



Memories of Sport
By Kent Morgan
(courtesy of Canstar Community News)

Western Canada wasn't kind to Scotty Bowman

When Scotty Bowman was beginning his Hall of Fame coaching career, Western Canada was not welcoming.

In 1957 Bowman came west with the Ottawa Canadiens as general manager and coach Sam Pollock's assistant. The powerful Montreal Canadiens sponsored team was highly favoured to beat the upstart Flin Flon Bombers in the Canadian junior final, but Bombers prevailed in a series that went seven games.

The next season when the Memorial Cup final was played in the east, the pair were in charge of the renamed Ottawa-Hull Canadiens. After knocking off Toronto Marlboros in the eastern final, Ottawa-Hull met another Montreal farm squad, the Regina Pats, and won the Canadian junior championship in six games.

In 1959, the 25-year-old Bowman was in charge of a different Habs farm squad, the Peterborough TPT Petes. The Ontario champions - with future NHLers Wayne Connelly, Jimmy Roberts, Barclay Plager and Denis DeJordy - in the lineup beat Pollock's Ottawa-Hull squad in the Eastern final.

Bowman had to bring his team west to Winnipeg where a somewhat-surprising opponent was waiting for them.

The Winnipeg Braves had won the MJHL championship over another Montreal-sponsored squad, the St. Boniface Canadiens, and reached the Western final by beating the Fort William Canadiens.

Flin Flon led by River Heights product Cliff Pennington, the SJHL scoring champion and most valuable player, was heavily favoured in the final.

The Bombers won the first two games in Flin Flon, 5-1 and 7-4. Back in Winnipeg, the fore-checking and back-checking of the Braves stifled the Bombers' big guns. The home team won four in row with the clincher a 3-0 shutout by Flin Flon native Ernie Wakely.

In those days, teams were allowed pickups and the Braves had strengthened for the Western run by adding Ted Green and Howie Hughes from St. Boniface and Don



Atamanchuk from Transcona Rangers. Green solidified the blueline of Gary Bergman, Doug Monro and Lew Mueller. Coach Bill Allum inserted the pickup forwards on a strong second line with captain Wayne (Keeper) Larkin. Laurie Langrell, Bobby Leiter, and Al LeBlanc were the top trio.

On April 24, Petes won the first game of the Memorial Cup final, 5-4 at the Winnipeg Arena. But the Braves then took over with Langrell leading the charge. The MJHL regular-season scoring leader, who had two goals in the opener, scored twice in the next two games as the Braves won both 5-2. In a game four 5-3 victory. Larkin and Leiter each had a pair with Al Baty notching the winner. It was Baty's first goal in 15 playoff games.

With the Shrine Circus taking over the Arena, the series moved to Brandon where on May 1, Baty notched three more in a Cup-clinching 6-2 win. Larkin, Atamanchuk and Rene Brunel added singles. Bowman was ejected in the third period after disagreeing with the referee

It's been a long 50-year drought for Manitoba as the Braves were the last team from our province to win the Memorial Cup.

As has been well documented, the Sam Pollock/Scotty Bowman tandem went on to win Stanley Cups in Montreal and Bowman became the winningest coach in NHL history.