

the reactor

By Paul Azevedo

Sports 6/25/75



Attendance figures show that more people in the Bay area are interested in the price of steak and beans than they are in baseball or hockey.

Oddly, though, the metropolitan dailies devote 10 or 20 million dollars worth of free advertising to these and other sports each year. If Central Foods and Jolly markets pay for their advertising, it seems reasonable that the Giants, Seals and "A's" do the same. Why should these profit making businesses get a free ride week after week, year after year? Theatres buy space. So do circuses, and large department stores.

Some of the Chron-Ex's best writers, men like Prescott Sullivan and Wells Twombly, devote their time to creating interesting writing out of boring statistics and inarticulate athletes.

If they put their minds to it, they could make grocery news really sing. In their hands, tomato paste and anchovy soup would come alive.

The Tribune's resident sports-pert, Horace Hinshaw, has it easier. The Tribune's sports pages, being devoted to locals, are read by mothers, fathers and neighbors who are much more interested in local athletes as people than as skilled performers.

You don't have to win to be important to a Tribune sports reader. A Little Leaguer's exploits are important because he's your neighbor. (But there is nothing sadder than the 50-year old whose great achievement in life was a four-bagger in Little League.)

Not only do baseball and football get more in free newspaper advertising than they gross at the boxoffice, but strangely, they have been exempted by admiring government officials from ordinary laws against monopoly.

If supermarkets drafted persons who showed potential grocery clerk talent and assigned them to chains in reverse order of store profitability, the screaming and gnashing of teeth would be a sight worth seeing.

Markets with low sales would get their pick of the fastest stockboys, who would have no choice in the store they worked in (unless they went to Canada or the Caribbean).

Newsmen would wait impatiently until it was learned who had drafted this year's top produce sorter. Safeway would be reported in the green sheet as trading two stockboys, a cash register jockey and a future draft choice for the leading banana stacker in the QFI chain.

The unions wouldn't stand for it, you say? But it's just as reasonable as a sports draft system which deprives men of the opportunity to sell a shortlived talent to the highest bidder.