookies soon start talking among themselves about their similar problems and prospects in their first brush with professional sport. In the camp atmosphere of doubt and competition, some manage to become close friends, carousing together after hours (sometimes even against the rules), reliving their days as junior or university players, and speculating about their uncertain future as professionals.

This study and Goodman's survey both suggest that the extracurricular

associations among rookies follow racial lines and, within them, positional lines.[9] For example, the black candidates for defensive back gravitate towards one another, as do the white candidates. American black players face a special problem in Canadian cities, especially those in the west, where there are significantly fewer black men and women outside the world of football with whom they can associate than in the United States. As a consequence many date white women.

But the competitive nature of camp also fosters certain malevolent practices. Many rookies are vying for the same position. When differences in ability and experience are slight to nonexistent, other criteria must be brought to bear if individual players are to distinguish themselves from their competitors. To this end, colleges and universities are ranked according to their reputations in football. Being from a school with a poor reputation is taken as a sign that players from that school are poorly qualified to play professional football. Players who are the object of such assessments may deny the truth of this reasoning. Still, imputations of this sort do little to bolster their self-confidence in a highly competitive situation where self-confidence may be the determining factor in performing well enough to make the team. The ranking system generally accords Canadian schools a lower reputation for football than American schools. Supporting this evaluation are the facts that, on the average, Americans start playing football on organized teams earlier than Canadians, and that they have better football programs in high school and, to a lesser extent, in university.

In other words, imported players, as well as coaches and managers, generally believe that experience at a school in the United States validates their claim that they are better than Canadians, especially if the school has a fine football reputation. The following comments by a Canadian offensive lineman with five years professional experience and four years experience at an American college indicate that at least some Canadians also accept this ranking system:

> If you're a Canadian, you're looked down on. They'll look down on you if you're a Canadian and played Canadian college football or a Canadian who played in the States. Like I told you before, there's a ranking. They'll [the coaches] take you sight unseen if you played in the States . . . I'm just as bad myself. I say Canadian college football sucks and all that; yet this [attitude] may cost us a great football player once in awhile. But I'm a victim of that myself. I look down on [Canadians] until they prove themselves otherwise. But I've seen some great Canadian football players.

Since most Americans on CFL teams (veterans and rookies) are black, the ranking of universities and players soon takes on racial overtones. Particularly among white Canadian rookies, blacks are perceived as "feisty" and as "having a chip on their shoulders," or as displaying an "I-am-better-than-you-attitude." To the extent that these dispositions actually exist, they may be understood, in part, as adjustments by members of a minority to competition with the white majority. On at least some teams in the CFL, the ethnic apartheid among rookies wanes considerably once the active roster is settled. At this time, the coaches of these teams stress the need to work together, to act as a team, and to respect demonstrated ability rather than the categorical memberships of race, nationality, and alma mater.

The stressful world of the rookie professional may cause him to "crack," to break down in tears, to become unmanageable, or to give up and leave camp. Those who remain and make the team often report that this achievement was one of their biggest thrills in football. Half the sample of professionals reported that becoming a member of a professional team for the first time was a memorable thrill and turning point in their career. Only playing in championship and playoff games was cited as more thrilling than this. A similar picture exists among the university players, except that a somewhat larger proportion (17 or 68 percent) said making the university team was thrilling. Ten players or 40 percent of the junior sample said it was a thrill to make their team. It was the fourth most frequently listed thrill of their career.

Getting Drafted. Although, each year a handful of rookies negotiate contracts as free agents in the professional football camps in Canada, most are invited or "drafted." Junior players and players at schools in the United States receive invitations to these camps on the basis of scouting reports. Players at Canadian universities and Canadians at American institutions are drafted, providing they went to high school in Canada. Whether drafted or invited by a team, the player eventually signs a contract, which gives him a certain amount of medical coverage, a subsistance allowance, and a small fee for each preseason game he plays up to the start of the regular season, should he last that long. The practice of contracting free agents to try out for a professional team acts as a partially effective safety valve. It allows some who fail to survive the contingent turning point of the draft or favorable scouting report the opportunity to display their qualifications.

Jackson and Lowe describe the draft system in football in North America:

> It is probably in football where the *draft* receives the most attention (relative to other sports) in the news media and it has, when related with *trades*, a cross-the-international-border significance in North America. The draft represents a form of "rites-of-passage," wherein the cream of the intercollegiate athletes is given the recognition for sound performance during "apprenticeship."[10]

The Canadian practice of the territorial exemption has been abandoned. When it was in force, one high-quality player could be "protected" from a college or university in the vicinity of each CFL club.[11] Since 1985, eligible university players are drafted in "rounds"; that is, each team selects one player, with the teams that had the weakest record the previous season being given the earliest choices. After all teams have made one selection, a second round of drafting begins using the same procedure, then a third round, and so on until the teams have made all the selections they want from the list of eligible players. The draft takes place in February during the annual meeting of the CFL. It is preceded by an annual two-day evaluation camp (initiated in 1983), which raises the possibility of making more informed selections than in the past. In 1984, seventy-five players were invited to this camp, during which they were observed by scouts from the various CFL teams and tested in much the same way as they are at the beginning of training camp.

These arrangements are intended to improve the scouting by the CFL teams in Canada. "There's a lot of guesswork in scouting," notes George Brancato, coach of the Ottawa Rough Riders. "By getting everyone together, you have a better chance to compare players."[12] The practice of protecting the top player in a region historically gave CFL scouting in Canada a regional rather than national focus. The result was that most scouting efforts were directed toward potential recruits from the United States. Since January, 1985, CFL scouting has been run centrally from the Toronto office of the organization.

Thus, there is a further contingent turning point for the Canadian adult amateur: to attract enough attention during his final year of junior eligibility or his third or fourth year of university eligibility to be invited to the evaluation camp or to a training camp. Another contingency for university players is to be selected at the February draft, preferably in one of the early rounds. Both turning points hinge on how well a man plays during the year he is most likely to be scouted. Both hinge, as well, on the chance factors of a scout seeing a player in action, seeing him on videotape, or becoming aware of his accomplishments through the news

media. Players recognize the importance of performing at their best during the year they are most likely to be scouted. It is especially critical to avoid being sidelined with an injury. Hopeful amateurs who have been injured have been known to play against medical advice expressly to keep a high profile with the scouts. Despite these precautions, however, many rookies are still contracted sight unseen, solely on the basis of their statistical record and letters of reference.

Noncontingent Turning Points

Several noncontingent turning points are experienced in football from the development stage onward. These include getting cut, receiving awards, negotiating contracts, generating performance statistics, and playing in a crucial game such as a playoff or championship. Since players, as a group, are most likely to get cut in training camp or sometime during their first year or two of professional employment, this turning point is covered in the present chapter. The others are considered in the next chapter. The protracted negotiation of contracts, as opposed to accepting more or less what is offered, is most common during the maintenance stage. Awards, concerns with performance statistics, and playing in crucial games are turning points that occur throughout the football career. They are discussed in the next chapter from this standpoint.

Amateurs and professionals alike can get cut. Still, only two university players and two junior players defined this contingency as a major disappointment in their career. The reasons for so mild a reaction to so important an event in one's athletic life are unclear. Perhaps release from an amateur club is expected more than release from a professional club. Perhaps amateur teams cut fewer players, and so fewer respondents reported having had such an experience. Perhaps it is a matter of definition: The amateur respondents who failed to make the university or junior team rarely described their lack of success as a cut; rather, they simply failed to make the team.

By contrast, professional rookies, perhaps because they are contracted, did describe themselves as having been cut when they failed to make the team. Eight professionals said that getting cut was a major disappointment. It is a poignant experience, explained a defensive back who was cut after three years of play with a professional team:

> At _____ I was starting for five or six games in a row and playing good ball. Then we had an injury and I was forced to play

> corner[back]. At that time there weren't any Canadian corners. We tied the game at 28. I was beaten for two touchdowns, but I had a new guy inside [inside linebacker] who didn't even know my name hardly. They'd just brought him in the day before. And I was put in a real dilemma. The next day I was cut . . . That was a real downer. I was in a situation where there was no way you could win on it. I played to the best of my abilities and I did well. That was a real disappointment . . . They coached me on the position, threw me out there to the wolves, and then blamed the tie on me.

Another player, a linebacker with five years professional experience, was more philosophical about getting cut:

> Professionally, the major disappointments come in any time you're released. The first time you're released it's really devastating. You think the world's going to end. From there, you get realistic. You realize, "Hey, I have an education. I'm not a dummy; I have other things that I can do." My pursuit of wanting to play bad enough got me all these different places [teams]. Every time you are let go, it's like you are just cut, physically cut. It aches you, because you do give so much of yourself. But, it's the nature of the game. You learn to understand it. You don't necessarily accept it because you don't want to be continually rejected. But it's going to happen.

Getting cut during training camp or at some other time during the establishment stage may signal the end of the player's football career. Yet many players — the exact number is unknown — sign with another team soon after release. It is noted in the next chapter that being cut is not necessarily a stamp of inadequacy as a player. Of course, those who made the decision to release a man believe he is inadequate. But another coach or manager may evaluate him more favorably after weighing his abilities against such considerations as team needs and salary demands.

NOTES

1. This is a substantial modification of Super's classification of career stages. Neither his taxonomy nor that of Miller and Form, the two most cited schemes in the literature, fit the work histories of most professional athletes. These athletes have at least two careers, the first ending with retirement from professional sport. Super, D.E., *The Psychology of Careers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957); Miller, D.C. and W.H. Form, *Industrial Sociology*, 3rd ed.(New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

2. Kenyon, G.S. and B.D. McPherson, "Becoming involved in physical activity and sport." In *Sport, Culture, and Society*, 2nd ed. J.W. Loy, Jr., G.S. Kenyon and B.D. McPherson, eds. (Philadelphia, PA: Lea & Febiger, 1981), 224.

3. That a somewhat larger number of professionals than amateurs had parents who tried to discourage their entry into football seems to have no explanation. Perhaps this finding is nothing more than a growing acceptability of the game, an acceptability that was somewhat stronger when the amateurs were young than when the professionals were young.

4. In 1984 the Calgary Mohawks junior team disbanded, leaving the Colts as the sole junior team in the city.

5. Mazurak, S. Personal communication, 1984.

6. See the 19 March 1984 training rosters for each CFL team published in Jones, T., *Canadian Pro Football '84* (Markham, Ont.: Paperjacks, 1984). In general, imported players wind up in the so-called "skilled" positions, presumed to require the most speed, agility, and dexterity. They are quarterback, running back, cornerback, and wide receiver. Simmons, Steve, *Calgary Herald*, 12.8.86, p. C1.

7. Stebbins, R.A., "Career: the subjective approach," *Sociological Quarterly* 11: 32-49, 1970.

8. *Calgary Herald*. 23.5.84, p. E1.

9. Goodman, J., *Huddling up: The Inside Story of the Canadian Football League*, rev. ed. (Don Mills, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1982) 214.

10. Jackson, J.J. and B. Lowe, *Sport as a Career* (Ottawa: Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, n.d.), 54.

11. Protection of one player within the boundaries of the "territory" of each CFL team is still possible with junior players.

12. *Calgary Herald*. 3.12.84, p. C2.

CHAPTER 6

Career: Peak and Decline

The life of the Canadian football player is one of jolting bumps, painful bruises, and incapacitating injuries, and sometimes uneasy relations with the press, bitter disagreements with team management (for professionals), and an assortment of other detractors from the game. Added up, they make an impressive list. Yet, when weighed against the powerful love of football that drives its players, the detractors seldom tip the scales towards quitting the game. In Dan Kepley's words: "I can't play this game forever. I know that, and I can live with it. I can look in the mirror and say, 'Kepley, you can't play this game forever.' It only takes awhile for the lump in my throat to clear."[1] Perhaps it is easier for more ordinary players to throw in the towel than it was for Kepley, all-star linebacker several times over with the 1978-82 Grey Cup champion Edmonton Eskimos. After all, he reaped uncommon rewards from his former occupation. But the retired players interviewed for this study, some of whom had more ordinary careers, found retirement no easier. None of them liked the idea of leaving football.

MAINTENANCE

It is no doubt clear by now that the stages of the sports career as discussed in the previous chapter are more precise in theory than in reality. In reality, people gradually pass from the beginning of their career to development, to establishment, and so on. In reality, some contingencies operate in two or more stages and others signal simultaneously the end of one stage and the start of another. So it is with professional football players when they move through maintenance to decline.

Players who survive the tribulations and insecurity of getting established ease into the least stressful part of their career, the maintenance stage, which, for the typical professional, lasts from five to ten years.[2]

Established athletes have reached their peak and may retire here. If not, they must soon face the fact that their ability to perform their sport will decline significantly. McPherson notes that professional athletes end their athletic career early, usually before age 35. Thus they are much less likely than those in other occupations to retire before decline sets in.[3]

Personal Changes

It is in the maintenance stage that a professional is apt to find his or her greatest security. This is normally the time when one is least likely to be fired, most valuable to one's employer, and in top productive form. This observation also holds for professional sport, except that there is still a disquieting degree of insecurity during maintenance. This insecurity is generated by the contingencies the athletes meet. The career of the Canadian football player offers many examples.

During maintenance football players face contingencies stemming from two sources: personal changes and team changes. Personal changes may be bodily or mental. Though there are others, two of the most prominent are an incapacitating injury and a "bad attitude."

The influence of an incapacitating injury on a player's career is more complicated than it might seem at first glance. Part of the complication comes from trying to establish which injuries are actually or potentially incapacitating and which are not. At one extreme is the "blown knee," for example, which must be surgically repaired before the player can play "skilled" football, or football of professional quality. Indeed, some incapacitating injuries are never totally reparable; neither the team trainer nor the player is able to restore the usefulness of the knee. At the other extreme, is a sprained wrist, for instance. Here the trainer and the player himself can effect sufficient improvement to enable playing the next game without fear of harmful long-term consequences. Such an injury is not incapacitating.

Injuries falling between these extremes are open to interpretation as to whether they are actually or potentially incapacitating. At issue is whether continued play on the injury will result in long-term or permanent incapacity. Involved in the interpretation are the player, the trainer, the coach, the team physician and, in certain instances, the CFL — CFLPA specially appointed "neutral physician." Every veteran interviewed was aware of and decried the practice of some CFL teams of using the trainer and, on rarer occasions, the team physician to warrant

that an injury is not incapacitating when later evidence indicated that it was. The trainer and possibly the physician tell the player that he can play and play effectively (play skilled football) and expect no future incapacity to result from this action. In this situation, the trainer and the physician are in league with the coach, and possibly the general manager, who are known to want or have directly said that they want the player in question on the field for the next game. Of course, it is only possible for the trainer (perhaps with the physician) to grant this wish if the injury is a potential incapacity, not an actual one. Many strains and fractures fall into the gray area of potential incapacity.

We have already discussed how both professionals and amateurs dislike sitting on the sidelines while their teammates practice or play another team. Yet, the injured player's desire to play in the next game is not shortsighted. He would also like to play football beyond the next game. Further, he would like to avoid a lifelong disability. In sum, he is usually quite willing to "play hurt," to play despite pain, if he can be assured that continued use of the injured part will have no serious consequences. He is quite unwilling to "play injured" because of the threat of incapacity.

If a player doubts the truth of what he is told about the future of his injury, he may seek neutral medical advice or refuse to play. His suspicion may be aroused if his coach is known for his penchant for demanding that players play without regard for their subsequent health. "Be a man," or "Sacrifice yourself for the good of the team" are slogans that are difficult for a rugged football player to ignore. It may be that the coach believes the player's injury is not incapacitating, and that the man is only babying it on the sidelines when he should be at work on the field. If the trainer values his job, he will try to help the coach reach his goal. In addition, certain trainers are known to be incompetent. When they say no disability will result from continued use of the injured part, players are inclined to disbelieve them.

Incapacitating injuries, whether actual or potential, act as career contingencies in at least two ways. One way is physical. They can end a man's football career or significantly lower his level of performance and push him into the decline stage. Veterans related several such cases.

> A wide receiver was advised by both the trainer and the team doctor that he could play despite a pain in his neck. Five games later when his left arm became numb, he pulled himself from the lineup and

Figure 13: Playing hurt or playing injured? (photo by Dac Dang)

> sought his own medical counsel. Through it he learned that he had been playing with two cracked vertebrae in his neck. A subsequent operation confirmed that he could never again play football.

Another veteran, also a wide receiver, recounted his experience with a broken hand:

> *Player*: When it first happened, they couldn't find the break. At the end of the year, one of the nurses where I was having my X rays taken came up to my wife who just happened to be with me and said: "Boy, did they ever screw up your husband's hand." At that point, I went up [to the trainer] and they miraculously found the break. That was after fifteen or sixteen weeks of playing with it.
> *Author*: Are you suggesting that the break was just as obvious on the X rays sixteen weeks ago?
> *Player*: Yes, only I'm not good enough at reading them, but, it was a big enough break.

To protect players with potential incapacitating injuries, the CFL "Standard Player Contract" now contains a clause enabling those whose contracts have been terminated by their teams while injured to seek redress by means of the opinion of a neutral physician.

The second way is mental. Thinking about an incapacitating injury can weaken the player's performance in games. While playing injured, the player worries about what he is doing to his body when he should be concentrating on the game. He also tends to favor the injured place, thereby affecting his confidence in his ability to play his position. Players reported that, under these conditions, some coaches found fault with their efforts on the field and even replaced them in the lineup. As a result of injury, the careers of these men were affected.

Much more nebulous than injuries is the contingency of the "bad attitude," which some players develop toward football during either the maintenance or the decline stage of their career. For some reason, they temporarily lose their usual enthusiasm for one or more important facets of their job. For instance, they slack off on their conditioning or fail to play "with intensity"; that is, they fail to run, block, tackle, and so on with accustomed speed and drive. Temporarily, they have grown stale. A man of eight years professional experience explained how be became stale and how this contingency affected his career:

> I got complacent and didn't work on things I should have worked on. I just didn't get any better. Physically, I think I still had it, but

> mentally I'd get to a game and I'd think, heck, I've prepared all week long like I did the week before, but I'm just not ready . . . I'd get to the game and I just didn't have that gut feeling, which I really appreciate this year. I'm playing fullback. [Now] there is more nervousness, and I just don't want to make a mistake. [At fullback] I am blocking all the time . . . whereas at linebacker, which I played in recent years, they run away from you and you're not in the play. They may be in your area 25 to 50 percent of the time . . . On offense you're in the play every time, so you're ready to play, you're hyper. You need that feeling in football. Before, I was just going through the motions. I'd come out of a football game and feel that I didn't play very well that day. I just couldn't understand why. My first three or four years in the league I played both positions. In X city I was weakside linebacker. I didn't like the idea of when we were on the other hash mark of having to flip over to the other side. They were just saying that I was not as good as this other linebacker. This was discouraging.

A bad attitude seldom goes unnoticed by the coaching staff. If, after a couple of games, the player has not changed his outlook, he may come under considerable pressure to do so. He may even be benched for major portions of the games, and those who back him up may be given an opportunity to show what they can do. If his attitude continues for long, he may begin to hear talk about trading him to another team.

Developing a bad attitude or suffering an incapacitating injury are chance occurrences that contribute to the sense of insecurity in professional football. Team changes may have a similar impact on the players they affect.

Team Changes

Team changes produce four kinds of contingencies: those resulting from changes in the team's offense or defense, the coaching staff, roster, and financial status. These changes can be traced to the practical business ethic that drives the modern professional football team. "As far as general managers are concerned, players are commodities to be hired, then fired, or traded for someone better. As in any other business, it is performance that counts, and in football that means a championship team."[4] As the players are inclined to put it: "We're just pieces of meat."

Whereas amateur teams are forced to select a defense and an offense

that maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of team members, professional teams are less constrained. Within the limits of their budgets, professional teams can purchase the players they need to implement the offense and defense their coaches think will make them champions. Thus, among the reasons for trading players, releasing them on "waivers," and cutting them is that their skills have become less valuable, because of a change in offense or defense, than those of the players team management hopes to sign.[5] Presumably someone had to be removed from the active roster of the British Columbia Lions when this team signed a player to perform a special role. According to the *Calgary Herald*,

> The *Vancouver Sun* says the Lions have signed import lineman Paul Najarian to a CFL contract. The *Sun* said Wednesday that Najarian is a player the Lions hope can fill the role as a standup defensive end to rush the passer.
>
> The Lions have been searching for a player with the unique skills to fulfill that role since Don Matthews took over as head coach last year. Matthews had tremendous success in Edmonton during his years as Eskimo defensive co-ordinator using an undersized but quick defensive end to pressure the passer.[6]

As is evident from this article, changes in an offense or a defense also offer a contingent opportunity to those players who fit the new strategy.

The article also indicates that a change in the *coaching staff* can bring about a change in defense or offense. Besides stressing a different offense or defense, a new coach may evaluate his players differently from the coach he replaced. He may see talent that his predecessor overlooked and vice versa. Moreover, some coaches, like some schoolteachers, have favorites: men whom they like for personal as well as athletic reasons. A new coach may even bring one or two of his favorites with him to the team he has just joined. It is in these ways, then, that a new coach can become a career contingency for a player: The player is evaluated either more or less favorably than previously, and this change leads to greater or fewer opportunities to play in games.

Changes in the team roster are inevitably a contingency for someone. During the continuous movement of players between teams from May to November each year, any club can come up short of the personnel it needs for its offense or defense. Hemmed in by such limitations as budgets and maximum number of allowable import players, a club may have to get rid of a player to make room or compensate another club for a

player it wants to hire. In this manner, a career contingency is created for all players affected by the transaction. Tom Forzani, one of the CFL's most accomplished receivers, got caught in this kind of squeeze, which forced him out of football:

> It is also interesting to note that a year ago the Stamps [Calgary Stampeders] quietly released Forzani to make room for University of Calgary quarterback Greg Vavra. Unknown to many, the Stamps had to re-sign Vavra within 24 hours of the 1983 Grey Cup or watch him rejoin the Esks [Edmonton Eskimos]. Once they signed him, the Stamps then had to place Vavra on their roster, which they did by cutting Forzani.[7]

Sometimes the decision with regard to who leaves is based on nonperformance factors as well:

> Montreal head coach Joe Scannella knew Carl Crennel was a good middle linebacker, but he also knew he had a better one in Tom Cousineau and that some Alouette players were getting tired of Crennel's constant complaining about the team. So Crennel was traded. Bob Shaw knew Ray Nettles was a top middle linebacker but felt that Nettles was a bad influence on his Hamilton teammates, so traded him.[8]

In addition, roster changes can come about through injury, whereby a player is put on the team's disabled list. This contingency affects unfavorably the career of the injured man, but affects favorably the career of his backup who will now start in his place.

Finally, every team must live with budgetary limitations. These limitations mean, for example, that a team may be unable to match the salary of a rookie or free agent that is being offered to him by another team in the CFL or in the United States. A contingency is thereby created for the player in question. Or, as occasionally happens, it is decided that a veteran who is drawing a high salary is replaceable by a more junior player, who will receive substantially less pay, leaving the club with money to hire needed help. Here the veteran must choose between two unpleasant contingencies: he may take a cut in salary or endure being cut or traded.

DECLINE

As mentioned, the decline stage is not inevitable in any career. Workers everywhere retire or die before their ability to perform on the job starts to

deteriorate. We have seen how the unexpected — incapacitating injury — can end an athletic career while at its peak. Nevertheless, by refusing to acknowledge the decline of physical abilities, most sports professionals cling to their occupation to the bitter end.

Clearly, aging is a main contingency at this stage. With aging comes waning physical powers. But this process is slow and imperceptible. It quietly contradicts the myth that, whether we work in sport or outside it, we have drunk from the fountain of youth and therefore need not worry about such a process as physical decline, especially at so young an age as thirty. Of course, career decline may start prematurely, so to speak (before the waning of physical powers), in the athlete who fails to recover fully from an injury.

A second contingency in the decline stage of the sports career is the availability of lower level professional playing opportunities; for example, the minor leagues in baseball and hockey and the satellite tours in tennis and golf. Unfortunately for the football player, only a few scattered senior teams exist for him. The hapless elder in football is simply put out to pasture — relegated to the general labor market — and replaced with a younger player who is believed by management to have a brighter and longer athletic future.

Decline and retirement are somewhat easier to accept when the alternatives are appealing, when the player has prepared for an interesting second or nonplaying career inside or outside his sport. But what second careers are available that match the excitement, glamor, and salary of professional sport? Level of education is a contingency here, for it is usually only in jobs requiring a university or professional degree that one begins even to approach these kinds of rewards. In this regard, an outstanding reputation in professional sport may help its retirees find, though not necessarily keep, a better than average nonplaying job.[9] Nevertheless, the broad picture is one of many former professionals assuming blue-collar positions at a young age, with young families to support.

How do Canadian football players meet the contingencies of career decline, such as aging, having no lower level playing opportunities, finding an attractive second career, and acquiring a university education? Turning first to aging, it is evident from this study that players have different attitudes toward this contingency. Of the 22 (out of 30) respondents who were active players at the time they were interviewed, 9

indicated that they had no idea how long they will play, but said that they would play until cut or until it became apparent that they would soon be cut. Two of these nine emphasized that they would prefer to quit "on a high note," that is, leave football during the maintenance stage of their careers to avoid the insult of being cut. These players were generally young, with two to four years professional experience.

Eight other players had a tentative retirement date in mind. Most of them said they would play for ten years or until age thirty and then decide from year to year whether to continue. Their decision to continue would be based on their "health" (effect of incapacitating injuries), the attractiveness of the game, and the financial return it brings them. Why age thirty? No one seemed to know, except that this age was bandied about in the interviews as vaguely indicative of being over the hill in football, or of rapidly approaching that unenviable condition.

The remaining five of the thirty respondents set a definite date for retirement. For some it was thirty; for others it was earlier. None of the five had less than five years of playing experience, the minimum number needed to acquire full vesting rights to their pensions.

Despite the players' desire to make their own decision as to when and how they will leave football, the evidence gathered from the eight retirees indicates that the twenty-two active players are apt to waive (albeit unintentionally) that decision by trying to stretch their careers too far into the decline stage. In all likelihood, team management will make the decision for them. Six of the eight retired players continued to play until cut one or more times. Players cut more than once were able to sign with another team that had an immediate need for them, but which subsequently cut them, too, sometimes at the end of the same season or the beginning of the next one. One of the retirees who voluntarily left football both lost interest in the game and faced major knee surgery. He concluded that it was foolish to try to play with these handicaps. The other voluntary retiree recognized that his skills were waning and felt it was wise to quit while ahead, with his team begging him to remain on their roster. Neither man is typical of Canadian football players in particular and professional athletes in general.

One of the two voluntary retirees had an attractive second career into which he could move; the other had no second career of any kind planned. The remaining six had second careers they intended to pursue after they played their last professional game. Even then, six of the eight

retirees, including one who retired voluntarily, had problems adjusting to their new occupation. The most difficult adjustment was seeing themselves as retired from football, as no longer players. Even though reasonably attractive jobs awaited these men, jobs with which they could identify, their immediate reaction to being cut was to try to get signed with another team (which most of them did) and thereby keep alive their identity as football players and delay the inevitable. One of the retirees described his predicament at this time and why even joining another team was no solution to his problems. Asked why he left football, he repled:

> There were a variety of things. Certainly [the coach] didn't want me anymore. That was a little difficult to take . . . Beyond that, there was the family pressure. I had a wife and two kids at the time and she was having our third child. It was more important for me to be there [than to leave town by being traded]. I've seen so many families break up by [the husband] not being there and growing apart. That had an impact on me. Besides that, in X city I was pretty well set up in that I had employment, I had other things I could do. It doesn't make the transition that much easier, but it definitely gives you some alternative goals . . . They gave me several choices. I could have been traded to _____ or _____, or I could have retired. [But] I'd rather be let go, than give in to the coach.

In spite of the tendency for professional athletes to end up in low-paying, low-prestige jobs, the football players in this study generally appear destined for an interesting, reasonably situated "life after football."[10] Only 4 of the 22 respondents (2 young players 2 seasoned players) had no idea what they would do once their athletic career ended. The remainder had plans. Table 1 lists the expected second careers of the players and the present second careers of the retirees. It also gives the highest level of education reached by all thirty interviewees. The total of the first column is greater than thirty because some players had yet to choose between two or three possible second careers.

Level of education is definitely a contingency in finding an attractive second career. It broadens the alternatives available to the individual and at least puts football players closer to matching the excitement, glamor, and salary they have grown accustomed to in their sport. In this regard, it is perhaps fortunate for players in the CFL that their salaries are considerably lower than those of their colleagues in the United States. In 1983 the average salary in the CFL for all categories of players was

Table 1. Second Careers and Levels of Education of Professional Football Players

Choice of Second Career	Number of Players	Level of Education	Number of Players
Run own Business	11	4 years or more of university	
Teaching	7	Physical Education	8
Sports related jobs (e.g., coaching, sports medicine)	5	Social Sciences	7
Sales	4	Management Sciences	4
Pursue professional degree	2	Education	3
Misc.	3	Science	3
None	4	3 years or less of university	3
		High school diploma	2

$45,513. Unless they took a cut in pay, most players in the decline stage were being paid between $60,000 and $70,000 annually. The same year, a few quarterbacks received salaries in access of $120,000, the only players who had negotiated salaries over $100,000.[11] Two of the nine players who lacked a university degree were recruits from Canadian junior football; they had undertaken no studies beyond high school. Four of the nine had less than a year of university to complete for a bachelors degree.

The fourth contingency in the decline stage of the player's career is the lack of lower-level playing opportunities. Though no professional opportunities exist, leisure opportunities are available. Flag and touch football programs are run for adult men across Canada, senior tackle football is played in Ontario and Manitoba. Rugby is also an alternative, sought by some amateur football players who have completed their eligibility at the junior or university level. But no professional, retired or active, expressed an interest in these activities by which they could keep actively, albeit somewhat superficially, in contact with the game they love so much. When they leave the professional world, players at the decline and maintenance stages tend to sever completely their ties with the participant side of football.[12] It is a kind of social death — a departure from one world, the world of sport, and entry into another world, the world of nonsport. The grim reaper — the messenger conveying the fact of the cut — is ordinarily the equipment manager, whose typical communication to the unfortunate player is "the coach wants to see you — and bring your playbook."[13] Apart from the remote possibility of a comeback, the ex-professional in Canadian football finds that the end for him, whether he takes the plunge or management pushes him, is abrupt and contrastive--from the hot, swirling environment of the locker room and the playing field to the cold, comparatively placid, humdrum environment of the workaday world of the larger community.

SUBJECTIVE CAREER

The idea of subjective career was introduced in the preceding chapter. There we examined the players' interpretations of their progress and sometimes their retrogression through the contingencies and turning points of the beginning, development, and establishment stages of their sports role. Here we see how they interpret the maintenance and decline stages.

Contingent Turning Points

Our earlier examination of incapacitating injuries and the bad attitude included the players' reactions to these contingencies. They involved personal changes, in which the contingent aspects of, and the subjective feelings about, the event unfold more or less simultaneously and are best discussed together. By contrast, team changes as contingencies originate outside the player. They are sequences of events that eventuate in the player being demoted to a backup position or traded or cut. It is only when a player sees something important in this sequence of events — that is, something affecting his career — that the team change becomes a turning point.

Being traded is often a personal crisis for a player, especially when he is satisfied with his current club and his life in the local community. At its kindest, being put on the "trading block" is evidence that, though he fails to fit current team needs, he is an attractive enough commodity to help his team bargain with another team for the man they need. Often, however, a player is offered in a trade to another team because he is seen by management as somehow weak. Unfortunately for all concerned, judging the value of a player — in the main, judging how good he is at his position — involves a substantial amount of guesswork. The respondents of this study were quick to recount cases where men they thought were good were said by management to be weak, but who nevertheless performed well for the team to which they were traded. This can be nothing other than an error in judgment, for no team wants to lose a good player, especially to an opposing team whose new acquisition will help them beat his former employer.

Management recognizes the uncertainty involved in judging player excellence, for it resorts from time to time to the practice of putting a player "on waivers with the right to recall." If another team, but especially two or more teams, express an interest in acquiring him (with or without a trade of players), then a degree of consensual evidence regarding his excellence has been found. Under these circumstances, the team may exercise its recall right. If no team expresses an interest, then his team's impression that he is deteriorating is supported and they may consider cutting him.

While a player is being considered for trade or release on waivers, his abilities as a player and perhaps other personal qualities are being assessed more closely than usual. This is typically a painful experience

for the player, since he has a higher evaluation of himself than his coaches, who think he is not good enough to keep. And, at this time, considerations external to football enter the picture for him. It is common for Canadian citizens and landed immigrants to hold part-time jobs during the season. Indeed, facilitating these part-time jobs is one of the reasons why the CFLPA tries to prohibit member clubs from holding practices or meetings before 4:00 p.m. up to the first of September and before 3:30 thereafter. The jobs are clearly more than a mere source of pocket money. They often become full-time employment during the off-season and the principal source of income, if not the man's second career, once his days as a player have ended.[14]

Furthermore, to the extent that a man cannot or believes that he should not live apart from his family for nearly six months of the year, he has another reason for being concerned about a possible trade or release. Related to this is the financial burden of maintaining two residences: an apartment in the city where he plays and a family home in the one he left. Still another cause for concern, though perhaps not as common as the others, is the apprehension that some players feel about signing with another team. They believe they will get a cool reception from their new teammates, because they will replace a friend of these teammates who has been traded or cut — and they may not be convinced that their new colleague is any better or even as good as the one who left.

These issues are important enough to some players to encourage them to negotiate a "no trade clause" in their contracts. To succeed may require some hard bargaining if the player is on a team that tries to keep its players portable. Such teams, wanting flexibility to meet changing team needs, discourage their players from, for example, taking employment in the community or buying a house.

In all this, special contingencies may arise and influence whether a player stays or leaves the team and how this is done. A high salary can make him too costly for would-be buyers, no matter how good he is. But, his high salary may be an added reason for management to try to get rid of him, especially if they believe he is declining. Some men, eager to continue playing, take pay cuts as a way of meeting this contingency. Others, realizing that they may face such a contingency in the future try to keep their base salary at a modest level and seek increases through contract signing bonuses. Still other players negotiate the highest salary they can get on the assumption that their team will eventually invest so much in them that it cannot afford to trade them.

Long-term value to the team, high salaries, and release on waivers as well as contracts, trades, and cuts all increase in significance when one plays beyond one's thirtieth year. Factors such as popular appeal and the availability of younger replacements are also considered as the team and the man struggle to realize their separate and often incompatible interests. The man may influence this process by remaining flexible and useful, that is, by being willing and able to play several positions. This strategy, which is open mostly to Canadian linemen, helps his team achieve the optimum mix of talented Canadian and imported players.

There are times when players want to be traded or released on waivers. They may be interested in joining a particular team, because they believe it has a better chance of reaching the Grey Cup final than their present team, or because they want to live in a certain city or area of the country. Perhaps they are trying to escape a brittle relationship with a coach or personnel director. Leaving one team for another is a turning point for these players, too, albeit a favorable one.

Noncontingent Turning Points

There are also noncontingent turning points in football: the awards, "stats," contracts, and crucial games. Though obviously not entirely within the control of the players, each is strongly influenced by their actions. Except for contracts, each is also experienced by amateurs and early professionals in the development and establishment stages.

Most awards in Canadian professional football and those most visible to the public are ultimately determined by the press. After soliciting opinions collected from the coaches, reporters across the country vote for the players whom they believe merit the Schenley and Pacific Western Airlines (formerly Rothman's) Player of the Week honors. The Schenley Awards are made during Grey Cup Week for the *Most Outstanding Player*, *Most Outstanding Canadian*, *Most Outstanding Defensive Player*, *Most Outstanding Offensive Lineman*, and *Most Outstanding Rookie*. Each year the coaches choose a CFL All-Star offensive team and defensive team and the same teams for the Eastern and Western Conferences. Each week during the regular season an offensive player, a defensive player, and a lineman in the CFL receive the Pacific Western Airlines award. The *Player of the Game* award is made by the press following every regularly scheduled CFL game.

In May of the following year, before the opening of the spring training camps, the CFLPA makes several more awards for an outstanding

performance during the preceding season. These include several outstanding player awards, the *Mack Truck Award* for the outstanding offensive lineman and outstanding defensive lineman, and the *Tom Pate Memorial Award*. The CFLPA honors are the only national awards determined by the players themselves.

Although none of the interviewees begrudged the winners of these awards their accolades, some were quick to note that the awards determined by the press and the coaches are "too political." They hold that far too many deals are made among small groups of reporters or coaches or both to get their favorite nominees selected. The I'll-vote-for-your-man-if-you'll-vote-for-mine process has left some players bitter and cynical about the awards affected by it. Moreover, the majority of players in this study doubt that there are more than a few sports reporters with the ability to assess the fine points of their play. (As mentioned earlier, the players also doubt, on occasion, the ability of coaches and managers in this regard.) The result, some respondents claim, is that men equally qualified for an award are often overlooked.

Whether viewed as political or not, eight of the thirteen respondents who received such awards said the honor was one of the thrills of their career. Whether it was the game ball or a "Schenley" or Schenley nomination, the eight acknowledged winning the award was a turning point. The remaining five received awards covering the same range of significance (including a two-time Schenley winner). Partly because of their political nature, they did not regard the awards as thrills, though their effect on contracts sometimes made them turning points.

Nevertheless, when players, as opposed to reporters and coaches, are given the opportunity to pick the best from among themselves, the outcome is similar. At least this was what happened in May, 1984. There are seven CFLPA awards, excluding the Tom Pate Memorial. Four went to players who had won a Schenley for the 1983 season; two more went to players who were runners-up for a Schenley that same season, and the remaining award went to a player also selected for the CFL All-Star team.

Schenleys are also awarded to university and junior players. Those who play for the universities in the CIAU compete for trophies given to the *Rookie of the Year*, *Defensive Player of the Year* (nonlineman), *Lineman of the Year*, and *Player of the Year*. The winner of this last award receives the Hec Crighton Trophy. In junior football, Schenleys

and corresponding trophies are awarded to the *Outstanding Defensive Player* and *Outstanding Offensive Player*. In addition, excellence is recognized among university players when they are nominated to the CIAU all-star offensive and defensive teams, and among junior players when they are named to the all-star offensive and defensive teams for each of the four CNJFL conferences (Ontario, Manitoba, Prairie, and B.C. Big Four). These teams are selected at the end of each season. Outstanding offensive and defensive players in university and junior football are further recognized throughout the season by means of the Player-of-the-Week award. A variety of local team awards complement the set of honors a player can win in adult amateur competition.

According to some respondents, the political strain is also evident in the selection of Schenley winners from among the university and junior players. Since the press is not involved here, only the coaches are implicated for trying to strike deals with other coaches to corral votes for their favorite candidates. Nonetheless, both samples of amateurs are, on the whole, inclined to view these awards as genuinely deserved. With the possible exception of the Player of the Week awards, winning one of these honors is at once one of the most prominent turning points and one of the most memorable thrills in the amateur's career. Only playing in a crucial game was thought thrilling by more players.

Though not thrilling for every professional recipient and sometimes regarded as political by both amateurs and professionals, awards are treated by coaches and players alike as an important measure of excellence. Another measure of excellence is a player's "stats," or quantitative record of performance on certain key, measurable aspects of his position. For example, from game to game and across the playing season, place-kickers are judged by the number of field goals and conversions they make, punters by the average number of yards their punts travel, cornerbacks and defensive halfbacks by the number of interceptions and the average number of yards they return the ball, passers by the number of completions, receivers by the number of receptions, and offensive backs by the average number of yards "rushing" (carrying the ball). A player who leads or is close to leading the league on one of these dimensions has an impressive performance record. No respondent said an achievement of this sort was thrilling. But all respondents, amateur and professional, regarded "good stats" as a rare accomplishment and an important turning point.

Stats and awards, especially the awards voted by the coaches and the press, have a favorable effect on another turning point in the professional's career, namely, the contract. Among players in the maintenance and decline stages of their careers, contract negotiations are cited as one of the more significant tensions in football, particularly when they are conducted during the season. But, whenever they take place, they stand as one expression of the player's level of excellence and value to the team. As already mentioned, there are times when a player and management have different views on the former's excellence and value. How tense negotiations become when there is disagreement of this nature depends, in part, on the bargaining styles of the team's representative and the player or his agent or lawyer. A defensive back described some of the ingredients for tense contract negotiations:

> I find contracts tense. Because you get in there and you know what you're worth. And, yet, you get underbid so much. You're a commodity, [that] is exactly what it is. You have a lawyer or an agent and he puts you in one price category and the general manager feels you're not worth that. The press gets mixed up in it and adds more tension because you get more publicity than you want to get . . . If you are playing at the same time, then there is greater tension because you have to continue to do well on the field. Say, I get beat for a touchdown in a crucial game and my contract is up, they'll hit me on the head with that play. That happened to me in _____ (year). I got beat for three touchdowns out of twenty games. I had the least touchdowns caught on me of anybody in the CFL that year. Then they came and said you got beat on this [touchdown]. And I said, "Just look at these stats. Look at the guys around the league. Are you telling be I'm not worth as much money as these guys?" I'm considered the number 1 or number 2 cornerback in the Canadian Football League. It's pretty frustrating.

Most players negotiate their contracts during the offseason and thus often avoid at least some of the tension described in the preceding passage. Also, many players feel they have been fairly treated in their contractual dealings with their clubs. Not all personnel managers and coaches are set on paying their players as little as they can get away with.

Some CFL veterans and even the occasional rookie employ an intermediary to ensure that they receive the best contract possible. This person is likely to be either a lawyer or a specialist in sports contracts known as an "agent." Many players in Canada feel that their salaries are

too low to justify the use of an intermediary, whose fee will only reduce further their net income without raising significantly their gross income. The players' image of the agent (though not of lawyer's) is tarnished further by stories about agent dishonesty. For example, some agents are seen by the players as trying to persuade a man to accept a lower salary than he could command on his own, so that the agent can pocket a handsome under-the-table payment from management for helping them contract his client at bargain prices. Some players also question whether agents based in the United States know the Canadian football scene well enough to operate effectively within it. Yet, it is there that one is most likely to find an experienced intermediary who knows the game of football. Despite this image, several respondents believe that the use of agents and other intermediaries is increasing in Canadian football.

But, tense or not, a new contract, with or without the services of an intermediary, is a turning point. As elsewhere in the world of work, it is a measure of personal worth. It also guarantees a level of income that makes possible a certain life-style. Lastly, for its duration, it is one less problem with which the player need concern himself.

The final turning point considered in this chapter is the ultimate turning point and the main goal of football players and the teams for which they play: winning the championship. In pursuing this goal, players encounter their greatest thrills and turning points, namely, playing in crucial games, be they playoff or championship games. Needless to say, losing one of them was also regarded by all three samples as the greatest disappointment to endure.

As of 1984, the playoffs in junior football went as follows: the Prairie Conference champions play the champion of the Manitoba Conference; the winner of this game plays the British columbia champion for the Western championship and trophy; the Western champion plays the Eastern champion (as determined in a playoff in the Ontario Conference) for the national championship and the Armadale Cup. In university football, the champion of the Western Intercollegiate Football League plays the champion of the Ontario Universities Athletic Association, while the champion of the Ontario-Quebec Conference plays the champion of the Bluenose Conference. The winners of these games play for the national university championship and the Vanier Cup. At the professional level, the Eastern Conference and Western Conference champions compete in the Grey Cup game.

The Grey Cup game is the most prominent championship in Canadian football. Whether their team won or lost that game, it was considered a thrill by the eight interviewees who had played in it. But it is winning the Grey Cup and receiving the ring that commemorates this achievement that is the highest thrill for CFL professionals. For the players, amateur and professional, being on a champion team, but especially a Grey Cup champion team, is the best evidence they can muster of their team's superiority over all in their conference and in Canada. It is the kind of evidence that any adult worker or serious leisure participant would be pleased to have of his or her performance or of the performance of his or her work or leisure organization. Football titles do not allow members of the winning club to conclude that, as individuals, they are the best at their position. However, they do allow members to conclude that their *team* is superior. Football (especially offensive play) depends heavily on the coordinated efforts of the players. Therefore a team victory is something of which each contributor to the coordinated action can be proud.

How is winning the Grey Cup the ultimate turning point for Canadian professional football players? In what new directions do player careers go as a result of this feat? For one, their image in the league improves. They can now be seen by team managements throughout Canada as capable of playing under the heaviest pressure, a genuine asset for any club. Furthermore, they can be seen as highly motivated to return to the Grey Cup final again; that they have the drive to play intensely for an entire season to reach this goal. It is a heady experience, and no player seems to get enough of it. This chapter opened with a quotation from Dan Kepley and so it shall be closed. If anyone knows what it is like to play in the Grey Cup, he does; he played in it six times:

> Where do we go from here? Why, to Vancouver, of course. We've got a date in their new domed stadium on November 27. And next year the Grey Cup is in Edmonton, so it would be only fair, after all these years, to let our home fans sit in while we collect another [Grey Cup] ring.
>
> Can we? Who knows. But I'll guarantee one thing: no one will want it more. You might say it's habit-forming.[15]

NOTES

1. Kepley, D., *Edmonton Eskimos: Inside the Dynasty* (Toronto: Methuen, 1983) 60. Kepley retired from professional football in 1985 after failing to recover from a knee injury sustained in 1982. His announcement of his retirement was accompanied by tears.
2. McPherson, B.D., "Retirement from professional sport." *Sociological Symposium* 30: 126-43, 1980.
3. McPherson, "Retirement from professional sport," 132.
4. Goodman, J., *Huddling up: The Inside Story of the Canadian Football League*, rev. ed. (Don Mills, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1982), 211.
5. A player released on waivers has had his contract terminated by his team and is now available to any team in the CFL to recontract.
6. *Calgary Herald*. 22.5.84, p. C8.
7. *Calgary Herald*. 19.10.84, p. E1.
8. Goodman, *Huddling up*, 213.
9. Hearle, Jr., R.K., "Career pattern and career contingencies of professional baseball players." In *Sport and Social Order*, eds. D.W. Ball and J.W. Loy (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975) 507.
10. Ogilvie, B.C. and M.A. Howe. "Career crisis in sport." Paper presented at the Fifth World Sport Psychology Congress. Ottawa, Ont., 1981.
11. *CFLPA News*. February, 1984, p. 2.
12. At least one source suggests that the occasional ex-professional winds up playing flag or touch football. Some of them are younger men who, for whatever reason, terminated their professional careers during the establishment stage. Others have had a full professional or amateur career, but still crave some sort of active participation in the game. *Calgary Herald*. 13.5.80, p. C18.

13. See Lerch, S., "Athletic retirement as social death: an overview." In *Sport and the Sociological Imagination*, eds. N. Theberge and P. Donnelly, pp. 259-72 (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1984).

14. Canadian football players are an exception in professional sport, since they are not fully employed at it during the regular season. McPherson (see note 2) points out that it is ordinarily difficult for a professional to plan for a second career because he is thoroughly occupied as an athlete. There is little spare time for most professionals to get more education, make investments, establish and run a business, or practice another skill.

15. Kepley, *Edmonton Eskimos*, 149.

CHAPTER 7

Canada's Second Sport

When a sport is important enough to be regarded as a nation's second most popular sport, there are bound to be implications of this prominence for those who play it. As with other people who are prominent, the football player finds that, whether he likes it or not, he is pulled into various involvements beyond the world of football, that is, with the local community and sometimes the national community within which the largely private activities of adult football take place. This study uncovered five such involvements, discussed here under the headings of images, reporters, finances, women, and amateurs. As will become evident, amateurs and professionals are involved differently in most of these. Yet, many players in both categories are affected, primarily because Canadians see football as their second sport.

IMAGES

Part of the professional football player's popular image was considered in chapter 2, where it was noted that he is seen today as an expert in his line of work. It was also noted that the amateur, when compared with the expert professional, is publicly seen as inferior. Both popular images were complemented by the sociological images of amateur and professional. The present-day popular images of expert professional and inferior amateur, however, have other components besides those considered in chapter 2, which were degree of skill and knowledge and occasional personality flaws.

These other components are not always complimentary, even for the professionals. One component is the "dumb jock" image, which in the minds of some people, is related to the image of football players as big men. Players bristle at the idea that people in the community view them as big and stupid. But what really makes them cringe are the words and

deeds of certain coaches that indicate that they, too, accept the public stereotype. This they do, for example, by telling players that they are not competent enough to question coaching decisions.

The professionals with a university degree (Table 1), along with the junior and university players who are working toward such a degree, point to their educational achievements as evidence that they are as intelligent as most people in society. Moreover, the players argue that modern football is very complicated, with too many intricate plays and strategies to be played well by men whose only qualification is brawn. This observation applies equally to defensive and offensive players. The best defensive players know the standard plays of the offensive team they are playing against on any given day.

Evidence from an American survey of athletes' grades supports the players' views of themselves as reasonably intelligent people. Roughly the same proportion of male athletes and male non-athletes in the survey averaged grades of "C" or lower (20 and 19 percent, respectively). Twenty-seven percent of the athlete sample majored in physical education, compared with 19 percent of the non-athletes. Even here one must be careful how the differences in percentages are interpreted, for it is arguable whether physical education programs are significantly easier than other university programs. The majority of the remainder of the athletes in the sample majored in business, engineering, and social science. In Canada, Curtis and McTeer (1984) found that university athletes graduate at the same rate and with similar marks as other students, although they remain in school longer to achieve this.[1] Although some studies support the "dumb jock" image and some problems exist in measuring academic achievement, it is clear that the assumption that athletes are dull is unwarranted, that it must be subjected to rigorous test.[2]

Furthermore, the image that football players are big holds only for some of them. Linemen are big, but they often said it is annoying to be identified in a crowd as a football player. Size is too impersonal an identifier. They prefer to be recognized by name as one who plays for a particular team. Meanwhile, smaller players such as defensive backs and receivers suffer the opposite problem. They must convince strangers that, despite their moderate size, they really do play football.

Many amateurs and professionals also believe they are viewed in a third way by the public: as second-best. This image, which a number of

them seem to accept, is two-fold: (1) that football in Canada is seen by some players as inferior to football in the United States (see Chapter 5); and (2) that these players and others see Canadians as preferring hockey to football; that football is really the country's second sport, not its first. Accordingly, the status of the football player is lower than the hockey player's. Indeed, some respondents, both amateur and professional, are convinced that the best Canadian male athletic talent winds up in hockey, leaving football with what is left.

Apart from these disquieting public images, some respondents' personal image is such that they occasionally doubt the importance of what they are doing. Several observed that they are "men playing a boy's game."[3] Implied is the thought that, when compared with such obviously important activities as performing surgery, building houses, or even hauling garbage, football as entertainment and as an expression of athletic skill is rather insignificant. Their personal image of what they are doing is that it is frivolous.

Such a view could sap motivation were it to get out of hand, were players to think about it when the going gets tough in practice and games. Perhaps these thoughts are part of the bad attitude discussed in the preceding chapter. Yet, players generally seem to avoid such philosophizing. They keep up their spirits by, among other ways, reminding themselves how much they enjoy what they do and how the many spectators enjoy it too. After all, the players reason, they get paid, in part, from ticket sales.

Homosexuality

That the subject of homosexuality should even be considered in a book about football players is no doubt enough to provoke outrage in some quarters. What more manly sport is there, one might ask, than the rugged sport of football? The fact is that ruggedness and homosexuality are quite unrelated; there are rugged homosexuals and those who are not, just as there are rugged heterosexuals and those who are not. What evidence exists on the matter indicates that athletes in general are no more homosexual than the general population.[4] I observed no homosexual activities while in the field nor heard of any.

Nonetheless, a vague myth persists that football players are homosexual. I encountered one manifestation of this myth as I talked about this study with friends and acquaintances. With alarming frequency, they

(both men and women) mentioned homosexuality in the course of the conversation. Nicol and More apparently felt that the idea has enough currency to be familiar to the readers of their spoof on football. Consider the following:

> Writing in *Western Folklore*, anthropologist Alan Dundes of the University of California in Berkeley says that football is an erotic rite. He points out the "unequivocal sexual symbolism of the game" — the suggestive costume, complete with moulded codpiece, as well as the language of football ("score," "piling on," rouge"). Dundes concludes that football is basically an effort by one group of men to subject another group of men to the sexual indignity of having the end zone penetrated.
>
> Nonsense. While it is true that baboons assume a three-point stance to "present" their bottoms to superior males of the troop, the theory that millions of men make weekend widows of their wives by replacing normal sex with the spectacle of other males hugging one another and patting one another's bottoms — this is slander, dearie, nasty rotton rubbish.
>
> If the gridiron is gay, what is the tennis court? With his grip on not one but two balls, his use of stylized club (the caveman) to feminize the victim of the assault, and his vicious effort to hold his opponent to a "love" position, the tennis player is plainly perverted and Wimbledon should be renamed West Sodom.
>
> However, the damage is done. Many a young man who thought that football was a manly game now fears that he will lose his virginity as he is bending over to recover a fumble. He is unsure where his pubic area lies in relation to the goal posts, and is afraid to ask. When a full-grown offensive guard blushes to see the tarpaulin removed, football is in trouble.
>
> Players who once enjoyed the momentary respite of lying across an opponent's face now feel morally obliged to spring to their feet at once, hands extended to show that the tackle has involved no intimacy beyond a goodnight kiss. Coaches are afflicted with a new problem: rookies who refuse to go into showers without a chaperone. Instead of just giving their name to the referee they insist on showing his photos of their fiancees as proof of heterosexuality.[5]

As mentioned, homosexual acts were never observed or discussed in my fieldwork. But homosexual comments were heard occasionally among the amateurs, particularly among the junior players. The comments, however, did not suggest that the man or men referred to were gay

in reality; rather, they seemed to serve as a general put down, as synonyms for such terms as slob, jerk, clown, or asshole. Thus, one player identified an agility drill as a "homo drill" because it consisted of rapid footwork. An announcement of a team picnic posted in the locker room was doctored with the command: "No homos at the corn roast, only girlfriends." One afternoon the players were summoned to the warmup formation by one of the captains with: "Let's go, homos." And, as the opposing team got the better deal on a controversial referee's call, one of the players on the team I was observing shouted "you fuckin' homos" into the general clamor that had erupted. The professionals seemed to be above all this. At least I heard no such commentary from them.

It is difficult to say what influence the vague public myth about homosexuality in football has had on these statements. Sheard and Dunning noted similar comments among a sample of English rugby players, which they traced to the players' doubts about their own masculine identity and to an extension of the common male adolescent confusion about appropriate sexual objects.[6] Yet, despite the occasional references to "homos" by amateurs and the public myth that some players are gay, the evidence suggests that the only real problem may be a possible lack of tolerance among the players for homosexuals in the wider community.

REPORTERS

We have been considering the image of Canadian football players as a group. Reporters have undoubtedly helped to shape this image, and it is difficult to separate their part in this process from the role played by such forces as stereotyping and hero worship. It is easier, however, to see a link between the press and the public images of individual players. On the whole, it appears that the press has more control over the development of an individual player's public image than any other force, including the publicity efforts of the player's team.

The power of reporters to shape a player's image is expressed in several ways. First, they interpret to the public what is happening or has happened at a football game. Modern football is fast and complicated. Many lay people need help in understanding what is going on. Second, the press selects, interprets, and conveys news from behind the scenes about individual players, including information about player trades,

team problems, and salary negotiations. Although team management and sometimes even the individual player try to select and interpret the information that the press conveys about the individual, the press makes the final decision as to what is broadcast or published. Other than professional ethics such as accuracy in reporting, the only constraint on conveying news about individual players is the threat of liable suits.

Third, reporters and editors decide when, where, and how they will broadcast or publish image-related information of the first two kinds; that is, they can decide to ignore the information, they can give it front-page exposure or bury it on a back page, they can discuss it at length or in a few sentences, or they can treat it as an uninterpreted news release or as part of a column where editorial opinion is expressed.

Fourth, the press can decide, to some extent, the source of the news it subsequently conveys. For example, to learn why a certain player was cut, a reporter might seek an interview with one or more of the following: the public relations officer of the team, the general manager, the head coach, the speciality coach of the player in question, or the player himself. On matters as delicate as cutting someone, it is quite possible that there will be two or three versions of why the player was released. Moreover, it is possible that some of these people will refuse to discuss the cut with reporters, which may prevent them from presenting the full story.

From the players' standpoint, none of these powers of the press would pose special problems were it inclined always, or even generally, to treat them objectively. On the whole, however, the press is seen, by professional football players especially, as far too frequently biased or inaccurate in its reports on football-related matters. The players argue that the press publishes or broadcasts naive interpretations of players' actions in games and of other events concerning them. They feel it also publishes or broadcasts personal interpretations as though they were fact. Furthermore, they believe that the press publishes distorted interviews with players, by omitting important content available in the interview, by presenting reporter opinion disguised as player opinion or fact, or by creating misleading emphases by intentionally manipulating words.

Some biased stories result from the common journalistic practice of seeking information and interpreting it in ways that lend support to the convictions of the journalist.[7] For instance, a receiver was asked if he would like to have the ball thrown to him every play. The player replied

that he would like this very much. Receiving the football is his reason for playing the game. The next day the local paper carried the story that the player was unhappy because he was not thrown the ball enough. The player believed the reporter was looking for some "dirt."

Still, warm relations do exist between some sports reporters and some players. Certain reporters are welcome in the locker room, some are drinking buddies or personal friends of individual players. Some players and reporters are drawn together for practical reasons; that is, the reporter avoids writing unfavorable statements about a player while keeping him informed of management's plans, especially those concerning the player. As his part in the bargain, the player provides the reporter with inside information about the team and its problems.

Nevertheless, every respondent recognized that a problem exists especially in the "written press." (It is easier to distort a written report of an interview than a live interview.) Twelve of the twenty-five professionals listed biased and inaccurate reporting as a major dislike. It was outranked only by the management's practice of using the trainer to authenticate as not incapacitating an injury that is actually or potentially incapacitating (see chapter 6).

Let us consider naive interpretation. Several respondents pointed out that sports writers tend to single out two or three plays in a game that the writers believe account for its outcome. In fact, the players say, it is *how the entire game is played by both teams* that accounts for who wins and who loses. That is, the outcome of a football game depends on the accumulation of everything that happens in a game from its beginning, not just a few dramatic events such as a fumble, missed fieldgoal, or remarkable catch in the endzone.

Sometimes the actions of players are naively interpreted by the press. In reading the sports pages of Canadian newspapers, I have run across instances where players were accused of loafing, of being inadequately motivated to play football. However, I have never seen any evidence for these claims. As noted elsewhere in this book, there are many reasons why a player might look, to someone in the stands or the pressbox, as if he were not trying. For instance, he might be playing with an injury or against a better opponent. Players also know when they are beaten at their assignment and when, under this condition, any further effort is a waste of time and energy. Such behavior could be interpreted as laziness by people off the field. Only when the player is struggling with a bad

attitude towards football (see chapter 5), does low motivation seem to be a factor in poor play on the field.[8]

In fact, players seem highly motivated to play games and play them well. As stated earlier, they love their work, they hate being side-lined, and they know they will be replaced if they perform badly for long. They also hate to lose either the game or the frequent personal contests they encounter within it. Finally, the professionals see themselves as just that — professionals — whose job is to perform consistently well. In short, what appears to the press as loafing, is often defined by the players as ordinary, properly motivated game behavior.

A biased or inaccurate newspaper story can also create problems for the player's wife or girlfriend. She may have to contend with the fallout from such publicity at work or in the neighborhood. One player reported:

> "In my third season, I didn't play well. They [the press] said the reason I didn't play well was that I got married before the season began. That all pro athletes have a lousy year after they get married. My wife got bugged at work on this one. She was called a "career wrecker."

Sarcastic or angry reporting about the performance of an individual or team is also common. Players dislike intensely this style of writing, which they say is found in every CFL city. Notice, as an example, how Stampeder Bill Mintsoulis is excoriated for having dropped an "important" pass.

> Smile Bill Mintsoulis. It could be worse. Your name could be Nate Johnson or Dave Retherford.
>
> Smile Bill Mintsoulis. You'll get over it. Everyone drops a pass now and then. So what if it was the first ball thrown to you this season. You'll get another chance. In retrospect, Bill, the ball Tommy Scott dropped earlier in Saturday night's game may have been just as important as the one you muffed.
>
> Smile Bill Mintsoulis. Look how wide open you were. That's not bad for a guy with chronic hamstring problems playing his first game. That's not bad for a guy from University of Toronto, which produces many fine doctors and lawyers but, rarely, a football player.
>
> Smile Bill Mintsoulis. It could be worse. It could always be worse. You could be playing for Saskatchewan. You have to look at the bright side, Bill. You're now famous. All of us watching at home shared in your pain.

> And halfway through another Calgary Stampeder season, we have nothing to look at, if not the bright sides, do we, Bill? Strangely, Bill, there is more reason for Stampeder optimism this afternoon than any afternoon in recent memory. Had you and Tommy Scott hung on, at the right time, the Stamps could have finished the first half with as many wins as losses.
>
> That was B.C. you were playing even, Bill, under the Dome on Saturday night. That wasn't Hamilton, you know. It could have gone either way, as they say. It might have, too, had a couple more balls been caught and a few earlier tackles been made by the special teams which, Bill, didn't seem all that special to me.
>
> Those were the Lions, Bill. You know, the team that should have won the Grey Cup had Jacques Chapdelaine caught a long pass when he was open. There's something about the Canadian receivers these days. You just can't trust them, I guess. There's no Tony Gabriels or Peter Dalla Rivas anymore. Just a bunch of Mintsoulises and Chapdelaines . . .[9]

This jaundiced view of the press is most intensely held by the veterans. First- and second-year players are more likely to enjoy their contacts with the press, which are, however, considerably fewer in number. Nevertheless, even early professionals soon learn of the possible difficulties they can encounter with reporters.

Amateurs are even more favorably inclined towards the press than early professionals, but have, on the average, fewer contacts with it. Those who dislike these contacts usually cited them as the reason for their nervousness before television cameras or tape recorders. Although a few said the press asks silly questions (''What did it feel like to run back that kick for a touchdown?''), only a handful worried about distortions in print. In the amateur sphere, where contact with the press is uncommon, there is a special problem. The players singled out by journalists occasionally get ribbed by their teammates who, however, know that a team really has no stars — only variously skilled contributors to the common effort (see chapter 8).

Several amateurs, particularly those in junior football, mentioned that publicity is good for their team. The overall opinion among the amateurs in this study is that press coverage of their games is much too thin. Coverage typically improves somewhat when a team is winning, as many university players observed when the Dinosaurs played in and won the 1983 Vanier Cup. The Colts, who were less fortunate, often com-

pared their neglect by the press with the comparatively lavish attention the Regina press gives the Regina Rams. Some players felt that even the high schools in Calgary get better coverage than junior football.

The Reporters' Side

The press has its problems with players, too, apart from trying to be unbiased and accurate. Players admitted to manipulating certain reporters with the aim of enhancing their public image. Management, also, has been known to use the press to "talk" to the players, for example, by telling a reporter how poorly a player is performing and then leaving a copy of the published interview in the locker room for all to read.

Many reporters seem to be aware that players mistrust them. Reporters know that players have learned what questions will be asked and how to answer them without endangering their job or their team and without giving information that the reporter can expand into a sensational story. The players have learned (or even been told by their coaches) to be positive about themselves and their team, to say nothing technical or complicated, to offer no opinions, and to talk only about themselves. Thus, to the query, "Do you think Coach Jones should have had a different game plan?" a seasoned player who dislikes Jones might answer: "No, the coach knows what he is doing. Things just weren't going well for us today." Reporters who treat players well in print and know how to handle delicate subjects may get beyond this superficial level of information. Those who do are apparently few in number in Canadian football.

If they are to get copy about the football world, journalists must somehow maintain their welcome among the players and management.[10] Those who have been too critical too often about the team or its members have found themselves barred from the clubhouse or faced with uncooperative players and coaches should they manage to get inside. This is happening in many CFL cities at present. The situation has driven at least one columnist into print:

> I just know that it can't go on like this much longer. The media and the players' association must bury the hatchet . . .
>
> My only point was that there could and should be a natural weeding out process, rather than that blanket attitude by some players toward the media.

> If a writer is constantly guilty of misquoting players or a broadcaster, in editing a tape, uses that clip which invariably is a stumbling answer to a tough question, then he or she could and should be ostracized.
>
> But, if a writer or broadcaster isn't involved in those games, he or she should be entitled to the time of day, not be ducked by a player only as a matter of principle.[11]

Perhaps many sports reporters would rather it be otherwise, too, but find that they are under pressure from the owners and senior executives of the newspapers and stations for whom they work. Perhaps it is the same for reviews of professional football games as it is for reviews of Broadway shows: unfavorable reviews and controversial topics sell more newspapers than favorable reviews and noncontroversial topics.[12] Perhaps sports news, as other kinds of news, must be simplified — purged of confusing detail, complicating conditions, and diverse viewpoints — to become sufficiently entertaining, or at least sufficiently light, to compete with the other mass media that are predominantly entertaining.[13] In some instances, accuracy could be improved by watching team practices and game films (these are available to the press). But strict and inflexible deadlines may prevent many reporters from checking their facts against these sources. Yet, without such a check, it may be next to impossible to judge accurately why a play unfolded as it did. And the statistics gathered during each game tell only part of the story (see chapter 8).

Senior management in the mass media create these pressures, under which rank-and-file reporters are forced to work. As a result many young journalists quit their profession in response to the frustrating contradictions between professional ideals (e.g., objectivity, accuracy) and company demands (e.g., controversial topics, dramatic stories).[14] Whatever the ultimate causes of the current player hostility toward the press, it is the reporters who feel it directly, and it is the players who suffer image problems at the hands of a harried press.

FINANCES

One of the principal sources of income for the CFL and its individual teams is the sale of the rights to advertise products during telecasts of CFL games. Between 1984 and 1987, the league had a three-year contract with Carling O'Keefe Breweries of Canada, Ltd. guaranteeing Carling the right to sell advertising time during the telecasts. The

contract was worth $33 million to the CFL.[15] The previous three-year sale of rights (also to Carling) brought the CFL approximately half that amount. Starting in 1987, the CFL will contract directly with the major television networks since Carling O'Keefe is no longer interested in this sort of collaboration. The 1984-87 sum was only for advertising *rights*; the brewery and any other advertisers still had to buy advertising *time* on the telecasts.

But $33 million is not enough to run the CFL and its various teams. It is probably not even enough to cover the salaries of the players, coaches, administrators, and office staff. Money must also come from other sources, including donations, ticket sales, and promotional schemes. It is at this level of team financing that individual players get involved. Ticket sales, for instance, are affected by a team's win-loss record and by the entertainment value to the local community of individual stars.

Although some teams have better public relations programs than others, every public relations man works in various ways to heighten the visibility of the players. For example, a local newspaper may be encouraged to write a story about the family life or leisure interests of the team's starting quarterback or leading pass receiver. Players, especially the more visible ones, may be urged to make public appearances at, for example, the opening of an automobile dealership. In the off-season, those who remain in town are asked to play in hockey or basketball games, the purpose of which is to raise money for charities or school athletic programs. Players sometimes receive a token payment for appearing at business openings, speaking at banquets, or presenting high school athletic awards. But for all these events, it is the promotional value and increased ticket sales that are the principal interest of the players and the public relations officer, who is usually instrumental in arranging these player/community contacts.

Professionals generally seem more than willing to help with fund raising and public relations projects, although the younger players sometimes feel awkward at these events or suffer stage fright when speaking to large audiences. Interacting with the public is a problem even for veterans. The shallow football knowledge of the former leads to numerous "silly" questions, which the latter have grown weary of answering. In addition, several veterans complained about the inadequate public relations efforts of their teams. A couple of them noted further that the considerable turnover of members of most CFL teams

works against the development of local images of the many players who are here today and gone tomorrow.

The community-owned teams in the west gain additional financing from $150-a-plate dinners, at which players are present to talk with the guests. These teams also accept charitable donations from local businesses. Finally, the sale of advertising in game programs and at the special dinners brings in still more revenue.

Amateurs also become involved in promotional and fund-raising activities. The junior players are asked to sell at Stampeder home games tickets to a raffle known as "50-50." The proceeds support junior football in the city. Both the junior and university players sponsor their own fund-raising functions, such as dances and recreational events. The aim of these is to raise money to finance a postseason trip, or, in the case of the 1983 Dinosaur team, which won the Vanier Cup, to raise money to pay for championship rings for each member of the team. The university players also make occasional appearances at shopping centers and other public places to promote attendance at their games.

WOMEN

This examination of the male-oriented world of the football player would be incomplete were we to neglect the role of women. This role is anything but marginal. At its shallowest, women enter the picture as dates, friends, or fleeting sexual partners of players whom they meet at the usual urban haunts of male athletes. The man's physique and his stature as a player of a popular sport are among the attributes that make him attractive to the opposite sex. Contacts of this sort are more common among the junior and university players than among the professionals. Nearly 60 percent of the amateurs were either married (3) or committed to one woman as a partner or steady date (29), compared with 83 percent of the professionals, 21 of whom were married, 4 committed to one woman, 4 were single, and 1 was divorced.

In other words, a female relationship figures in a sizeable majority of all three samples. The feelings of these women about their player's commitment to, involvement with, and performance in football is of vital importance to those players. The meaning of football to these women, at least as seen through the eyes of their men, is complicated.[16] Let us look first at the professional scene.

Twenty-one of the 25 professional respondents who were married or

committed to one woman said that, in general, she accepts their involvement in football. Two of the remaining women were said to reject the respondent's involvement and two were said to tolerate it. A substantial number of those who generally accept their association with football were held to dislike one or more aspects of it. These aspects fall into five categories: politics, tensions, separation, injury, and social life.

In football, politics refers to the attempts by players, on the one hand, and coaches and management, on the other, to acquire and maintain control over their interests as individuals and, occasionally, as conflicting groups. Politics in football, as elsewhere, centers on the acquisition and use of power. One side of the politics of football was examined in the preceding chapter in connection with receiving awards. The political maneuverings described there are among the things that upset "football women." They also fret when, for example, their partner feels the coach is "playing favorites" with competing players, the personnel manager is lying about salary raises, or the coach is encouraging the player to remain with the team while secretly trying to hire a replacement who is believed to be more competent or less expensive.

The pregame jitters, the anxiety over gaining and maintaining a starting position, and the physical and psychological accompaniments of injury are among the tensions experienced by the players. Both the tensions and the politics of football affect the wife or partner because the player brings them home. There she hears about the perceived unfairness of the political issue or the uncertainty or anguish of the tension. To the extent that the two people are striving to reach certain goals of success and well-being for themselves as a unit, politics and tensions threaten her as much as him:

> Football can be very disruptive. It's been rather tough on our family life. We've gone through a series of problems. That makes me particularly sad . . . There was the disappointment of not starting right away. There's a lot of tension here. I didn't know if I wanted to play and still not start. I persevered up through my fourth year, going through those offseasons preparing and bringing home my frustrations. Finally, in my fifth year, I got to start.

Injury, like politics and tensions, is experienced primarily by the player, but the women were frequently said to worry, especially during games, that injury might occur. They were said to sympathize with the respondent's pain and with his dejection at suddenly being forced to the sidelines.

Politics, tensions, and injury, then, are among the shareable problems of football. A player with a close female partner benefits, because that partner has a major interest in his difficulties, even when they sometimes strain the relationship. Misery loves company, because in this case the company helps soothe the misery by distributing its load over two pairs of shoulders.

Unlike the first three aspects, separation is primarily the woman's problem. Separation refers to the assorted ways in which football takes the player away from his partner. Games out of town separate the two, as do some training camps and public relations activities (those to which the woman is not invited). There are teams that hold parties and banquets for the players only. "Nights out with the boys" are particularly galling to some wives and girlfriends — especially when they feel they occur too often — because they are seen as less essential to the role of the player than other forms of separation. They are also seen (accurately) as intentionally excluding women. Again, the well-being of the relationship is threatened by separation, which affects the player to the extent that he values that relationship.

The social life of the women of professional football players, when a problem, is chiefly their problem. Several arrangements in the world of football create problems socially for players' wives and girlfriends. For instance, it was pointed out in chapter 4 that cliques form in professional football. The basis for their formation — race, player longevity, marital status, and player group — are player distinctions. But wives and girlfriends tend to be identified by them as well; that is, women find their movements in football circles restricted by the clique(s) to which their partners belong. Some women dislike this restriction and the insensitive ways in which they see it being enforced.

In addition, the woman's social status in football circles is sometimes tied to her husband's or boyfriend's. If he is a star, she may enjoy high status among the other women. If he is a backup with only a few years of experience, then she, too, may find herself farther down the female side of the totem pole. Women with prestigious occupational careers of their own were reported to be especially hurt by this ranking. Some of them adjust by avoiding the social side of football as much as possible.

Finally, there are aspects of the everyday urban world in which the couple circulates that can be disagreeable for both the player and his partner. A few respondents mentioned the threat posed by aggressive women who are eager to arrange a liaison with the player despite his

commitment to someone else. On a related note, veteran players who have lived in the city where they play for several years find it difficult to escape attention while shopping, going out for the evening, or enjoying their leisure in a public place. The privacy he seeks with his wife or partner is often maddeningly elusive for both of them. And both have to endure the barbs hurled at him by the press and fans. She hears the comments nearby (both good and bad) about his play as she watches from the stands. At work she may have to answer to a disgruntled boss or colleague who feels the team should have done better in their recent game.

On the whole, however, the women of football players accept football as a way of life. Some players say their wife or girlfriend is accepting because she knows that it will last only a few years. Many women also like the social life of football. They go to the games with other wives or girlfriends and, when the team is out of town, gather at one of their homes to watch them unfold on television. And, even though most Canadian football women appear to have had little previous interest in football, when they become attached to a player, they develop a genuine interest in the game itself, and not just the social life surrounding it.

Several players have established relationships with women who are absorbed in their own occupations or who are currently or formerly serious amateur athletes. A few football women come from families where the father or a brother played or coached football. These women can accept their player's devotion to the game because they know what it is like to be devoted to football, to sport in general, or to their own central life interest. The two have worked out an accommodation that allows both to pursue their interests with minimum interference from the other.

Women and Amateurs

Only three professionals reported that their marriage or steady relationship broke up largely because of their commitment to football and the strain of the commitment on that relationship. The women know that the work is time-consuming and sometimes emotionally draining. The amateurs, however, find no such understanding. The social institution of leisure contains no justification for the serious pursuit of an avocation as the social institution of work does for the serious pursuit of a vocation.[17] Thus it is hardly surprising that six university players and three junior players said that a serious relationship with a woman (including one

engagement) collapsed because of football. Football is harder on serious female relationships at the amateur level than at the professional level.

Still, like the professionals, most of the amateurs in a steady relationship reported that their wife, fiancee, or girlfriend accepts their involvement in football (14 of the 16 junior players, 13 of the 14 university players).[18] Some of those who are generally accepting of the player's involvement were said to have reservations similar to those of the women of the professionals. Notably, the women in amateur circles sometimes chafe at the separation enforced by meetings, road trips, long practices and, for students, the additional time needed to maintain passing grades. Indeed, the demand on time is the most significant complaint, even among those who generally accept the football way of life, although a few mentioned injuries and tensions as well. Several girlfriends were said to dislike the way Sunday games (found mostly in junior football) curtailed the customary Saturday night fun, because of the players' requirements to avoid drinking much alcohol and to get to bed early.

The girlfriends and wives of the amateurs were said to attend their games often and to talk with them at length about these games and football in general. Thus the sport is a common interest. As in the professional sphere, some of the women are themselves athletes or are pursuing substantial occupational careers as students or workers. Several amateurs mentioned that the women they are involved with push them to do their best and to overcome the momentary setbacks that inevitably crop up in any major calling.

A significant part of the community for many amateurs are their parents. Most of the university and junior players were raised in Calgary, and most of their parents have a strong interest in their football career. For many amateurs, it is especially important to play well when their parents are in the stands and to hear from them how their performance was viewed. For the professionals, this tie to the community is significant only when they are playing in their hometown.

AMATEURS

Amateurs and professionals are part of each other's football-related external community. For the amateurs this is a very significant part, for their contacts with professionals amount to a career contingency (see chapter 5). From the professional's side, meeting and interacting with amateurs are much less important. They are simply seen as another

category of people in the community with whom the professional has occasional contact by dint of his employment in the nation's second sport.

Somewhat greater than 60 percent of the professionals said that their contact with amateurs comes chiefly through some sort of buttonholing. This can occur in almost any public place: a bar, restaurant, shopping center, or street corner, or at the stadium after a practice or a game. As mentioned earlier, some players stand out because they are big men. They and their physically less conspicuous teammates may also be known from newspaper pictures or television appearances, or from their photographs in the annual team factbook. Some respondents said that buttonholing by amateurs is a nuisance, chiefly because it reduces their privacy or slows their attempts to complete an errand. Others said these encounters are acceptable as long as the amateur has something important to talk about. Particularly annoying to most professionals is the amateur who has nothing important to say, but who interrupts their routine chiefly for the glory such contact can bring him among his friends.

Some amateurs are seen as competitive, as showing signs that they believe that they are as good as, if not better than, the professional with whom they are talking. On this account, the professional respondents left little doubt that they see experience as the major dividing line between amateur and professional performance in football. Some professionals admitted that there are amateurs who have at least as much raw talent as themselves and might even be in better physical condition. But, when it comes to playing a football game, the professionals' significantly greater experience enables them (the professionals) to outplay nearly all amateur competition.

In general, the amateurs agree with this description of how they are distinguished from the professionals. Still, 3 of the 25 junior players (12 percent) and 8 of the 25 university players (32 percent) believe they are as good as the typical professional. All these men were contemplating professional careers. Some had already attended a professional camp.

As noted in chapter 5, some professionals do have amateurs as friends and acquaintances, some of whom are former college teammates. Other relationships have developed through repeated contact at parties or health clubs. Some meet sporadically to play pickup hockey, football, or basketball in the off-season.

Lastly, contacts with amateurs may be arranged through an organization. Professionals rub elbows with amateurs in such formal settings as banquets, coaching clinics, and awards ceremonies. And professional teams have occasionally hired amateurs for brief periods, for example, to throw passes during training camp or even to play when illness and injury suddenly leave the team shorthanded.

Amateur football players, then, as far as the typical professional is concerned, are but one part of the wider community that the professionals meet in their capacity as prominent athletes, and not a significant part at that. Only three of the sample of thirty professionals said they had an amateur or two as close friends. Two of the respondents were early professionals who retained former college teammates as friends. The third, a veteran, has a brother who plays amateur football and whose friends he has come to enjoy.

One of the reasons why amateur and professional football players have rather little contact is they they actually have rather different life-styles. That is, the impact of playing the nation's second sport is significantly stronger for the professional than for the amateur. As a result, there are certain aspects of the professional football player's life that are unique. The national prominence of the sport at the professional level has affected the individual player's relationship with his team. The pressure to play consistently well in a highly visible sport has led to a special behind-the-scenes contest that amateurs in Canada experience less often and with less intensity. This contest is examined in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Curtis, J.E. and W.G. McTeer, "Sport involvement and academic attainment in university: Two studies from the Canadian case." Paper presented at the Olympic Scientific Congress in Eugene, Oregon, 1984.

2. Snyder, E.E. and E.A. Spreitzer, *Social Aspects of Sport*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 93-94. Leonard, III, Wilbert M. *A Sociological Perspective of Sport*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Burgess, 1983), 213-14.

3. Although technically correct, the "men" have done a great deal over the years to develop the game and raise its standards of excellence, something the "boys" would never have done.

4. Snyder and Spreitzer, *Social Aspects of Sport*, 95.
5. Nicol, E. and D. More, *The Joy of Football* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1980) 146-49.
6. Sheard, K.G. and E.G. Dunning, "The rugby football club as a type of 'male preserve'." *International Review of Sport Sociology* 8: 5-24, 1973.
7. Altheide, D.L. and R.P. Snow, *Media logic* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979) 91-96.
8. It could be argued that a player is loafing because he is tired and out of condition. A man returning to the lineup after four to six weeks of recuperation from an injury would undoubtedly be noticeably out of shape. And by the fourth quarter, nearly everyone is showing signs of fatigue. Charges of loafing under these conditions are clearly uninformed.
9. *Calgary Herald*. 17.8.84, p. D1.
10. Snyder and Spreitzer, *Social Aspects of Sport*, 217.
11. Collins, F. It's a week to bury hatchet. *Calgary Herald*. 22.11.83, p. F9. For further information on the players' views of the press, see Goodman, *Huddling up*, 220-23.
12. Goldman, E., *The Season: A Candid Look at Broadway* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1969).
13. Altheide and Snow. *Media logic*, Chs. 2 & 3; Stephenson, W., *The Play Theory of Mass Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
14. Holz, J.R. and C.R. Wright, "Sociology of mass communications." In *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 5, 1979, 193-217 (Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews Inc.).
15. Wayne, J., "CFL TV deal a sweet note on Gaudaur's swan song." *Financial Post*, 22.10.83, p. 42.
16. Although wives, partners, and fiancees occasionally sat in on the interviews and were invited to contribute to them whenever they swished, the majority of interviews report only the player's view of the woman's outlook on football.

17. Stebbins, R.A., "Serious leisure: A conceptual statement." *Pacific Sociological Review* 25: 251-72, 1982.

18. Nine junior players and 11 university players did not have a steady girl.

CHAPTER 8

Player vs. Team

To anyone except a football player, the title of this chapter must sound strangely contradictory. How can players compete against their teams when teams are supposed to operate on the basis of teamwork, on the basis of coordination and cooperation. The situation is less contradictory than the chapter title might suggest. Players indirectly compete against their teams when circumstances force them to "look out for themselves." Even then they are not intentionally trying in some way to beat their team. It is only that, in looking out for themselves, they occasionally do or say things that may harm the team as a group or harm certain individual members.

Before we look at the circumstances that force players into competition with their teams and the nature of that competition, we must first answer some questions about teams in football. What is a football team? What rewards encourage players to engage in teamwork? What role does teamwork play in winning and losing?

THE TEAM AS GROUP

Sociologically speaking, a football team is a social group. Though not referred to as such, several group-like components of football teams were discussed in chapters 3 and 4. It was noted that teams are composed of men playing various roles or positions in which they interact with one another according to the requirements of the plays of the team and the rules of the game. Teams, like other groups, also have a culture, consisting in this case of distinct goals, norms, routines, humor, and language. The traditions, symbols, and level of morale are also part of this culture.

One set of characteristics not found in all groups, but that is especially important to the best football teams was discussed in chapter 3 under

dependent play. To review briefly, there are two kinds of dependent play: coordination and cooperation. In the first, two or more players achieve flawless timing of a sequence of linked moves. In the second, there is no interlinking of moves, since the players must move simultaneously as they pursue a common goal. Put otherwise, coordination and cooperation are two forms of teamwork.

Coordination and cooperation are achieved through trust. Experience teaches the players to trust each other to do one's best to make the play succeed. Put differently, players are aware of their dependence on each other and, on good teams, they are aware that they can generally count on the others to do a good job. On a good offensive or defensive team, where plays are successful much of the time, trust leads to mutual respect for and sometimes attachment to individual teammates. Trust and its accompanying sentiments of respect and attachment are based on the proved competence of the others in helping the team reach its ends.

An important aspect of football teams as social groups is their intentional neglect of individual players as stars. The group conception arose from my watching countless amateur and professional practices, where the men went through seemingly endless technique and play-related drills to perfect coordination and cooperation. In the practices, the stars, as defined by the press and the fans, participate in the drills and exercises at the same level of intensity and for the same length of time as the rest. They are no different from their teammates.

The group conception also arose from my attending meetings where I heard players and coaches talk about strategies, both offensive and defensive, for moving the ball and stopping its movement. They stressed time and again the importance of avoiding "mental errors," or the lapses in concentration that cause a player to forget to do his part in the coordinated-cooperative interaction of each play. Certain exceptional players were sometimes mentioned here. Clearly, it is group effort that is needed to contain a brilliant receiver, or stop an agile linebacker, or give a powerful running back room to gain yardage.

Football, then, is fundamentally a team sport. Furthermore, it is a strategic team sport (part of its heritage from rugby). Setting game plans and choosing certain plays at certain junctures in a game are strategic decisions made by coaches and players. It is also true that they work only if members of the team have properly prepared themselves by maintaining their physical condition, by concentrating on the job at hand and as a

consequence remaining confident of their ability, which is considerable. However, in a strategic sport such as football, none of these individual qualities is sufficient. The strategies work only if the plays on which they rest also work. The plays work only if there is teamwork — coordination, cooperation, and trust.

Teams as Chamber-Music Ensembles

Though the likeness may seem bizarre at first glance, football teams and chamber-music ensembles have important characteristics in common. In a chamber group, each musician performs a separate part (i.e., does not generally double with another musician) from a larger score that blends all parts into a unified whole. In addition, individual performers play solos from time to time. Those who perform these solos may be exceptionally skilled and perhaps are famous in music circles for their artistic ability. But the solos are part of the larger piece of music. The soloists depend on the other players to provide an accompaniment that blends rhythmically, harmonically, and dynamically with the solo part. If someone plays too fast or plays out of tune at any time — and here is the critical point — the piece is flawed. It makes no difference whether the person who erred is playing a solo or an accompanying part. The quality of the group product (the piece of music) is, for the moment, noticeably defective.

It is the same with football. Each play or perhaps set of plays is like a musical score. Players who pass, receive, or carry the ball are like soloists. And some are famous for their ability. Their actions, however, are but one part of a larger group product known as a play, to which all twelve players make important contributions. If someone fails to do his part, the play will be flawed: the quarterback as passer will be sacked, the runner tackled behind the line of scrimmage, or the receiver so well covered that no pass can be safely thrown to him. However good the members of the team, weak play by one of them, like a sour note in a chamber ensemble, makes for a defective group product. And the brilliant star has been given no opportunity to show what he can do because one of his teammates has fallen down on the job.

What about quarterbacks and conductors of chamber ensembles (when conductors are used) as leaders? Do not these two types occupy superior positions because they are leaders? The stress in this chapter on coordination, cooperation, dependency, trust, and group products indicates a

negative answer to this question. Adorno states the case for music:

> Among musicians it is hardly in dispute that the public prestige of conductors far exceeds the contributions which most of them make to the reproduction of music. At the least, their prestige and their actual artistic work point in different directions. A conductor does not owe his fame to his ability to interpret scores, or certainly not to this ability alone.[1]

This statement could certainly be rewritten for quarterbacks. Like conductors, their prestige is much more a product of media image-making and public acceptance of these creations than of their demonstrated importance in shaping the group product. Conductors always, and quarterbacks sometimes, select their own pieces of music or plays. They also start the action by raising the baton or calling the signals. Once started, however, the course of events, musical or athletic, is largely out of their hands. Conductors try to coordinate the flow of sound from different sections of the ensemble, but they are always at the mercy of the members of the ensemble for an adequate response to their directions. The quarterback is even more limited. Once he sets a play in motion with a handoff or a pass (if he is not tackled first), the success of the play rests with his teammates.

Quarterbacks and conductors contribute to the group effort in other ways, too. They are expected to encourage their groups to do their best, to shore up sagging spirits, to keep conflict down, and so on. They may also act as spokespersons for their team or ensemble. It is only the importance of their direct contribution to the play or piece that is being questioned here.

Unified Products

Good music produced by a chamber orchestra is a unified product, the result of the coordinated and cooperative efforts of the individual musicians. Good football plays can be seen in the same light. A football game is a series of offensive group products from two teams, with some of the products being unified and some of them being flawed, against a series of unified and, at times, not so unified defensive products of the two groups.

It is in the course of turning out and trying to turn out unified products that players find their most significant rewards, or benefits, in football. To determine what these are, I presented each respondent with a list of

nine possible rewards. He was asked to rank his selections from most to least rewarding. The list, which has been developed from my previous studies of amateurs and professionals, was presented on a file card arranged in the following way:

Rewards of Football

1. *Personal enrichment* (cherished experiences)
2. *Self-actualization* (developing skills and abilities)
3. *Self-expression* (expressing skills and abilities already developed)
4. *Self-image* (known to others as a football player and for ability as a player)
5. *Enjoyable, fun*
6. *Re-create oneself* (regenerate oneself after a day's work)
7. *Social attraction* (associating with other players, with fans, with press, etc.)
8. *Group accomplishment* (team effort in winning a game, championship, playing good football, etc.)
9. *Financial return*

Every player's ranking of the rewards was weighted. The totals of all weighted selections are presented in parentheses in Table 2. The rank of each reward, as determined by the weighting procedure, is expressed by the number to the left of the parentheses. Where accumulated weights are within one or two points of each other, the ranks are reported as tied (denoted by an asterisk).

Table 2 shows that enjoyment, personal enrichment, and group accomplishment are the three most prominent rewards of football for all players. Personal enrichment included esprit de corps; playing in and, in some instances, winning championships; and effective performance of their offensive or defensive unit (even if the team as a whole lost the game). Some of these enriching experiences are so completely absorbing that a sense of "flow" develops; the player feels totally involved in them to the exclusion of all else that is happening around him at the time.[2]

The enjoyment of football comes from running successful plays and from applying acquired knowledge, experience, and physical skills (e.g., blocking, catching, passing) to achieve these unified products. Another component of both enjoyment and enrichment are the expressions of approval of the player's actions on the field by friends, spouse,

Table 2. Number of Football Players Choosing Rewards by Rank

Reward	Professional	Universtity	Junior
	Rank(Total)	Rank(Total)	Rank(Total)
Personal enrichment	1 (142)	2 (111)	*2 (97)
Self-actualization	5 (95)	*4 (72)	*2 (97)
Self-expression	6 (83)	*4 (70)	*5 (77)
Self-image	8 (58)	7 (54)	7 (70)
Enjoyable, fun	2 (128)	1 (115)	1 (114)
Recreate oneself	9 (21)	9 (7)	8 (29)
Social attraction	7 (65)	*4 (70)	*5 (76)
Group accomplishment	*3 (114)	3 (101)	*2 (98)
Financial return	*3 (113)	8 (17)	nil

fellow players, and respected coaches and fans. The reward of group accomplishment needs no explanation.

By contrast, self-image was ranked near the bottom by all players. Community identity as a sports bigshot is a minor reward when compared with the enrichment, enjoyment, and sense of group accomplishment that football brings. The same can be said for the professionals with respect to the social attractiveness of the game. They, much more than the amateurs, have contact with the wider community. As a result, the social attraction of football gained from mingling with fellow players is diluted for the professional by the less exciting, sometimes even threatening, association with the public.

Lastly, financial return holds the same rank for the professionals as the intrinsic rewards of enjoyment, personal enrichment, and group accomplishment. This is further evidence for the claim made in chapter 2 that being paid for sport does not necessarily make it a purely instrumental undertaking. The financial return mentioned by some of the university players is their athletic scholarship.

Barriers to Unified Play

Achieving unified offensive and defensive play is an important ingredient in the recipe for winning games. It is not, however, the only ingredient. Among the others are game plans, play selection, referees' calls, field conditions, weather conditions, team morale, home field advantage, and skill level of players. The relative importance of these is unknown. Logic alone suggests, however, that the ingredient of unified play is as important as any and more important than most. How can a team with a record of weak offensive and defensive unified play in a game win against a team with a record of strong unified play in that same game?

Some of the ingredients just mentioned, specifically, team morale, field and weather conditions, and level of player skill, affect unified play. Morale was considered in chapter 4, as were the chance factors of field and weather conditions. The role of player skill in unified play is examined in the next section, as is the effect of the pursuit of individual goals. We shall conclude this section with a brief discussion of how ethnicity and cliques affect unified play.

A team with ethnic harmony is one where racial and nationality conflicts among players are kept to a minimum. We have already

discussed the ways in which race and national location of one's college influence the interaction among rookies in training camp (chapter 5). All that can be added here is that these factors may continue to influence players relations once a training camp is finished and the team roster fixed.

According to players with experience on several teams, the strength of such influences varies from club to club in the CFL. They hold the coaching staff accountable for maintaining or failing to maintain ethnic harmony in a team. The majority of coaches and general managers in Canadian professional football are white, American born and trained. There is evidence in the United States that white coaches discriminate against black athletes.[3] To the extent that American coaches and managers bring these attitudes with them to Canada, one can expect that they will do little to promote racial harmony on their teams. Canadian players also feel that most American coaches believe in the general superiority of the imported player.

The implications of ethnic disharmony for unified play are clear: if men have to work with others whom they dislike, they may find it difficult to prevent their feelings from interferring with the conduct of their job. If a quarterback dislikes one of his receivers, he may be strongly inclined to throw to other receivers, no matter how capable the disliked person. Certainly the trust in other players' doing their part, which underlies coordinated and cooperative play, will fail to develop when players have little respect for one another because of the racial and national slurs they have exchanged.

The mosaic of cliques among professionals in Canadian football was considered briefly in chapter 4. It was noted that cliques develop along the lines of race, player longevity, player group, and marital status. Similar networks are found in many places of work in Canadian society, and they are by no means always accompanied by hostility. My observations and the interviews suggest that unified play is threatened only by racial cliques, because they help spread and establish patterns of ethnic disharmony.

The barriers to unified play of ethnicity and cliques are found primarily at the professional level. The amateurs escape them by and large. There are only a handful of nonwhite players on the university and junior teams, and they are usually Canadian-born and trained. The only significant development of cliques occurs according to player groups, which

are friendly divisions. Quite possibly, the greatest barrier to unified play at the amateur level is the pursuit of individual goals. But it is minor when compared with the barrier posed by the pursuit of individual interests among the professionals.

THE INDIVIDUAL

From the outset, it should be recognized that the pursuit of individual goals does not always threaten unified play in football. As mentioned, players find enjoyment, personal enrichment, and a sense of group accomplishment in participating in well-executed plays. To the extent that these are personal goals, they benefit unified play. Other individual interests may or may not unfavorably affect unified play. These interests fall into three interrelated categories: personal fame, career advancement, and self-preservation.

Personal Fame

Momentary fame can develop from a single game because of one or more dramatic plays or because of the accumulation of impressive stats and the receipt of an award. Certainly such recognition is cherished. But the recognition that follows from accumulated stats and their associated awards for an entire season is definitely a stronger goal than that coming from the week-to-week achievements and their honors. (The connections between stats and awards are covered in chapter 6.)

Unified play may be threatened by such pursuits when, for example, a coach or quarterback calls a play expressly for the purpose of helping a particular receiver or runner improve his record. Amateur coaches sometimes collaborate with an aspirant to professional football who, to attract attention, needs all the top awards and good stats he can get. Unfortunately for the ideal of unified play, the team as a whole may be unable to execute consistently well the plays in which the aspirant can potentially shine. Moreover, the opposing team soon becomes aware of these goals and strengthens its defense against them.

Defensive players striving for good stats and major awards in their areas generally seem to pose fewer problems for unified play. They have to take what the opposing team offers them. Still, there are probably times when a defensive back, with an eye to his interception stats, catches a pass intended for the other team's receiver that, given the situation (i.e., 3rd down, good field position), would have been better

knocked to the ground. Or a defensive end might rush the quarterback hoping to record another quarterback sack, when he should remain on the periphery to guard against an end run or a pass along the line of scrimmage.

Moreover, the stats, as mentioned earlier, never tell the whole story. For example, consistently good blocking by an offensive tackle is never quantified. Nor is consistently good man-to-man pass coverage by a defensive back or corner back. In fact, they could conceivably do their job so well that no passes would ever be thrown to the men they are assigned to. Hence, their record for interceptions and interception returns would be dismal.[4] A related problem is the capable halfback or receiver who rarely gets to show his ability because the team rarely runs the plays in which he can stand out as a ball carrier or receiver. Any extensive attempts to select plays for the purpose of enhancing a player's stats threatens the morale of these players who, by quantitative standards, are essentially invisible. Lowered morale can affect coordinated and cooperative play as well as the level of trust players put in one another.

The drive for fame that motivates some players is intensified by two additional situations. One is the media practice of identifying what it considers sport heros (and sometimes villains) and of promoting these players with exceptional coverage.[5] For the players lionized in this manner, the publicity is appealing. But, at the same time, it has the effect of unfairly calling attention to a few individuals who, in actuality, contribute no more to unified play and team success than their unheralded teammates.

The other situation is one where players, both amateur and professional, are members of teams experiencing losing seasons. Here the quest for good stats and major awards may become the principal interest. Too little unified play is one of the likely reasons for the weak win-loss record. The rewards of group accomplishment, personal enrichment, and enjoyment of the use of sports skills are hard to find under these circumstances. Therefore, the normally less significant rewards of self-image, social attraction and, for professionals, financial return assume greater importance. As an amateur put it: "At least I was able to get something out of that season with good rushing stats." Of course, it is possible that this attitude helps produce a self-fulfilling prophecy: The team continues to fare badly, partly because some of its members are seeking personal goals at the expense of team goals.

Career Advancement

Becoming famous is itself a kind of career advancement. Nonetheless, the term career advancement will be used here to refer to the pursuit of the set of values controlled in significant degree by management. These values are good contracts and good present and future playing opportunities.

A player's contract contains clauses on salary, signing bonuses, and duration of the agreement, which are written up following negotiations between him and his team. Similarly, a player comes to an understanding with management about whether he will be a starter or backup and whether he will be traded or not. Contracts and playing opportunities are potentially explosive interests of the players. But, if handled well by all concerned, they are normally settled with little threat to unified play.

Career-advancement interests that are handled well are said by the players to be fair, honest, and consistent. I have no information on what proportion of all career-advancement arrangements in a typical CFL season are fair, honest, and consistent, as defined by players. Fifteen of the twenty-five professionals in this study said, often emotionally, that these three ethical principles too often went unobserved in their career dealings with management. As measured by the number of respondents who mentioned it, management's neglect of the three principles is the number one dislike of CFL professionals. Several players summed up their thoughts on this problem by noting that "management is hard to talk to." Others went into detail:

> The biggest thing I don't enjoy about it is the political aspect . . . I don't enjoy the destroying of individuals. I have seen other people destroyed before my eyes from a mental standpoint. I went through it this year, when they tried to destroy me as an individual and downgrade my abilities. They do this by not playing you, by not telling you why. They come in and say that you are not doing this or not doing that, so that they are basically eroding your self-image. I was fortunate that I was able to maintain myself.
>
> Sometimes they lie to you. Why don't they just come up and say what it is that you are doing that is weak and that they don't think you are going to fit into our scheme? Or, we are going to be using this guy . . . and this guy is probably going to play. Here's what our plans are and here's why we are doing it. Just be up-front with the guy. Just ask the guy what the hell's wrong. It could be a personal problem at home . . . They do that in _____. The

coach is more interested in the family . . . He wants to make sure everything is fine at home.

I think one of the worst times was in _____. The general manager said: "Go ahead and move your family out here." So I moved them. My wife was cooking the first meal and I had come from practice early. I had been cut. There was a little bit of this in _____, too. There was a coach there that would always lie. He was quoted once as saying that "you have to lie to players." There's a lot of that. Whether it be management or coaches, it's found on all the teams. Even in _____, they called me and said I was too old and too slow and not strong enough. And really, the true element of it was that the general manager didn't like me because we were having negotiations problems and the coach didn't like me because I was part of a regime that had struck the year before.

These are three examples of what the players mean by management being hard to talk to. In them there is two-way communication, some exchange of ideas and information. For instance, a player might be told how valuable he is to the team (but be traded two weeks later). There are times, however, when no words are exchanged at all. The player simply discovers, for example, that he has been replaced in the line-up or put out on waivers. No reason is given for this change, nor is any indication given as to how long it will last. The coach may even refuse to talk with the man.

This is the politics of football, which upsets so many wives and girlfriends (see chapter 7). The politics get worse (from the players' standpoint) when a team is in a losing season or trying to rebuild from one the previous year. Players are blamed by their coaches and managers for the team's record; some are said to be lazy, incapable, perhaps even overpaid. The attitude of these players must change or they will be replaced as starters. A way must be found, management feels, to reach the conference playoffs, usually regarded as the minimally acceptable mark of a successful season.

The desperate situation leads to frequent changes in the line-up, the team roster, and sometimes even in the overall offensive or defensive approach of the team. With so much in flux, there is bound to be some inconsistency, dishonesty, and injustice in player-management relations as coaches and others try to save face in the wake of questionable decisions and players' disputes about charges of being lazy or incapable.

In working to build a winning team from one that is losing, management, as the players see it, often loses sight of the three ethical principles. An account in the *Calgary Herald* illustrates this:

> Minutes after Ray Crouse completed his first workout at McMahon Stadium, the all-star running back was informed he had been traded to Toronto.
>
> Crouse, one of three Calgary Stampeders who retired on the eve of training camp, was shipped to the Argonauts for another import runner, Nate Jones of Utah State.
>
> The Canadian Football League trade left player agent Cy Wolfman howling.
>
> According to Wolfman, Stamps' coach Steve Buratto made a verbal agreement Tuesday night to adjust the bonus clauses in Crouse's contract.
>
> Given that assurance, Crouse "unretired" and attended Wednesday morning's practice.
>
> However, before Wolfman had a chance to visit the Stamps' office and pick up the written agreement, Crouse was traded.
>
> "I've already talked with (Argos' president) Ralph Sazio and the Stamps have not informed him of the verbal agreement they had reached with Ray," said Wolfman. "I have to start all over and negotiate with Sazio. I'm disappointed. I took Steve Buratto at his word."
>
> Buratto confirmed he had "come to an understanding" with Crouse, but insisted there was nothing spiteful about the transaction.
>
> "Trading Ray was not a vindictive move. We watched Phil Carter and Lewis Walker and we felt we had two backs equal to or better than Ray. The trade came about in the morning. I felt it was a good move for both parties so I made it."
>
> Crouse, who will earn $51,000 in base pay this season, was not happy with the way the Stamps bid him farewell.
>
> "Right now, that's how I feel. I think they could have told me I was going to be traded rather than have me go through that one stupid practice . . ."[7]

It should be clear that the players are not complaining about sincere assessments and reassessments of their abilities and their value to the team on a cost-benefit basis. Of course, it is unpleasant to be told that you are not as good a center as someone else and that therefore you are going to be traded. Such an assessment, according to some objective standard,

might even be wrong, but if it is sincere, the coach who made it is, ethically speaking, beyond reproach. And players recognize that coaches re-evaluate them. It is in the nature of professional football to be constantly under review, the result of which may be that one is looked on subsequently as better or worse than, or the same as, one was at some earlier point in time. A sincere change of opinion is not what the players mean by inconsistency.

Self-preservation

Self-preservation is not a term commonly used by the players. Still, it is a good label for their belief that they must look out for themselves when it comes to injuries and matters of bodily maintenance. We have already covered the self-preservation issue of the incapacitating injury and how player concerns here are sometimes flagrantly disregarded by team authorities (see chapter 6). Though possibly rarer, similar worries arise over the coach's demand that a lineman put on weight so that he will constitute a more imposing force on offense or defense. But some men wonder about the long-term consequences of this plan. What happens to all this muscle when one leaves football for a sedentary job?

The issue of self-preservation as expressed in these two ways puts players in a bind: it puts them into what they call a "conflict of loyalty" between themselves and their teams. CFL coaches often demand, as we saw in connection with incapacitating injuries, that the player sacrifice himself for the good of the team. A couple of respondents mentioned that such pressure can even come from teammates. Yet, many players say that loyalty is a two-way street along which management must travel as well. Players expect that, in return for their loyalty and their sacrifices, they will be treated fairly, honestly, and consistently. A third-year professional expressed his disillusionment with the way management fails to reciprocate the player's loyal behavior:

> The biggest disillusion I have is finding out about the reality of it. You find out that the coaches are human beings; that the players are human beings; that the legends you've played against are human beings . . . You get in there and find out that this guy, this coach, that you are supposed to respect is really quite an asshole . . . It is just too bad that a general feeling of defeatism permeates the whole thing. Even on a championship Grey Cup team [this is true] . . . They talk about creating a family atmosphere here, but what they

> have done is really treat us like stepchildren. I'm not saying that it should be the college rah, rah. I'm not into that. But what it could be is a group of men realizing how lucky we are and taking advantage of it. As it turns out, [only] some of us realize how lucky we are, but we get caught up in the cynicism and the day-to-day B.S . . .
>
> Our feeling on the team is "let's do this for us." My first taste of it was in my rookie year at _____. That team had just a terrible history of losing . . . I remember that we were about half way through the season and already some of the veteran players were saying that all you can do now is "play for yourself." Just try to save your job; just play the best you can. What I was expecting was someone to come up and say: "Look, you guys, we're here as a team. Let's make the best of it we can as a team . . ." But management doesn't want a group feeling like that because then we get too much power. They want you to be totally dependent on them. They don't want you to have any feeling of security, because then you will become complacent, which is not true.

As this quotation suggests, professionals in the CFL, if the sample of players in this study is any indication, commonly develop a look-out-for-yourself attitude toward their occupation. This is a dramatic change in outlook for the early professionals, especially the Canadians whose university and junior football is largely free of self-preservation problems. Players solve this conflict of loyalty by abandoning the principle of team sacrifice. In its place they put the principle of practicality. At the level of everyday affairs, the practicality principle is expressed when a player bargains tenaciously (perhaps through an agent) for a favorable contract, suspects the medical assessments of the team trainer and physician, relies on the protective measures provided by the CFLPA, threatens or actually uses law suits, and the like.

"We're just pieces of meat," said many of the respondents in summing up their relationship with their team. As they see it, they are little more than hunks of muscle and bone in the eyes of management, who try to manipulate them like pawns on a chessboard. In fact, management and players share the same goal, namely, winning games. It is the means to this goal that are sometimes disputed. Were the players to run their own teams, they would surely have the same goal, but not at all human cost.

One of the ancient ideals of sport is the sacrifice of oneself for the

higher values of excellence and victory. Sacrifice includes aching muscles, extreme fatigue, even broken limbs and torn ligaments. Still, modern Canadian football has demonstrated that there are limits to this self-sacrifice. Life-long injury, excess weight, and individual exploitation are among these limits. Players draw the line on loyality here, whereas management does not. But then, say the players, management never has to suffer personally the costs of playing recklessly beyond the limits.

WHY EXPLOIT PLAYERS?

In considering our answers to the question of why management sometimes exploits players, two points should be kept in mind. First, management was never interviewed on the subject of exploitation, or any other for that matter. This study is restricted to the description and explanation of the players' viewpoint. Second, not all professional football management is exploitative. Many respondents singled out the Edmonton Eskimo teams coached by High Campbell from 1977 through 1982 as an example of outstanding humane treatment of players. During his tenure his teams played in six Grey Cup games, winning the last five.

The only possible justification for player exploitation is that it wins games. The question is, what evidence is there that exploitation produces wins? I shall try to answer this question by determining whether exploitation *necessarily* leads to more consistent unified play than when there is no exploitation.

Since there is no direct evidence in this study or any other that could answer this question, we shall have to consider the logical reasons why the answer is probably "no." First, it is difficult to imagine how a player worried about injuries, career advancement, or future health will concentrate and hence play any better in this frame of mind than one free of these concerns. Second, coordination and cooperation are, at bottom, forms of athletic interaction with *specific* individuals. Thus, it is difficult to see how frequent changes in the line-up, through cutting, trading, and benching players, will enhance player interaction. Players say that they become accustomed to the ways other players on the team do their jobs. They grow accustomed to the cadence of the quarterbacks, the moves of the men next to them on the line, and the speed and agility of other defensive backs in pass coverage. A continuous flow of unfamiliar players into the line-up, means all players, both old and new, must

constantly adjust to each other. It is likely that unified play suffers under these circumstances.

Third, fans, coaches, and management assume that skilled players, especially those who are stars, can affect significantly the win-loss record of professional teams. Thus, it is believed that the movement of players in and out of the line-up and between teams is justified. It is justified as long as the team is acquiring more skilled players in its trades for less skilled players or it is trading players of equal skill while cutting salary costs.

But the importance and even level of individual skill, at least among first- and second-year professionals, may be overrated. In a study of American professional football teams, Goldstein demonstrates that non-skill factors (e.g., morale, attitudes of home-team crowd, home-field advantage), account for many more wins and losses than level of player skill.[8] He notes that all teams draw from the same pool of college talent, which is largely of the same level of skill. If, as Goldstein's analysis suggests, early professional talent is more or less equal, exploitation of some players at this level to acquire other "more skilled players" is an illusory goal.[9] In the meantime, players get angry when management replaces a teammate with a player whom the players believe is no better or even somewhat worse. Such a practice is bound to shake morale, which, in turn, can unfavorably affect unified play.

Fourth, it is possible that players are exploited because management intentionally or unintentionally accepts the public image of them as dumb jocks (see chapter 7). Or, on a related theme, players may be viewed by their employers as inferior subordinates in the club hierarchy, where communication between top and bottom is rare and formal. As dumb jocks, players may be seen as blind to their own exploitation — too ignorant to know when they are being used. As inferior subordinates, they could be viewed as unworthy of ordinary privileges or even of civil treatment. Whatever the view of players, some players feel that they are at the bottom of their management's list of interests. One respondent said that the management of his team pays most attention (as expressed in banquets, receptions, face-to-face interaction) to itself, then to staff, then to media, and lastly to players. A retired player gave a different kind of evidence of this orientation:

> After having won the Grey Cup in _____, to go back to the hotel and see the management, etc. going first-class and the players kind of bringing up the rear. I didn't think that we should be kind of

> elevated or put into any exalted position, but . . . In fact, after that Grey Cup, a friend of mine and I just went back to the hotel on a city transit bus . . . on our own. We sat there and had a few drinks of Scotch and then went and had something to eat . . . All the champagne and all that was in the directors' area, and the players were basically herded in, fed, and told that they were on their own until we get back tomorrow. They celebrated and we had to find our own fun. That taught me early what went on. The sad thing is that when you get out of football and you look back over your career and you have always tried to be a fair-thinking person, try to do things the way you would like them to be done to you. The disappointment of it all is to find out that you're just a body. We used to say that you pass your physical by breathing on a mirror. If you steamed it up, you were breathing, and they would send you out whether or not you were good or bad or indifferent. You're out there as a piece of meat. And if you shine forth like you've done a great job, then you are on the team again. It's all business.

Or, consider this view straight from the top, published in the *Calgary Herald*:

> TORONTO (CP) — Hamilton owner Harold Ballard, upset with the performances of his Tiger-Cats, heaped abuse on the Canadian Football League team's players Wednesday and advised fans to stay away from the final home game at Ivor-Wynne Stadium.
>
> Ballard said many of the Ticats, last in the Eastern Division (3-9-1), are "overpaid bums."
>
> "I feel terrible about the Hamilton fans. I feel terrible I took money from them this year."
>
> He said their coming to games "mostly (was) . . . a waste of time and money."
>
> Few have bothered to show up. Attendance is 35,000 below totals for 1983, which also was a poor year at the gate.
>
> "I don't blame the fans who've stayed away," said Ballard. "I wouldn't blame anyone if they stayed away."
>
> "I think they should stay away (Oct. 20, vs. Ottawa)."
>
> Ballard claims the Ticats will lose $1.4 million this season.
>
> "I can't say I'm overly upset about losing so much, because I understand what the fans are going through. Our players are paid very well, but they should be ashamed of themselves."
>
> "You can't criticize the fans. Would you spend all that money to watch terrible football? Would you want to waste so many hours of your life? Sometimes, I can't even watch them myself."[10]

After this tirade, Hamilton won its remaining games, ending with a record sufficient to play in the 1984 Grey Cup.

Part of the problem is that sport *is* a big business, and as in other big businesses, players are labor-power purchased by owners and managers to produce a commodity — in this case football games.[11] As noted by Marxist theoreticians in the sociology of sport, once a player sells his labor to an owner (i.e., team) he, like workers in many other industries, loses a significant degree of control over that labor and over himself as the source of power that produces it. That is, the player is pressured to do what is required of him by those who pay his salary, regardless of whether he likes the requirements (e.g., play with an incapacitating injury, accept a trade to another team). If one wants to play professional football in Canada, one must play under management's rules as well as those of the game itself. There are no alternatives. If management is benevolent, the vulnerability of the player is negligible. But as this study indicates, the owners and managers are often anything but benevolent when it comes to doing what they believe is necessary to field a winning team and reach a quick profit.[12]

ARE PLAYERS ALIENATED?

The Marxist thesis states further that the exploitation of workers in the production of a commodity results in their alienation from that commodity. In football, alienation would occur from the game itself. Workers who are alienated, according to one definition of this concept, are estranged from the product they produce; that is, as players, they no longer find intrinsic value in the job of football. Instead, they work largely, if not entirely, for the external ends it helps them reach (e.g., salary, prestige).

Are today's professional football players in Canada really alienated? If regrets about playing professional football are any indication, then the answer is "no." To a man, the players surveyed in this research said they have never regretted making football their first occupation in their lifetime work. If they could do it over again, they would proceed no differently. They also intend to recommend the sport to their sons, should they show an interest in it. Let me remind the reader that most players fight to remain in the game as they approach the end of their athletic career (see chapter 6). The reason they give is their love for it, not its accompanying salary. The three intrinsic rewards mentioned

earlier also help keep up their interest. One retired professional looked back over his football career with the following observations:

> Question: Do you wish that you had entered a different occupation than football? If you had it all to do over again, would you choose football?
> Player: No, I enjoyed it very much. Secondly, I knew that I had friends who always said play for as long as you can, because once it's over, it's over. In other words, they said that you can always go to an eight-to-five. You only have an opportunity for a short period of your life to play this game.

For all its difficulties, the view of football from under the helmet is one of a sport with enormous lasting appeal for those who take it seriously. To be sure, there are obvious improvements to be made at the professional level in relations between the players themselves and between them and management, reporters, and fans. We shall consider some of these in the final chapter. Yet, both amateurs and professionals feel a great sense of loss when it finally becomes clear that their days on the field have come to an end. Perhaps a time will come when player-management relations, as one set of problems, will have become a minor concern. Perhaps such a time will never come. The game appears destined to survive whatever happens.

NOTES

1. Adorno, T.W. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. by E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976) 104.
2. Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975).
3. Snyder, E.E. and E.A. Spreitzer, *Social Aspects of Sport*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976) 184-86.
4. Good blocking, fakes, handoffs, and pass coverage are, of course, visible on film for those who wish to study more closely these kinds of excellence.
5. Altheide, D.L. and R.P. Snow, *Media Logic* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979) 233-34; Lüschen, G.R.F. and G.H. Sage, *Handbook of Social Science of Sport* (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 1979) 162.

6. Coaches, too, may be blamed (and fired) by their superiors.
7. *Calgary Herald*. 25.5.84, p. D1.
8. Goldstein, J.H. "Outcomes in professional team sports: Chance, skill, and situational factors." In *Sports, Games, and Play*, ed. J.H. Goldstein, pp. 401-08 (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979).
9. Perhaps this is why Coach Brancato says there is "a lot of guesswork in scouting" (see chapter 5).
10. *Calgary Herald*. 11.10.84, p. E1.
11. Beamish, R. "Sport and the Logic of Capitalism." In *Sport, Culture, and the Modern State*, eds. H. Cantelon and R. Gruneau, pp. 141-197 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 176-81.
12. For a brief discussion of the professional sports team's orientation to short-term profit, see Johnson, A., "The uneasy partnership of cities and professional sport." In *Sport and the Sociological Imagination*, eds. N. Theberge and P. Donnelly, pp. 210-27 (Forth Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1984) 223.

CHAPTER 9

Reflections

No one who either played or observed the two Harvard/McGill rugby matches of 1874 would have imagined that this sport was destined to evolve over the next century into the game described and analyzed in this book as Canada's second sport, Canadian football. The changes in the rules of the game, in its players, in the vocation and avocation of football, in its social organization, and in its place in society are nothing less than astounding when viewed over this period of time. The question now is, will there ever again be so much change? What will our second sport look like in another hundred years?

Let us reflect a little. League reorganization, expansion, and contraction are always possibilities, although this is most likely to occur in junior, and especially senior, football and least likely to occur in professional football. Still, declining gate receipts are a sizeable problem at present for the professional teams, a problem which, if left unsolved, could lead to such change. The revenues from the sale of rights to advertise during telecasts, which inevitably vary with each three-year contract, help but by no means completely bridge the gap between these receipts and the operating expenses. Reorganization, expansion, and contraction could also be affected, as they were in the past, by improved transportation and fluctuating costs of travel and lodging for both fans and teams. Will the next century of football find domed stadiums in all or most CFL cities and, if so, what effect will they have on ticket sales?

In the meantime, the quality of television in general is constantly improving. Will a substantial proportion of spectators come to prefer (perhaps because there are too few domed stadiums) to watch the local game at home or in a lounge because technology has now made this possible, despite a CFL blackout policy for the area? Will we reach a point where football teams, like many other entertainment forms, will

perform from time to time in studio-like surroundings with no live audience present (only canned applause and cheers at the appropriate moments)? Apart from the issue of ticket sales, which presumably would be substituted for by television and advertising revenue, is the question of whether a live audience is any more essential to the work of the sports entertainer than it is to the work of the comedian, musician, thespian, or magician. Probably not. Live audiences are nice, but all these artists have learned to perform before the camera with no more audience present than the television producers and an assortment of technicians.

The chances are, too, that the future will bring a further narrowing of the difference in excellence between amateurs and professionals in Canadian football. This is most likely to happen at the university level, among those players who have spent considerable time on junior teams and who have then accumulated an additional four or five years of university experience. In this way, Canadian players will begin to offset, if they have not already done so in fact, the advantages enjoyed by American imported players who, historically anyway, start organized football at a younger age. In this connection, midget, bantam, and high school football will likely spread and improve in Canada within the confines of the limited public funding of sport. Thus, it is not impossible that the typical Canadian player entering the CFL in the future will be better than the typical import, and somewhat older because of the extra years spent as an adult amateur.

But there are also aspects of Canadian football that will remain largely the same. Such a prediction can be made, in part, because these aspects have changed little in the past. The practice sequence of warmups, agility exercises, skills drills, play-related drills, and final conditioning is one example. Another is the sequence of travel to, preparation for, playing of, and returning from games. Likewise, the season will probably continue to unfold from year to year in much the same manner, although there will undoubtedly be some tinkering with the playoff arrangements.

The player career will also likely remain much as it is today, with its distinct stages of beginning, development, establishment, maintenance, and decline. The contingencies discussed in this book will continue to operate far into the future: parental support, sport experience in the family, availability of organized teams, quality of coaching, rules and regulations, physical limitations, meeting professionals, getting signed

with a professional team, and injuries. The same can be said for the contingencies encountered in the maintenance and decline stages: injury (again), attitude, team changes (in coaching staff, roster, offense and defense, and budget), aging, lower-level playing opportunities, attractive second careers, and college education.

The players' interpretations of these contingencies and the turning points that go with them to constitute the subjective career are also likely to remain unchanged for some time. Making the team, getting cut, negotiating contracts, and participating in crucial games are among the turning points that future generations of players will certainly experience. Though rather unlikely in our record-oriented society, it is conceivable that the emphasis might shift away from individual stardom to team play and so relegate to the history books the present-day turning points of receiving awards and generating statistics.[1]

Were this to happen, several corresponding changes in the external community would likely follow. Reporters would probably spend much less time shaping and reshaping the images of individual players. There would be no stars as we know them today to represent their teams at banquets and commercial openings. Instead, any member of the team with good public-speaking skills would do for these purposes. The wives and girlfriends of players would have only to answer for the team's performance rather than for that of their particular player. Still, in this scenario, the image of the professional sports expert would seem to be assured in the eyes of the community, in general, and in the eyes of the amateurs, in particular. Such an image, incidentally, is already present in the arts where musicians, dancers, and singers are respected experts, not because they are stars, but because they are good enough to be members of prestigious orchestras, troupes, and choruses.

How might the disappearance, or at least the attentuation, of contemporary stardom come about in Canadian football? It seems unlikely that impetus for such change will originate with either the press or the public. We live in an age of stars. They abound and twinkle brightly in the firmaments of art, sport, entertainment, and even science. Reportages about these people are good journalistic business, in no small part because the public is interested in it.

But as I have argued in this book, stardom, at least in its current form, is harming football. I am convinced that the fans and the press would be treated to better-quality football if the stars in the game were, so to speak,

substantially dimmed. Assuming the fans, reporters, players, and management would all welcome higher-quality football, let us reflect now on the ways stardom might be contained and quality boosted.[2]

REESTABLISHING UNIFIED PLAY

Exploratory research in science, of which this book is an example, lends itself poorly to definitive statements about the implications of its findings. What has been said here about the Calgary Colts, the University of Calgary Dinosaurs, and the sample of thirty professionals can be taken as valid for the teams and players studied, keeping in mind the usual scientific warning about the possibility of researcher bias in the collection and interpretation of data. However, exploratory research, because it ordinarily concentrates on one or a few cases, makes risky generalization beyond them to similar cases (e.g., other football teams and players). Hence the recommendations offered here must be considered tentative. They are based on what I observed in Canadian amateur football, but are aimed at Canadian professional football — all of it, and not just the thirty interviewees.

The amateurs and their coaches in this study have a clear conception of unified play, even if they sometimes fail to implement it. Among the professionals whose teams are struggling with a losing or middling season, this conception appears to be seriously absent. And, since few CFL teams these days seem to be able to sustain their winning ways beyond one season, this eventually applies to all teams. Indeed, when unified play is the rule in a team's efforts on the field, it seems to happen more by way of accident than by way of plan. That is to say, my observations suggest that there is a tendency in Canadian professional football to look at individuals and their personal excellence, success, and record to solve team problems, especially when the team is suffering many losses. What is needed, it is felt, are one or a few athletic knights in shining armor who can "turn around" the team's misfortunes. At the coaching and management levels of football, this is expressed along the following line of reasoning: (1) poor team performance is the result of the weak play of particular individuals; (2) these weaknesses can be overcome by finding more talented and skilled players to replace them; (3) the replacements are to be foreign imports (from other Canadian teams or from the United States), since the positions in question are the "skilled" positions they usually fill; finally, (4) some coaches and managers would

add that the small roster (35 men), which limits the number of imports to 16, hamstrings their efforts to find the best players in sufficient numbers to build a winning team.[3]

But if the conclusions of this study are valid, trying to build a winning team in football by resorting to individual saviors in the way just described is to court failure. Carried to its extreme, the clubhouse soon begins to resemble a bus depot. Players are cut or traded in wholesale numbers and replaced by others brought in for brief periods of time or longer, who may themselves be sent packing if they are judged to be insufficiently talented. One pathetic aspect of this process is that the plan to avoid further failure becomes a self-fulfilling plan of failure. How can a winning combination of unified plays, based as they are on coordination, cooperation, and trust, be built on the shifting sands of an intinerant gang of players? In fact, unified play is probably most difficult to achieve among the positions involving running, passing, and receiving, the positions most subject to trial-and-error hiring and firing when a team is desperately seeking solutions to its win-loss problems.

In other words, the players on the modern adult tackle football team are not nearly as interchangeable as parts on the modern automobile. The amateurs in this study have shown us that. Among veteran players, one back or lineman may not be as good as another. But this may be true not so much because of a difference in raw talent or accumulated experience, but because of a difference in familiarity with the team's plays and the players who implement them.

The fans, who are as oriented to individual players as the players and coaches are, who are as interested in stats, stars, and records, nevertheless dislike a losing team. It is conceivable that, when forced to choose between watching stars and watching a winning team (because the coach decided to work with the men he has), they would choose the second alternative rather than the first. And, in fact, over the long run, teams need not even face this choice. Once unified play is established for a team and firmly entrenched as the team's first goal, stars can be acquired and publicized as added attractions for the fans. They must, however, be team players; they, too, must give first priority to unified play.

Here is where the commercialism and the sport of professional football are joined. Fans must be able to identify sufficiently with their community's team to want to pay the price of the ticket to see them play. And the team is highly dependent on ticket sales. Fans appear to be quite

capable of identifying with local and Canadian players and with imported players who have played on the team for a season or two. These people are known and frequently respected. Fan allegiance may well be tested by a team in the throes of two or more losing seasons. But the problem is only exacerbated when attempts to get on the winning track include bringing in large numbers of new players about whom the fans know little. At this point it appears that many fans begin looking for other outlets for their leisure time and money.[4] Certainly, there are many to choose from.

In all this, player interests are being overlooked as well. Players are being denied the level of unified play that they have come to expect from their university days. This, the present study shows, is the highest reward available to them in the game. Perhaps herein lies the answer to the nagging question of player motivation: establish unified play as the norm for each game and players will play their hearts out to experience such play in every contest. In addition, the pressure is intense for the men who fill the skilled positions, whether as incumbents or as potential saviors. They are often held responsible for the team's success and its failure, even when failure can be traced to a management-induced lack of unified play caused by too many new faces in the lineup.

It should be understood that I am not recommending that the individualist approach be abandoned. Rather, I am suggesting that the usual steps taken to build a winning team be reversed once training camp has ended: instead of continuing to hunt for talented individuals and then trying to integrate them into the team, worry less about the talent factor (especially among first- and second-year professionals) and more about teamwork. After sufficient practice involving the same players, unified offensive and defensive play will develop. Certain weakness will no doubt become apparent, too, standing out in relief against the otherwise smooth performance of the team. If these result from a lack of talent or a clash of personalities, then some judicious trading or cutting is in order.

Winning teams are not likely to be inclined to try such seemingly revolutionary advice. Let them wait then, for there is always the next season, a season that could well be a middling or a losing season. In such a season, a switch in emphasis at mid-point in the schedule toward the development of unified play and away from the search for individual saviors might just produce the desired results. The players will love the new approach, which perhaps in itself justifies the change. Afterall, it is first and foremost their game.

NOTES

1. Guttman, A. *From Ritual to Record* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).
2. This assumption is reasonable given the way Canadian fans treat teams who have several losing seasons, and given the importance of the winning team as a positive means of community and, indirectly, personal identification.
3. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. "Inside track" (radio program aired 13 October, 1986).
4. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Inside track."

APPENDIX

On the basis of the background presented in the Preface, the following interview guide was constructed. The one used for the professionals is reprinted here, as it evolved to the thirtieth and final interview. The guide for amateurs is much the same, differing only in the areas that obviously apply to those who make football their livelihood. The interviews tended to be long, many lasting between two and three hours.

Interview Guide (professionals)

I Career

A. How old were you when you joined your first football team?
   1. Where was the team located?
   2. What teams did you play on up through high school?

B. Did any of your adult relatives, brothers, cousins, or adult family friends play on a football team?
   1. Did any of these people encourage your interest in football?
   2. Did anybody try to discourage your interest in football?

C. Describe your career in football after high school (get age of first try out for a pro team, training camps for various teams, teams played on, lengths of tenure with each team, reasons for switching teams, etc.)
   1. Describe rookie year — what special treatment (at camp, during season.)

D. Would you say that you have had any thrills in football (experiences defined by you *at the time* as exceptionally rewarding)?

E. Have you had any disappointments in football (something more than the routine frustrations)?

F. Have you been involved in football in any other capacity outside playing (e.g., coaching, training, managing, writing, public talks, youth groups, community service)?

G. At this point in time, do you wish you had entered a different occupation than professional football?

1. Would you recommend it to your kids?

II Professional involvement in football

A. Positions

1. What position(s) do you presently play?
2. What other position(s) have you played in the past (high school, junior, college)?
3. What is your favorite position?

B. Preparation

1. During the 1983 season, how much time did you spend on daily conditioning (outside daily team practices)?
   a) What did you do?
2. During the past two weeks, how much time have you spent with the trainer and in the training room?

C. The Press

1. How many times during the 1983 season have you been interviewed by the press?
   a) What are your feelings about contacts with the press and the resultant publicity?

D. Have you ever used an agent?

III Involvement with amateurs

A. Contacts with amateurs

1. What contacts have you had with amateurs since your professional career began?
   a) Do you enjoy these contacts?

IV Spouse (girlfriend) relations

A. Is your wife or girlfriend living in Calgary during the 1983 season?

1. Has she stayed in the same city where you are playing in past seasons?
2. Does you wife (and family) or girlfriend accept, tolerate, or reject your involvement in football?

a) (if reject) What is it about football as an occupation that they dislike?

V Orientations

A. What are the rewards of playing professional football?

B. Have you any dislikes or pet peeves in football, as opposed to minor annoyances?

C. Tensions

1. What are the tensions in professional football?
2. Pregame jitters: How do you control them?
3. Training camps: Are these tense?

D. Have you ever thought about any of these dislikes and tensions during games or practices?

1. Do other players have such thoughts?
2. Are you aware of the camera — the eye in the sky?

VI Off-season and the future

A. What do you do in the off-season?

1. What are your major hobbies and avocational activities?
2. How many of your close friends are football players?

a) How many are amateur, how many pro?

B. What are your plans for football from here?

C. What do you plan to do for a living when you retire from professional football?

   1. Have you set a definite date for retirement?

D. What are your plans from here (stay with present team, try to get signed with another CFL, USFL, or NFL team, etc.)?

E. (to retirees) Why did you quit football?

   1. Has the adjustment to retirement been easy/ difficult?

VII Education

University/College degress (where, major)

VIII Permanent address

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