Ticket sales system is flawed

To the Editor:

I am a freshman here, and I would like to share an experience I had with the system of ticket sales for rock and pop concerts. February 4, I went to get in line for tickets to The Firm (a hard rock band) at the Boston Garden's box office. It was snowing that night, I dressed reasonably warm and brought a folding chair. The Kendall subway station was closed early, so I ended up waiting for two hours during the windy snowstorm. When I got there I signed a list which placed me in position 19. I felt pretty good about getting such a good place on the list and figured I was guaranteed good seats at this position. The hours began to tick by. I had brought a book with me and I read quite a bit, but I was so cold I was shivering that I couldn't control my shivering.

By 7 am the line started to lengthen several hundred feet down the street. At 9:30 they let the first 50 or so people inside and wait until 11 am when the tickets went on sale. By this time, the "list" was invalid because the trustee of the list had burned it in a trash can. Line cutters did reasonably well, and I got bumped a few places. I was still among the first 50 or so.

When the tickets finally went on sale the line was three blocks down the street. I felt good that I could make it to the front row tickets or the not-so-good seats after I had purchased mine. When I got to the window, a man gave me "the best I have, sir." I was very depressed.

I have an idea which could help bring an end to this ridiculous system and give more people a fair chance. If the computers higher priced tickets expert to be sold out in a reasonable short time (which is common), then they should be sold at random. What this means is that everyone standing in line for tickets should have an equal chance to get the best front row tickets or the not-so-good seats at the higher price. It is reasonably certain that the concert will be sold out, then all the tickets should be sold at random. In this case, everybody should have an equal shot at being able to purchase higher or lower priced tickets.

The system should be based on a computerized printed-ticket format so that a person who asks for three tickets can have them all next to each other if he likes them. Also, the computer cannot locate three adjacent seats (or whatever number of seats the person asked for), then the buyer should be refunded or given the option for non-adjacent seats. Also, in the case where all the tickets are sold at random, if the computer returns lower priced tickets where the higher price was paid, then the difference should be refunded, of course. But the buyer must accept the tickets selected.

This solution will solve many of the problems associated with the system of concert ticket sales. As noted above, this will give everyone who bought tickets at another window a shut at getting the best or the worst seats. The incentive to camp out up to two days before the tickets go on sale will be gone. The need to do this to get decent seats will not exist and the buyer will be relieved of this burden. Also, the profession of ticket scalping will be made extremely difficult if not totally unprofitable for those who don't sell out. At best, a scalper can purchase a bunch of random tickets for a show which eventually sells out and then sell them at a higher price. He won't be able to make as much money as he did before because most of his tickets won't be nearly as good as good as they used to be when he camped out and bought out the front row.

I'm not quite sure how I got cheated. Since the tickets were all pre-printed, I suppose that all the good seating was sold at any window were all gone and that other windows still had good seats after I had purchased mine. Everyone familiar with the system of ticket sales for rock and pop concerts must agree that it has some major flaws and something must be done. A system of random selection similar to what I've suggested can and should be the device to solve these problems.

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