

SUITE 190, SCARBOROUGH, ONT.

# Being a "model citizen" paid off for the Rocket

From THE STARPHOENIX

Raghib Ismail's penalty-free CFL career apparently helped commissioner Larry Smith reach the decision he did when it came time to discipline the Toronto Argonauts wide receiver for his role in a donnybrook on Sunday.

The Argonauts and visiting Calgary ended up in a brawl late in their game in the SkyDome, and Ismail stomped on the head of Stampeder fullback Andy McVey.

According to Smith, Ismail hasn't been assessed so much as one penalty since he came into the CFL last season and the referees think he is "a hell of a model citizen."

In the end, Smith gave Ismail an either/or proposition — either he sit out one game and pay a \$1,000 fine, or he donate \$10,000 to the Ontario branch of Special Olympics.

Ismail chose the latter, and so will play on Saturday when the Argonauts meet the B.C. Lions in Vancouver.

"I looked at the Bruce Holmes and the James Curry scenarios, and they were bad apples. They were

bums," Smith told Marg Ommanney of *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix*. "And they're the only two suspensions the league has had in 21 years. The most severe fine was Curry's, at \$2,500."

Curry, a defensive lineman with the Saskatchewan Roughriders, was fined \$2,500 and suspended for one game after he roughed up Toronto quarterback John Congemi in a game at Taylor Field in 1987.

Holmes, a linebacker with the Ottawa Rough Riders, was fined \$1,000 and suspended for one game for roughing up Toronto quarterback Rickey Foggie in 1990's last regular-season game. Holmes appealed and eventually went to court, where a judge upheld then-commissioner Donald Crump's suspension but rescinded the fine. Holmes still lost \$1,800, the amount he would have received had he played in the following week's playoff game which was also against Toronto.

Smith added that he hopes other players get the message.

"This is peanuts to (Ismail), but it's a huge fine and it's a huge message to everybody else in the league that if they screw around and they're

earning \$50,000, I may fine them \$2,000," Smith said.

Also fined from that melee were: McVey (\$250), Toronto head coach Adam Rita (\$500), and Toronto players David Williams (\$250), Dave Van Belleghem (\$350) and Darrell K. Smith (\$500). Smith was injured and watching from the sidelines in street clothes at the time.

Referring to a weekend in which there were also incidents in two other games, Smith said: "The thing that irritated me most was the fact that there was a complete loss of control by the teams.

"In my mind, the coaches have to bear a certain responsibility. I'm sick and tired of hearing people complain about officials."

Meanwhile, it seems that Calgary owner Larry Ryckman is none too pleased with Smith's decision.

Asked what he would have done had his marquee player, quarterback Doug Flutie, done what Ismail did, Ryckman responded:

"If it was Doug Flutie, I would have personally suspended him. If (Ismail) was my player, I would have suspended him."