



Memories of Sport

-Courtesy of Canstar News

During the 1950s and 1960s, Winnipeg and Flin Flon met in many provincial midget and juvenile A hockey championships. When Winnipeg had a small juvenile league of sponsored teams in the early 1950s, the Canadiens and Monarchs each won two provincials. The Flin Flon Bombers then won the juvenile title three straight years from 1954 to 1956. Brandon Wheat Kings took the next two before Flin Flon won again in 1959. Dauphin won in 1960.

In Flin Flon minor hockey, every player who wanted to play got equal ice time under a system implemented by community club manager Pinkie Davie, a former Winnipeg junior and NHL player. Every two minutes a whistle was blown and complete lines were changed, which future star Bobby Clarke suggested gave him the chance to develop. An all-star team was chosen to represent the community provincially. Except for school activities, a school ruling only allowed "one trip out" each year. As a result, high school students usually chose to play minor hockey and not join the junior Bombers until after graduation.

The minor hockey scene in Winnipeg changed when the Great Winnipeg Minor Hockey Association was formed before the 1956-57 season. Instead of city-wide sponsored teams, teams had to operate out of community clubs. By 1961, Winnipeg teams began to dominate at the juvenile level. Bronx Park with future Jet Joe Daley in goal won that season and Kelvin, their Elmwood rival from down Henderson Hwy, won three of the next four only to being interrupted by Flin Flon in 1963. Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame inducted member Al Tresoor coached those teams that included fine players such as former MTS president Bill Fraser, Charlie Kurtz, George Sykes, Ron Hopkinson, John Schillinger, Don Smith, Bill Kops, Don Morrow, Gary Warren and Jack Tye. Flin Flon won in 1966 beating West End Orioles, who had future NHL player John Marks and NHL referee Andy Van Hellemond in the lineup.

River Heights coached by Hockey HOF member Ross Parke topped Flin Flon in 1967. The powerful Cardinals lineup included future NHLer Chris Oddleifson, star defensemen Bob Winograd and Jimmy Hargreaves, and Danny Johnson, who later headed the Manitoba Special Olympics. The late city councillor Bill Clement was a forward. The next winter



CUAC headed by another HOFer Greg Lacomby beat Brandon. The North End squad included Gerald Barron, Ray Boyko and Barry Presley, who went to play for the junior West Kildonan North Stars. Orioles led by captain Ray Huska closed out the decade by winning their first juvenile title since 1945 with a victory over Brandon.

In midget play, Flin Flon won the provincial nine times between 1954 and 1969. Over the years the midget and juvenile roster including many future junior stars and pros including Ted Hampson, George Konik, Ron Hutchinson, Mel Pearson, Carl Forster, Duane Rupp and Ken Willey, who played for the 1957 Memorial Cup champions. Clarke made an appearance in 1966 when the Bombers met the Cardinals at the River Heights Arena. That midget match-up may have been a foreshadow to future battles between some of the same players when they reached the junior level.

The first game was a Saturday night fiasco highlighted by 39 penalties with 25 going to the visitors. River Heights coach Parke apparently didn't like the officiating as he received a misconduct and a game misconduct. Neither did the MAHA head knocks as they suggested the unidentified referees lost control of the game. And before I hear from readers suggesting that one of them must have been this columnist who was known for calling a tight game, the answer is no. The final score was 5-1 Flin Flon.

On Sunday afternoon with new men in striped shirts giving Flin Flon 13 of the 20 penalties, the teams tied 5-5. Bombers won the two-game total point series 10-6. In the previous season playing at home, Flin Flon had lost to Weston, a Winnipeg community club led by captain Karl Haggarty and Nels Jacobson, both future pros.

In a future column Memories of Sport will take a look at the battles between Flin Flon and Winnipeg at the junior level.