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Survival of the Fittest:
Canada Recreates British Football in its Own Image

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In 1950, "we couldn't use the term 'Rugby' ...because Canadian-brand football still used the word to describe itself."[1]

- Freddie Miller, founding member of the Toronto Wanderers Rugby Union Football Club

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In 1946 Freddie Miller returned to Canada from the United Kingdom after being away eight years. He immediately lamented the absence of the game of rugby that he had been introduced to in England. By 1949, Miller and similar "lost souls" formed a club, the Wanderers, that claims today to be the oldest such surviving organization in Ontario.

There may be other claimants to the title such as the Balmy Beach Club also in Toronto, but the very fact of such an assertion and the lack of much organized history suggests the game had figurately wandered in a virtual wilderness for the first half of the century.

The Canadian brand of rugby on the other hand was never more popular at the time of Miller's return to Canada and indeed the 1940s and 50s could be said to the epoch of the Canadian game. In reference to the annual Canadian championship, the Grey Cup, Ted Reeve one of the country's leading journalists and himself a former player, wrote:

"Around one game of rugby we have wrapped a week of carnival, mounting excitement, reunions, good will, heavy betting, fancy costumes. It is a match and it is a masquerade, a mixture of English Cup Tie, Mardi Gras, the Calgary Stampede, and Saint Patrick's Day in the morning."[2]

What Reeve without trace of irony, called rugby, so did many others, and there is no doubt that Canadian football in those days was closer than American football to the root game of English rugby. Make no mistake however Canadian football by the 1940s was not rugby as that game is traditionally known. It had evolved into a distinct Canadian interpretation borrowing freely from American example. In spirit however, and this is the significant point, the Canadian game had attempted to retain the essence of rugby's principles - namely a game in which the kick, the run, and the more continuous flow of action dominated.

It had, and continues to have, fewer downs than the American game in which to retain possession of the ball thus facilitating both frequent exchange of the ball between two teams and an emphasis on field location rather than ball control. The running game is enhanced by a wider and longer field, while the end zone is more than twice the size of the American. There is a yard between the two lines of scrimmage, and all backs are allowed to be in motion. It is a game that rewards the kicking game by giving points for missed field goals. Unlike the American, there is no concept of the fair catch to stop play. The Canadian game encourages action and flow in the manner of rugby.

In becoming the dominant football game in Canada, it had virtually eliminated traditional English rugby, as well as soccer, from the country's mainstream sports by the end of the 19th century.

In rugby's case the traditional game was most seriously damaged. It survived only in isolated instances in places like Vancouver Island on the west coast and Cape Breton in the east. To play rugby for much of the 20th century was to play Canadian football - the terms being synonymous in most people's minds.

Soccer, because it was clearly different from either traditional rugby or Canadian football, suffered no such appropriation. Its fate however was somewhat more cruel. At least rugby was part of a dynamic process of change and experiment.

Soccer was consigned to the margins of Canadian sport as the recreation of new immigrants.[3] The game's spectators, at least judging by media coverage, always seemed to be rioting if the match didn't go their way. Mainstream Canadian society sniffed at such barbaric behaviour - never mind that the Canadian "national" game of ice hockey had more than enough violence of its own and fan uprisings were not uncommon.

Throughout Canada, ex-patriate Croatians, Italians, Scots, Jamaicans and other new arrivals invested their loyalty in the remembered customs and game of their previous homeland. Rather than finding a way to unify their support of soccer into a new national enthusiasm which might have challenged Canada's mainstream games they were content with separation and in some cases playing a style of soccer no longer in vogue even in their former country. To this day when the visiting country plays Canada in Toronto they are likely to receive the largest cheers.

Given a number of factors including the heritage of English games, British rule until the Confederation of 1867, the continuing presence of the garrison at least until 1872,[4] the prevalence of British custom and the origins of the majority of new settlers until well into the 20th century, why would Canadians not simply have retained, enhanced and played at least one or the other of the two newly evolved games of rugby football and soccer football?

Perhaps more to the point why not simply have adopted the early American interpretation of rugby into what we know as the "gridiron" game. Canadians for instance had dropped their own form of baseball by the 1860s, converting completely to the New York based game. They had even placed that game's commercial development

under American control.

Nor should there have been a need to develop a peculiar Canadian variation of rugby. Canada already had an emerging national game in lacrosse and it would soon be superseded by ice hockey which was of course a Canadian modernization on ice of old European games such as shinty.

Football had come to Canada with the British garrison at a time when it still had more in common with the somewhat chaotic English countryside game then slowly evolving in English public schools,[5] and before it had become formalized into its two dominant codes of soccer and rugby.

It was so popular by 1845 that it was officially prohibited under the Lord's Day Act.[6] Fifteen years later observers were referring wistfully to the "old Canadian game"[7] describing it as a brutal tug-of-war in which teams with unlimited numbers of players kicked or batted the ball with their hands while the ball carrier suffered the blows of hands and feet missing their mark (or perhaps not so). The object like soccer was to put the ball between a designated goal but the lack of positional play often saw matches last three or four hours without a result.[8]

Informal football of this kind even spread to the remote Northwest where the missionary John McDougall and his native dog drivers challenged the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company to a match in 1862.[9] That same year in Ottawa, the Rough Riders, a team of lumberjacks who rode logs down the Ottawa River, played a team called the Senators. A decade later six lady footballers advertised for challengers. Researchers of this period must often piece together what few clues remain in their attempt to define just what type of football is being discussed.[10]

The first formal football game was played in Montreal in the mid 1860s, between a garrison side and a team from McGill University. The game was rugby-like in form though such definitions lack clear detail until the two football games were codified, first by the Football Association in 1863, and then the Rugby Football Union in 1871.

We do know that the garrison players were more inclined to the rugby game and this would leave its mark for years hence. However the garrison left Montreal a year after the founding of the Rugby Union in England leaving that game in a precarious state in Canada. Rugby was simply too young a game to impose a rigid standard on Canadian play. There was room to experiment with the rules and to keep alive the old-fashioned traditions.

A key moment in North American sports occurred in 1874 with the visit of McGill's football squad to Harvard to play a two-game series. Harvard played a hybrid game, part-soccer, part rugby (though the American game generally owed more to a soccer style), while McGill ran on to the field prepared to play the more recognizable rugby style of football.[11] What to do? The squads opted to play each other's rules in alternate games and in a striking example of reverse cultural imperialism the Americans were won over to the Canadian style of football which of course was essentially rugby.

The Americans wrote off to England for the rules which on receipt completely bamboozled them. The apparently arbitrary throw-in, the unintentional heel-out of the ball from the scrum, and the notion of onside passing were either not understood or thought too limiting. Within thirty years Americans had effectively created a new game in which possession was based on the need to make certain yardage with first three[12] and later four downs, a line of scrimmage was set from which the ball was snapped back to a player we now call the quarterback, and finally the forward pass was introduced.

In Canada on the other hand changes were slower in coming both because of a prevailing belief that rugby should be played according to the accepted rules of the Rugby Union and because of a grudging respect for an untampered-with English tradition.

The Ontario Rugby Football Union (ORFU) representing town-based teams was founded in Toronto at Gus Thomas's English Chop House over the winter of 1882-83. Around the same, the traditional scrum was replaced by something resembling the American "snapback system", marking the first significant move away from the traditional game.

Such changes were reluctantly entered into and perhaps rationalized on the basis that as in all games then under development minor modifications were required not only due to emerging circumstances in the game's play but to meet the commercial needs of team sponsors. As for the latter point, not much has changed since then.

As much as anything, gradual evolution, far from suggesting disenchantment with rugby, in fact demonstrated the game's vibrant hold on Canadians. In the tension between an English heritage and American influence Canadians gradually carved out a gradual definition of a new game which was uniquely their own.

They did so at a time when George Beers' attempt to position the aboriginal game of lacrosse as Canada's national game against the summer insurgents, English cricket and American baseball, was beginning to lose momentum. Nor was ice hockey yet well enough established to emerge as the national game.

In fact as hockey became the country's leading winter game in the last two decades of the 19th century its search for formal organization and rules led it to rugby. Original uniforms were often rugby jerseys and hockey adopted some of that game's most important rules including a prohibition on passes to any player not in the onside position either alongside or behind the puck carrier. Until well into the 1920s this restriction on the forward pass

meant that ice hockey was characterized by brilliant solo rushes from one end of the rink to another by its star practitioners like Cyclone Taylor and Howie Morenz.

While Americans experimented freely with their innovations, Canadians kept the large melon shaped ball which was best suited to being carried or lateralled as opposed to being passed. Three man scrimmagers locked arms to start play but the rigid formations emerging in the United States were unknown in Canada.

It was a tour by an Irish rugby team in 1899 that caused Canadians to break from the past. Watching the brilliant Irish players, the Canadians realized they would never catch up and the stark choice was between the American brand of football or a decidedly second class British imitation. The ORFU reacting to the loss of spectators to the university game in Canada and lamenting the futility of trying to master the intricacies of traditional rugby opted for the recommendations of a former captain at the University of Toronto, Thrift Burnside. The snapback was refined, three downs in which to gain five yards were introduced, and field lineups reduced from 15 to 12 players.[13]

Further innovations were introduced, most notably by an American, Frank "Shag" Shaughnessy, a former Notre Dame football player and coach of Clemson's football team. He came to Canada in 1911 during the fight over Free Trade with the Americans which saw its Canadian proponents, the Liberal Party, thrown out of office. It was hardly a propitious time for an outsider from the United States with ideas for changing a local institution. Shaughnessy, however, understood their game better than most Canadians. As coach of the McGill University team, he developed the kicking game as part of the attack using the quick kick to improve field position. He also set all of his backfielders in motion before the ball was put in play. This tactic was forbidden in the American game.

The glory days of Canadian football followed the first world war. There was a thirty year golden age for the Canadian interpretation of football in which it flourished as a curious hybrid combining English rugby, American innovations, and a kind of a weather-induced, pre-1870, Canadian mucking. Scores remained low but fan enthusiasm and the game's popularity spread.

Canadian football had a place to itself on the fall sporting calendar. University graduates began introducing the game to their high school students. By the 1940s football was an integral part of Canadian culture and cheering on one's school had become an indelible memory of growing up.[14]

The uniqueness and peculiar Canadian image of the game, developed in this era, created a kind of national identity for the sport which was retained long after the game's professional organizers had abandoned both the spirit of its play and the Canadian identity of players and coaches. Canadian football officials would later draw on that repository of memory to convince the federal government to forbid an American-based league from playing in Canada in the 1970s[15].

The game, of the above noted golden age, was characterized by what Ted Reeve called "ground eating gallops"[16] along with the liberal use of laterals and options such as the quick kick. The Canadian game with a ball larger than the American retained other rugby features like the drop kick. By 1931 the premier Canadian professional league had adopted the most significant American innovation, the forward pass, but for at least the next twenty years the game had a different feel and strategy than that of the American.

All this was to gradually change.

Continually responding to the perception that the American game was more exciting than the Canadian the subtle balance within the Canadian game was abandoned.[17]

First was the ball itself. "Since the advent of the forward pass," Johnny Edwards wrote in 1947, "... drop-kicking seems to have become almost a lost art where our players are concerned...the ball itself was changed to make forward passing easier and kicking - especially drop-kicking - became more difficult. ...a new ball now is really sharp on the ends, and of course you don't get the same true bounce for a drop-kick that the old rounder ball gave."[18]

The Toronto Argonauts football team, formed by a rowing club in the previous century as part of an off-season fitness regimen, were the last real exponents of end-running particularly on plays in which the ball was put in bounds near the hash marks allowing wide-open lateral passing of the ball.[19] They also featured an all Canadian lineup and a Canadian coach Ted Morris. They dominated the Grey Cup competition in the late 1940s.

This Argonauts team also marked the end of an era as Canadian teams stepped up their recruiting of American college players. These designated imports had first made their impact in the 1930s most notably in Winnipeg where Fritz Hanson from North Dakota led the Canadian city to the west's first Grey Cup victory.

Next came American coaches who based their strategy on conditions appropriate to the American game.

The reaction of traditionalists to these changes was often small-minded rather than critical of their impact on the style of play. When the Montreal Alouettes indicated their intention to sign a black American in 1946, Toronto and Ottawa played the race card and threatened a boycott. The Alouettes called their bluff and the Canadian Football League was finally integrated.

As late as 1950 a booklet entitled simply "Rugby"[20], and intended to be a guide to Canadian football, suggested by way of strategy that a team possessing the ball inside its own ten yard line should

kick on first down despite having two guaranteed possessions to move the ball before a punt was strategically necessary. This conformed to the rugby practice of getting the ball as far out of one's end of the field as quickly as possible, but such notions would have made no sense to imported American coaches like Peahead Walker. Arriving in Montreal in the fifties he was baffled by the Canadian game of 12 aside rather than the American with 11. He sent his extra man out to the flank and told him to run aimlessly downfield while he built his strategy around the other 11 players.

Slowly the logic of the Canadian game with its emphasis on a running game (larger field, backs in motion etc.), a kicking game (ball location rather than possession), and continual flow was thwarted both by Canadians who failed to appreciate their own game and Americans who understood only their own.

The forward pass is now the dominant offensive tool in the Canadian game because of the perception that with fewer downs one must always pass. Yet an incomplete throw on first down virtually guarantees a pass on second, thus eliminating any element of surprise. Hash marks are now closer to the centre of the field discouraging the once prominent end-run play.[21] And the ball continues to shrink in size to conform to the American.

The Canadian game has retained its unique rule structure but by abandoning the spirit and playing style of its golden age, it has over the past fifty years lost a significant reason to maintain its difference from the American game. Ironically this abandonment at first saw the league achieve unparalleled commercial success by the 1960s and 70s. As much as anything this was due to the post-war boom in sports and the tremendous surge in football interest south of the border.

By the eighties, rot had set in within Canadian football. Franchises were abandoned at the professional level, many universities and colleges rethought their commitment to the game, and football declined at the high school level, when rising costs could not be matched by cultural arguments for its survival.

The Canadian Football League disastrously expanded to the United States in the 1990s and then retrenched back into Canada. By the end of the century its future though temporarily improved is still tenuous.

Nothing better demonstrated the game's ambivalence about its own uniqueness then a debate in February 2000. The managing director of the Argonauts, J.I. Albrecht recommended eliminating the single point awarded on a missed field goal if the receiving player could not escape the end zone.

"I'd like to see the part where you are rewarded for an error fixed," he said.[22] In so doing he failed to appreciate that such a rule maintains the old rugby emphasis on the run and kick by keeping the ball alive after a missed field goal. This leaves the receiving player with the option of trying to run the ball out of the end zone or simply kicking it back.

Calgary coach Wally Buono said, "This game has been played for over 100 years. What makes our game different from the American game is our kicking game."[23]

Hamilton general manager Ron Lancaster however noted, "This debate has been going on for 100 years. But I keep hearing we need to take some moves in another direction and change some things."[24]

In the end the rule was retained but time is not on the side of the Canadian game. Ironically this is occurring at a time when many observers actually believe the Canadian game is more exciting than the American.[25]

Why are Canadians abandoning their distinctive game? It can be at least partially attributed to a decline in the second half of the century of the strong nationalist urge evident at the beginning of the 20th century. By the 1980s support for Free Trade with the Americans got the Conservative Party re-elected.

The urge to create something unique had arisen in the friction between a British heritage and American influence. With the dominance of the United States after the second world war that struggle has become one of acquiescence, particularly since French Canadians, who once carried the national torch with the most fervour, have largely abandoned the pan-Canadian drama for that in the province of Quebec.

In the process however the old games of rugby and soccer are slowly finding a renewed place in Canada's mainstream sports culture. The country's national rugby team is usually able to make the final 16 of that sport's World Cup, while the soccer team's recent Gold Cup triumph sparked unusual excitement among both the general public and even soccer fans, usually divided among themselves in their old-country soccer allegiance.

The traditional game of rugby could only achieve any degree of national following once it had become obvious that Canadian football no longer was truly rugby in form or spirit. If anything the traditional game's post-war renaissance allowed it to enter the sporting mainstream before soccer. And despite continuing and significant ties with Britain (ie. the number of Canadian rugby and soccer players trained or playing in the United Kingdom), both games are now largely creatures of Canadian leadership and a wider international influence. In the long run this will give each a more extensive foundation both for developing new skills and finding places for national team members to play.

At the cultural level, as well, both have attained a place in the daily lives of millions of Canadians. Few children will ever play gridiron football but at least some of them have played rugby and almost all boys and girls have played soccer in school or in a

neighbourhood house league.

If the unique Canadian experiment to create a national football game like American football and Aussie Rules football does reach a rather sad conclusion, we might expect that the two orphan games of soccer and rugby will finally attain the unchallenged mainstream acceptance and the sporting prominence hinted at and hoped for by the first British pioneers of these games in Canada almost 150 years ago.

William Humber is the author of nine books including Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball in Canada (Oxford University Press, 1995), Freewheeling: The Story of Bicycling in Canada (Boston Mills Press, 1986). His next book A Sporting Chance: The History of the Black Athlete in Canada is scheduled for release this year by Umbrella Press. His writing on sports history appears in the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (1997), Historical Atlas of Canada Vol. III (1990), and the Canadian Encyclopedia (1988, 2000). He teaches a Canadian Sports History subject at Seneca College, and appears regularly on Canadian media to discuss sports history. Recently he was part of the series 100 Years of Canadian Sport on Canada's national sports television station TSN. He presented a paper Babe Ruth Comes to Canada at the Babe Ruth Conference at New York's Hofstra University in 1995.

As a small note of interest in the history of Liverpool, Humber attended the Toronto concert in September 1969 at which John Lennon first performed with the Plastic Ono Band - an event the surviving members of the Beatles claim precipitated the breakup of the Fab Four. What this has to do with sports history is unclear.

Endnotes

1. p. 7, Freddie Miller, Recollections:1949 - The Start of Post War Rugby, from Toronto Wanderers R.U.F.C. 50th Anniversary 1949-1999 (self-published by the Wanderers R.U.F.C., 1999)

2. p.104, Ted Reeve, Grandstand Quarterback: Canadian Football and How to Watch It, (Toronto,1955: Longmans, Green and Company)

3. There is an old soccer league in the rural Township of Darlington about 50 miles northeast of Toronto. Its very survival speaks to the kind of marginalization the game experienced. The original Bible Christians from Cornwall had brought their football games to this recently settled wilderness perhaps as early as 1863 if local accounts are to be believed. By the 1880s any debate on the merits of which football interpretation would survive, at least in this region, had been settled in soccer's favour.

The game could not compete with the university and bigger town support of rugby and survived in Darlington as elsewhere on first the memory of a common heritage and, for much of the 20th century, as an isolated outpost sufficiently cutoff from other sporting contacts to allow for its continuance. It retained a style of play more characteristic of the English game as it had been played in the late 19th century.

The farmers who played in the Darlington League were not reluctant to ram the goalkeeper, physically intimidate each other and rely on long kicks of the ball upfield where a player on the fly could collect it and charge towards the goal. As an English immigrant of the 1920s, Arnold Lobb, recalled, "I noticed one thing immediately. It wasn't as good as the soccer I was used to. They didn't know what a pass was. They kicked and hoped."

Bruce Taylor, a local farmer, said, "We used the shoulder and elbows and got away with it. When I played they allowed physical blocking. The things I did would get whistled today."

Only in the latter half of the 20th century did the League gradually merge with the more formal Ontario Soccer Association causing some to bemoan what they called the infusion of "Italian" rules in which fouls were too readily called.

The physical quality of play in the League may suggest another line of enquiry as to the greater popularity of rugby over soccer in Canada. Among a people learning to play either game, the finesse and self-control required by soccer may have been asking too much. Particularly since they had an obvious alternative in rugby.

The very fact that the farmers of Darlington played such a rough and even brutal game of soccer suggests their willingness to invest that game with some of the more raucous features of rugby and a continuing regard for the old Canadian game of football with its

physical emphasis. In that sense the Darlington game may represent a lost twig off the evolving Canadian football tree, which of course found ultimate fulfilment in its appropriation of the spirit and style of English rugby.

Perhaps the play, as well, indicates a sporting pre-disposition of Canadians for distinctly physical even violent games. Lacrosse and ice hockey share similar features and this in a country renowned for its peacekeeping and generally placid historical record. Could it have something to do with living in a harsh environment or do countries pursue sports at odds with their own national identity?

4. "In 1872 the withdrawal of the Imperial troops left a gap in the social life of the people. Much of the sport and entertainment of the townsmen had centred around the local barracks and the soldiers had initiated many new games and entertainments." p. 60, Howell and Howell, Sports and Games in Canadian Life, (Toronto, 1969: Macmillan)

5. p. 133-151, Eric Dunning, The Development of Modern Football, from ed. Eric Dunning, Sport: Readings from a Sociological Perspective (Toronto, 1971: University of Toronto Press)

6. "The inclusion of football in the activities prohibited under the Lord's Day Act of 1845 strongly suggests its commonality at the time." p. 51, Peter Lindsay, The Pioneer Years Prior to Confederation, from, ed. Howell and Howell, History of Sport in Canada (Champaign, Illinois, 1981: Stipes Publishing), p. 51-109.

7. "In the old game the player could keep cuffing the ball along with his hand so long as he did not pick it up or throw it..." from The Globe, Toronto, 8 November 1878

8. p. 131, Cox, Noonkester, Howell, and Howell, Sport in Canada 1868-100, from Howell and Howell, History of Sport in Canada, p. 110-169.

9. p. 84, John McDougall, Forest, Lake and Prairie (Toronto, 1895: Methodist Mission Rooms). McDougall describes "foot-ball" as "the national game of the North-West,...".

10. A good example is the youthful account of James Hughes. He stated, "I had never seen a football before coming to Toronto. While waiting one afternoon to learn whether we were to be admitted [to the Normal School in Toronto - a kind of preparatory institution for would-be teachers] or not, we played football. The game at that time (1865) had no restrictive rules. I was easily the strongest and most reckless young man on the field, and my path was soon strewn with fallen men. I liked the game. Some of my opponents did not like it so well. I took one game all alone because my opponents got out of the way when I was coming." from Lorne Pierce, Fifty Years of Public Service: A Life of James L. Hughes, (Toronto: Oxford University Press), p. 50.

11. p. 19, Gordon Currie, 100 Years of Canadian Football, (Winnipeg, 1968: Greywood Publishing)

12. In its early stages of rules experimentation it is clear that Americans retained the spirit of rugby. Many of the earliest rules actually form the substance of the modern Canadian game including the 110-yard field and three downs.

In Neft, Cohen and Korch's history of American professional football, they indicate that in 1892, "...That touchdown counted only four points. Football emphasized kicking. A field goal counted five points. A goal after touchdown was worth two but had to be kicked from the five-yard line, straight out from where the touchdown was scored;...Fortunately, the nearly-round football lent itself to dropkicking. Other movement on the 110-yard field was slow going. Forward passes were illegal and a team had only three downs to gain five yards for a first down...An appalling number of football deaths and serious injuries, regularly reported in the nation's newspapers, brought moves to outlaw the sport in 1906. Rulemakers defused the criticism by legalizing the forward pass, providing a neutral zone along the scrimmage line, requiring 10 yards in three downs for a first down."

By 1912 they note, "The game had changed. Passing had been legal for six years, though rarely used except in situations of despair. Touchdowns now counted for six points, field goals for three. The field had shrunk slightly to 100 yards, and the offense now had four downs in which to gain 10 yards." from Neft, Cohen and Korch The Football Encyclopedia (New York, 1994: St. Martin's Press), p. 17-18.

Having opted for four downs, Americans had created a game in which ball control for long periods of time was possible. Canadians would continue the rugby tradition of frequent exchange of the ball between rival teams by limiting the number of downs allowed to retain possession of the ball.

13. p. 29, Gordon Currie 100 Years of Canadian Football

14. As early as 1954 Toronto school officials were denying that interest in Canadian football at the high school level was in decline. "The patient may have seen better days," the Globe and Mail reported (29 September 1954), "but there is really no cause for alarm...". According to the league's convenor, "Our figures show that upward of 1,350 students turned out for senior, junior or bantam football teams this season. That's about one male student out of every six enroled in city schools and it indicates the boys haven't lost interest in football."

15. "The football crisis of 1974 developed from plans of the [American-based] World Football League to put a franchise into Toronto. The federal government warned the WFL to stay out of Canada and then introduced a bill in parliament which if enacted, would have made such an entry illegal. The bill as law would also

have required the CFL [Canadian Football League] teams to use gradually more and more Canadians and fewer Americans." p.42, Wise and Fisher, Canada's Sporting Heroes, (Don Mills, 1974: General Publishing)

16. p. 95, Ted Reeve, Grandstand Quarterback: Canadian Football and How to Watch It

17. It was just such excitement evident in the game of baseball with its frequent exchange between offence and defence that allowed that game to overwhelm any Canadian pre-disposition to support the English game of cricket. Cricket was an 18th century game created within a largely pre-industrial society, in which days as opposed to hours could be set aside for play. It survived in England because of the game's strong cultural historic roots. In North America its head start over baseball had to contend with that 19th century game's design advantages (shorter time period to play, greater opportunities for players to get into the game on both offence and defence, less demand for the highly developed bat and ball skills of cricket).

The apparent greater thrills of the American game of football contrasted with a Canadian national pre-disposition to support their own game. The Canadian spirit for compromise has seen the general retention of Canadian rules but within a game that now reflects an American philosophy of play characterized by passing the ball and a strategy better suited to a four-down/smaller-field sport.

18. p. 46, Johnny Edwards, Canadian Football (Toronto, 1947: Copp, Clark). The survival of the drop-kick, despite its absence from actual use during a game, has a remarkable kinship to the biological retention of useless organs. Prior to a National Football League game in 1999, two ex-Canadian Football league players, Doug Flutie of the Buffalo Bills and Mike Vanderjagt of the Indianapolis Colts, reminisced about their days in Canada by practising drop kicks - a skill they had been introduced to during their Canadian football days.

19. p. 72, Johnny Edwards Canadian Football (Toronto, 1947: Copp, Clark)

20. Rugby for Radio Listeners, (London Life Assurance Company, 1951)

21. 26 January 1973, Globe and Mail, "The most far-reaching change was in the position of the hash marks, which will be four yards closer to the centre of the field. The hash marks will now be painted 24 yards from the sidelines, instead of 20." The rules committee elected not to delete the tandem buck from the rule book, an old rugby-type reference in which the ball-carrier is assisted from behind with direct contact. Even though the move was illegal in the Canadian game, its continuing mention suggests at least a lingering sentimental attachment to an older game.

22. National Post, 15 February 2000

23. ibid

24. ibid

25. According to Kim Allen of Communique, the company hired to promote the game in the Canadian market, "CFL viewers accept that it's not the NFL (National Football League). It's faster, more action-packed, incredibly unpredictable. If you go to the washroom during an NFL game, nothing may have changed when you get back. With the CFL, the score may have flipped." p. M11, Toronto Star, 15 April 2000