




All Canada Was a Classic, For Some

 by **rbala** on Jun 22, 2011 9:30 AM EDT in Can Ball

 6 COMMENTS  EMAIL  PRINT

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The 11th annual All Canada Classic featured some of the best young basketball talent that Canada has to offer they didn't disappoint. The games were exciting and had many highlights and surprising moments but so few people were there to take it in. Can Ball Ray gives his two cents on what he thinks the reason for this is ...

Last night was the 11th annual All Canada Classic, or Rumble in the T-Dot, and of course Can Ball Ray was there for the festivities. If you were following my Twitter timeline last night, reading it sometime after the fact or not at all, just know that the game was you typical high school all star game.

The only difference was that it was in Canada and for Canadian ballers and it was as good as it gets. Both the ladies and the boys played hard despite what the scores indicated and it was very competitive. You could see that there was obvious talent on the floor and they were playing with heart and to win. Both ladies and boys put on very good shows and the scores don't truly give the games justice. It was exciting even during the times I thought it wasn't when I was living in the moment.

So why then did I leave the game with a somewhat empty feeling?

Here's why: It was because even now with the many players that have succeeded at the highest levels, with so much exposure, supposed fans and participation levels at an all time high, the event did not draw out as many people as it should have.

Now am not placing fault at all with Wayne Dawkins and his people at PHASE 1 who organized the event. It's strictly out of their control. They have done all that they can to spread the word of this great event using all their available avenues and they did provide a great event. My beef will never be with them. My beef is with the Canadian basketball community in general.

Since forever, I always hear/see/read about people who love this game. So where were these people who love the game so much? Where were all the people who are quick to yell out support an event like this but rarely show up?

Before I do that let me digress a little here ...

When I was a kid in high school in Toronto (Scarborough to be exact), I played the game a little for my school team. I wasn't the player I am today (which isn't saying a whole lot since I'm older and broken down a little) but I always thought that it would be cool to have the best players all in one game going head to head. I would hear about a guy from the west end of Toronto named Dean Labayen (1997-98 CIS Rookie of the Year) or a guy from the east named Jamaal Magliore (you should know his name) or some other guy. So me and my friends would travel all over the city to watch these guys in action when we could or hope that they show up at an open gym in Malvern late at night. Before the internet and YouTube we would do these things because we loved the game and wanted to see the best players we could. Putting the faces to the deeds we would hear about from other players was like unearthing treasure. It was almost euphoric. It's those times in my older age now that I can reflect on and talk about with younger kids. Me, my friends and countless others were supporting the game and the players we all looked up to at the most basic levels by doing this. We were connecting on the most intimate way with the player and the game that we loved. We were forming a bond between ballers, if you will, that cemented us to the fabric of the culture.

Fast forward to now ...

I think last night's event is a prime example of what seems to be symptomatic of our current basketball culture. The internet has created a generation where information is at an all time availability that everything anyone could want to know about is at your finigertips. The connections that we make over fibre optic wires, though very convenient for our busy everyday lives, is not the same as being there in person to soak it all in. The atmosphere, the people, the game itself, we all should look to be apart of this event, and others like it, to help foster the community that this sport lives in. This connecting to the game personally is what builds that bond within us as fans and players and as a collective.

Now I'm not saying to stop your lives and get to every event on the calender. That's just not possible for anyone. But I am saying that we should be supporting these events as best we can at every level and the best way is to show up.

There were a lot of empty seats in the Air Canada Centre last night but should there really be that many? For the only national (insert your quip here) high school all star event?

I've heard the complaints and snide comments in the past for anything I've been to that was Canadian basketball related, by so-called Canadian basketball fans no less, so I have to ask if that is the solution to fixing this disconnect?

Of course it isn't.

The only way to fix this is to find a way to connect with the players and people who are helping to cultivating

the game be it administrators, coaches or even your fellow fan. We need to grow this community of ours at the local levels and upwards to help foster these players that we are all hoping will be successful. We can't expect anything to fix itself and need to actively participate by at the very least showing up. That is 90% of the problem solved by doing that.

If the game continues this way, not only will our best talent no longer have any game(s) to play but our talent may not even want to play anymore.

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Comments

Ray!

Tough article about the change in 'zeitgeist'.

First of all, I wanted to say that filling the ACC is no easy task.... it seems that if Justin Beiber played BBall or would put on a concert as well... then you might have had a packed house. Steve Nash doing mentoring sessions... ditto... to fill an arena that size for a high school game – might be easier in Indiana?

The whole internet has changed our life our life passions. Bliss experiences of the past have been deeply affected – and that really is painful for some of us born way before Windows XP came out....

Nonetheless, my experience of high school BBall has been watching highlights that CityTV does with sports reporters like Kat Humphries.

This is a 'city thing'.... and I think that to fill those seats that you've really got to tap that into regular sports fans in the same way by amping the media coverage that allready exists. Some of those highlight reels from this years playoffs needed better commentating and camera placement. First thing to do is to get them hooked on High School BBall in its regular incarnation (or at least the playoffs).... That requires airtime, or highlight reels so that folks can get to know some of the faces, the teams, ...and after that... maybe go for that All-star game that is a gem..

To be fair, some of the best concerts I have seen are when no-body showed up. Their loss, and fantastic memories and expereinces for me.....

In friendship,
Jenge./

'...as a child, I dreamt of being a baseball.'

by **Jenge** on Jun 22, 2011 11:32 AM EDT [reply](#)

I like your last comment because it's been true for me as well. You tend to have the best times in venues or events where the crowds aren't as big.

But the point was not to fill the ACC with 16,000 people. Looking at the stands, there may have been less than 3,000 (I'm not sure because they didn't announce the attendance) which is not

very good in my books. There were more last year for sure and filling the ACC is a pipe dream right now. I just wanted there to be more people than what I saw. And this leads into the point of a so-called spike in basketball fans and players. There should be support in a bigger number than what I saw, that's all.

Now to your point about the media coverage, there is more media coverage for sure on our players but not in the traditional avenues of TV or newspaper. Those fans who sit behind computer screens are who really need to get out and be at these events. They spend so much time surfing the web for footage they miss the real life experience of being there. I was really hitting on the active basketball fans who know about these players but will rarely make a trip to watch them with their own eyes.

And I don't buy the "it's a city thing" argument. The internet has brought the city to the country and vice versa.

Ray Bala

*CANadian BasketBALL Report
on www.raptorhq.com*

by **rbala** on Jun 22, 2011 1:42 PM EDT [up](#) [reply](#)

..how about: It SHOULD be 'a city thing'. This is about a gigantic diverse city that will have Basketballers graduating every year. This city has a lot promise...

As for 'sitting on the couch too much',... no argument here...

'...as a child, I dreamt of being a baseball.'

by **Jenge** on Jun 22, 2011 3:49 PM EDT [up](#) [reply](#)

Maybe you have a point ...

I just think that there are a lot of people outside the cities that can and should be a part of the whole community. I would imagine that it should be an inclusionary endeavour but I'll take what I can get.

Ray Bala

*CANadian BasketBALL Report
on www.raptorhq.com*

by **rbala** on Jun 22, 2011 5:08 PM EDT [up](#) [reply](#)

i know a couple of farmers who like to throw pigs through a hole in a barn...

....that is a (terrible) joke

'...as a child, I dreamt of being a baseball.'

by **Jenge** on Jun 22, 2011 6:28 PM EDT [up](#) [reply](#)

What do you think about this story about the Mogadishu (Somalia) Women's BBall team?

Barely anybody cares about them, yet their existence is more 'real' than many tough guy stories in the USA.

[link](#)

If you build it... they will come.

~

Gunshots, mortar shelling and endless civil war, that's the imagery associated with Somalia and its capital Mogadishu. But a group of girls making up the Mogadishu basketball team are keen to change that perception and carry their national flag high despite a threat from the Islamist group Alshabaab and the challenges of living in a war ravaged country. Yassin Juma with the story of the female basket – ballers from Mogadishu with a message.

~

'...as a child, I dreamt of being a baseball.'

by [Jenge](#) on Jun 22, 2011 12:20 PM EDT [reply](#)