



## **CCCP WIN GOLD IN JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CANADA – SILVER By Al Vickery**

Canada's first-ever international junior hockey tournament – with games in Winnipeg, Brandon, Minneapolis and Fargo, N.D. – had to be the highlight of the 1974-75 amateur hockey season.

It even had a Hollywood –script ending, with Canada represented by the Western Canada Hockey League Selects, up against the Russians, packed with the best juniors ever assembled in the Soviet. Both teams had swept aside the other four competing nations – Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Finland and the United States – to go into the finale with 4 – 0 records.

The series had been planned that way – Canada vs. Russia for the last game – but even the most optimistic Canadians hadn't figured the W.C.H.L. All-Stars would go into that final contest with an unblemished record. Both the Czechs and Swedes were considered almost on a par with the Big Bad Bears, who had knocked off Canada's top eastern team Peterborough Pets, 9 – 0 on the final day in a decisive game last winter in Leningrad.

However, this year it was different. Canada needed only a tie with the Russians to gain the World Junior title – having a far superior goals for – and – against record.

But it wasn't to be. An enthusiastic overflow crowd of 10,551 in Winnipeg Arena on that Sunday afternoon, January 5<sup>th</sup>, witnessed a never-say-die effort by their favourites who fought back from deficits of 2 – 1 in the first period and 4 – 1 after 40 minutes to almost pull the game out of the fire with two unanswered goals in the final frame.

The Canadians outshot the Russians 17 – 7 in the last 20 minutes (40 – 30 overall) but couldn't buy the equalizer – missing on two great opportunities after winning faceoffs in the Soviet end in the dying seconds of the game. The first called for a brilliant glove save by the Russian goalkeeper; the second was an inches-wide shot which ended the game and the series.

But the Soviet juniors, unlike their national senior counterparts who had knocked off the W.H.A. All-Stars in reasonably easy fashion, knew they had been in a tough game and were more than happy to skate off with a 4 – 3 win. It was that close.

How did the tournament really get started? It was all the brain-child of Gerry Brisson, owner and general manager of the Winnipeg Clubs of the W.C.H.L.

Brisson had called a news conference to make an announcement regarding his own team when he broached the subject of an international junior tournament to Earl Dawson, regional representative of the Federal Fitness and Amateur Sport.

“Earl” said Brisson, “why can't we run an international junior hockey tournament here in Winnipeg, with an All-Star team from our league as Canada's representatives?”

Dawson was very receptive to the idea, feeling that possibly this would be the way for Canada to get back into international amateur hockey – through its juniors.



He took Brisson's plan to Frank McKinnon, president of the Manitoba Amateur Hockey Association, who carried it through to the C.A.H.A. where the wheels were put into motion. President Jack Devine and a C.A.H.A. delegation presented invitations to Russia, the U.S.A., Sweden, Czechoslovakia and Finland. They all jumped at the chance.

McKinnon and Dawson soon got to cracking in Winnipeg after everything was approved. Committees were formed and C.C.M. of Canada through president Graham Eves came in as sponsors. The event also was tied in with Winnipeg's centennial as the windup celebration for the year 1974.

With Dawson as chairman, an organizing committee was set up consisting of Jack Devine, C.A.H.A. executive director Gordon Jukes, W.C.H.L. president Ed Chynoweth, Frank McKinnon, M.A.H.A. secretary-manager George Allard, Winnipeg Enterprises Corporation manager Percy Downton, and the president of the C.H.A. Services Ltd., Harry Littler.

The group called a news conference for Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, at the Winnipeg Inn, where it was officially announced that the W.C.H.L. All-Stars would host the six-nation tournament running from December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1974 to January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1975. The Winnipeg Arena would be the site of eight of the 15 games; with three each in Brandon and Minneapolis, and one Fargo, N.D.

Dawson soon gathered in top men around the city to head the working committees: Downton chaired the Arena Committee handling ticket sales and arena promotion; Keith Campbell M.A.H.A. Vice-President, took over the Technical Committee, in charge of referees, minor officials, dressing rooms, practice times, etc.; veteran hockey executive Vic Johnson chaired the Team Committee which controlled transportation, meals, hotels, interpreters and entertainment; Winnipeg Enterprises president Sam Fabro took on the Protocol Committee, involved with opening and closing ceremonies, looking after V.I.P.'s, arrangements of banquets; and minor hockey executive Larry Monk was in charge of the Special Committee for gifts, security and accreditation of players, officials, referees, media, etc. Larry Skinner, C.A.H.A. director of marketing and communications, worked as liaison officer.

Each chairman soon named his vice-chairman and members as all hockey men swung behind the operation. Even the province and the city chipped in with representatives to the committees.

Similar committees were set up in the other three centres and the ball was rolling.

Advertisements were sent into newspapers, and radio and T.V. stations, and a steady stream of background and feature material was fed to the media through Dawson, Downton and veteran newsman Al Vickery.

In mid-November, W.C.H.L. proxy Chynoweth announced the appointments of Jackie McLeod of Saskatoon Blades and Pat Ginnell of Victoria Cougars as coaches of the All-Stars, with Del Wilson of Regina Pats as manager. McLeod, who had previously coached Canada's national team, brought to the squad the international experience needed if Canada was to make a creditable showing against the tough Europeans.

All committees were in full swing and everything was going like clockwork with headquarters at the International Inn. The C.A.H.A. even had set up and international junior hockey coaches'



seminar, with many experts taking part, including Dr. Valadimir Kosta, former coach of the Czech national team, as guest lecturer.

Then came opening night. Canada's Selects started out sluggishly against the Americans falling behind early 2-0 but coming back to win the game 9-3, with Trottier getting a hat-trick. At Brandon, the Russians knocked off Finland 4-1.

Canada continued to show its scoring power in their second game, walloping Sweden 10-2 as the Bridgman-McMullin-Blight line combined for 11 points, including five goals. The same night, Finland and the Czechs played to a 1-1 tie, but the Czechs fell 5-1 to Russia the following day. It was a goalkeepers' duel as Canada made it three straight December 30<sup>th</sup> against a stubborn Finnish aggregation, winning 2-1 as they outshot the visitors 46-32. McMullin scored the winner late in the third period but the spotlight belonged to Canada's Doug Soetaert and Finland's Marcus Mattsson who amazed the crowd and opponents alike with their brilliant antics in the nets.

Later that month, Del Wilson announced the All-Star selections, headed by the W.C.H.L.'s top three goalkeepers – Doug Soetaert of Edmonton Oil Kings, Ed Staniowski of Regina and Larry Hendrick of Calgary Centennials.

The defensive corps consisted of Rich Hodgson of Calgary; Robin Sadler of Edmonton; Kevin McCarthy of Winnipeg Clubs; Rick Lapointe of Victoria; Terry McDonald of Kamloops Chiefs' Bryan Maxwell of Medicine Hat Tigers; and Blair Davidson of Flin Flon Bombers.

Forwards included: Bryan Trottier and Brian Sutter of Lethbridge Broncos; Ralph Klassen and Danny Arndt of Saskatoon; Barry Smith and Clayton Pachal of New Westminster Bruins; Greg Vaydik of Medicine Hat; Mel Bridgman of Victoria; Kelly Greenbank of Winnipeg; Dale McMullin and Rick Blight of Brandon; Rob Flockhart of Kamloops; Jim Minor of Regina' and Mark Davidson of Flin Flon.

Wilson felt the team had the best goaltending in Canada; the defence was questionable but improving; the forwards had a good combination of size, speed, good shots and aggressiveness.

The Canadian team assembled in Lethbridge on December 21<sup>st</sup>, practiced each day and had two exhibition games against the Czechs in Alberta before flying to Winnipeg December 24<sup>th</sup> – two days before their opening game against the United States. Meanwhile, the other European teams were playing exhibition games in eastern Canada before heading west.

Sweden scored its first win as they handed the U.S. its second defeat, a 7-3 decision. The Americans lost their third straight as the Russians chalked up their third win in a row the following night; but not before the Yanks put on their best performance and only bowed 3-1. In Game Four for the Canadians, and with Staniowski back in the nets, the W.C.H.L. All-Stars blanked the Czechs 3-0 on goals by Mark Davidson, Trottier and Bridgman, and another excellent penalty-killing performance by forwards Barry Smith and Mark Davidson and equally great defensive work by McCarthy and Lapointe at the blueline.

Sweden scored its second win against one loss, with a 5-3 verdict over Finland. The Canadian win had meant that the Soviets were their final roadblock to the championship as the Russians downed Sweden 6-2 in a rough contest for their fourth win. Meantime, the Czechs bombed the U.S.A. 6-0.



Three games were billed for the final Sunday: the Swedes and Czechs at Brandon; the U.S. and Finland in Minneapolis; and the big one – Canada vs. Russia – at the Winnipeg Arena.

Sweden took third place by gaining a 2-2 tie against the Czechs; the U.S. lost its fifth straight, 4-2, to Finland.

At Winnipeg, early defensive miscues allowed Russia to take the 4-1 lead over Canada going into the final 20 minutes. Trottier had sandwiched a goal between two Russian markers in the first period, then two more Soviet goals in the second session made the task look almost hopeless for the Canucks. But Lapointe and Arndt closed the gap by the 16-minute mark. However, last-minute heroics by goalie Vladimir Myshkim and Blight's wide shot to an open corner gave the Big Bears the game and title.

Veteran hockey observers claim they had witnessed some of the best junior hockey they had ever seen. The majority of the fans felt the same way, and they showed their appreciation throughout the tournament with standing ovations and long chants of "Go Canada Go" as they warmed to each occasion.

Officials and players of each visiting nation considered it the best-run tournament they had ever participated in. So it's hats off to Brisson for thinking of the idea; the C.A.H.A., W.C.H.L., M.A.H.A., C.C.M., and all those involved, including the media, for making it work so successfully.