

Oh Canada

by Scott Simpson and Rob Ellison

OK all you armchair, couch potato-heads and pretend-to-be coaches, did Keenan know how to pick a well rounded team that can win, or what? All your second guessing (and everyone's criticism) goes right out the window (except for ours, of course. Hell, we're *journalists*. We're above that sort of thing . . .)

This team showed that with or without Gretzky they are the best in the world. This affords us the (far too rare) luxury of looking south of the border and singing "Na-na-naa-na . . . Na-na-naa-na . . . Hey-ayy-ay . . . Good-bye!" Feels good, huh? For a nation that *truly* needs some heroes right now, TC delivered, and for a while, we can feel good about ourselves again. But, by next week we'll go back to realizing that half the country is either on strike, almost on strike, unemployed, or wanting to separate. Sigh.

But before we get too teary-eyed and gooshy, lets go back to our predictions for the semifinals.

USA 7 vs. Finland 3 - Looks like Rob picked this one. Richter kept the States in the game early and Ketterer showed that he wasn't a magician in making the Finnish defensive blunders disappear. The USA showed that it's quick pace, fast skating game was too much for the Finns and every lucky bounce the States got ended up in the Finnish net. Kurri scored only his second goal of the tournament and looked like an aging man in danger of breaking a hip as he heads to the bright lights of Hollywood for the NHL season. There was one noticeable absentee in the US scoring attack in Brett Hull. The USA fans were justifying the Golden Debt, er, the Golden Jet predicting that "Who cares, he's second in tournament scoring in the tournament. He'll be there when it counts in the finals." Heh heh heh . . .

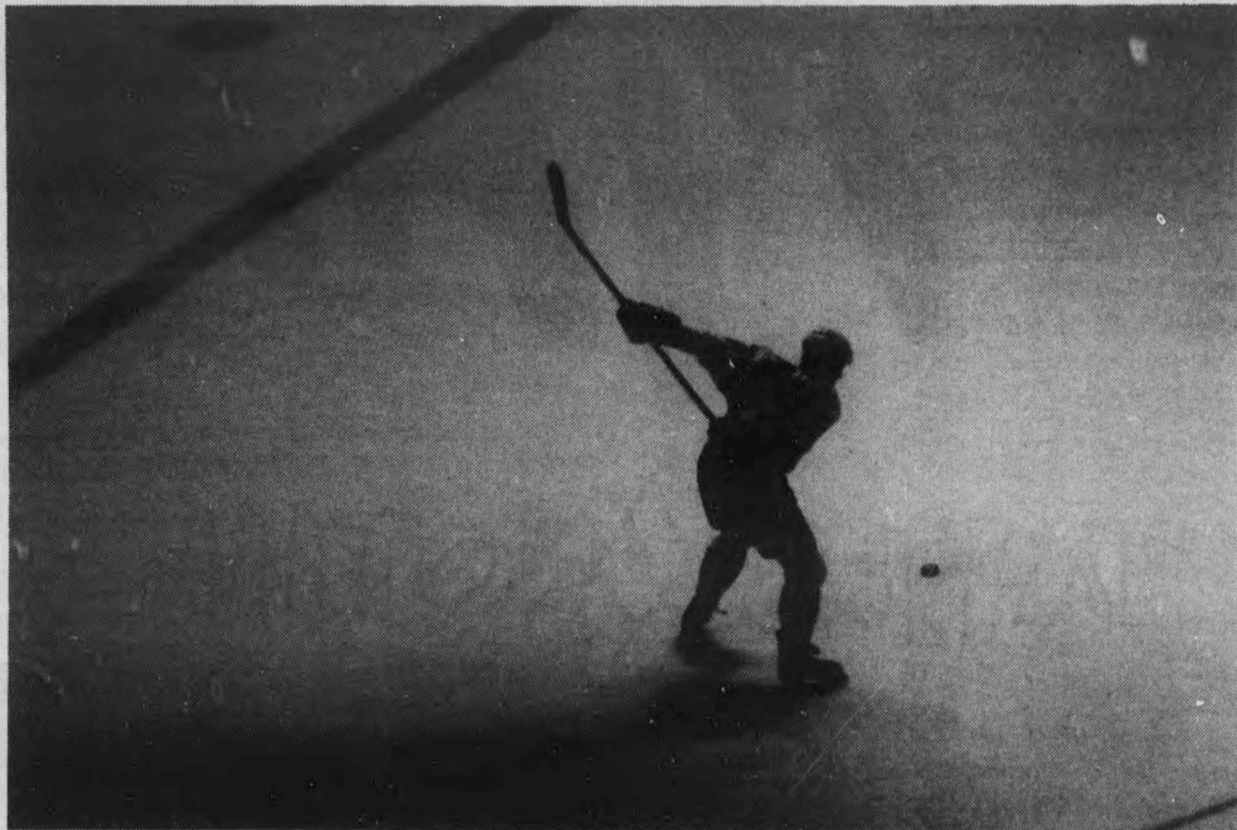
Canada 4 vs. Sweden 0 - Scott picked this one, but

Rob's pick was closer to flow of the game. (yeah Rob, but who's was closer? I outpicked you on this one, you weasel! Oops, slipping into "Gene Siskel Mode" again. Sorry . . .) This was classic goaltending duel. Team Canada came in like a team on fire and took the play to Sweden all game. Soderstrom was the difference for the Swedes, otherwise Canada could have been blowing them out of the other end of the rink. Soderstrom was in the unenviable position of catching a blistering Steve Larmer slapshot right between the lookers. Yeowwww!!! I don't care what league you play in, that's gotta hurt!!! But before you could say "Geez, guess they'll bring in the backup", Soderstrom was looking like he has three arms and a horseshoe you-know-where as he kept stopping great shots set up by the blunders of Borje "Which Way To The Beach" Salming. The turning point of the whole game was Gretzky's goal with about 4 minutes left in the second period. The Wayner had a breakaway and came in holding the puck on his backhand, looking for an opening to switch to the forehand. He got in too far and shot for the glove side. We thought "oh poo. Looks like he missed another breakaway" (goalies in full gear and their mask on backwards have a better chance of scoring on a breakaway than Wayne). Soderstrom blocked most of the shot, but his backward momentum allowed he and the puck to cross the goal-line. If the puck stayed out, the game may have swung the other way as the Canadians were taking too many chances in forcing the play and were actually outshot in the second period. But it was now 1-0 Canada and it was the beginning of the end for Sweden. From then on Soderstrom looked drained as he allowed 3 more goals. Ranford played great shutout hockey and this game was *histoire*. Who would've figured that in two whole games the

Swedes could only manage one goal on over sixty shots. Of course both goalies got players of the game for their respective teams and it looks like Gretzky's been playing around with his Tarot cards as predicted a Canada-USA final long before the tournament started (We did, too. Yeah, that's it . . .) We give this one an A for perseverance.

for not juggling any lines to get goo match-ups. Possibly Badger Bob hadn't mentioned this aspect of coaching to him. Possibly coming from Yale he felt he was above matching lines. We just don't know, but it was their loss and our gain. Again goaltending was superb and provided the game stars. But foremost, Gretzky got knocked out of the tournament

intermission: Keenan says "Ok, spinal check. One question. Are you a bunch of jelly fishes, or what?". The whole room replies "Heck, no!" And comes back on the ice looking like a team that wants to win. But, Canada gets a penalty with 7 minutes left (thanks to the US ref who had disappeared for most of the game). Who does Keenan send



The finals - Canada 4 vs USA 1 - The story of this game was Messier and Ranford coming to play and Gretzky being knocked out of the tournament. Ouch! It's also a story of Hull and Gretzky not getting the ice time they wanted or deserved, respectively. Keenan seemed to be using Gretzky less and less, just putting him out to throw the other team on the defensive and not double shifting him as per usual. Messier's legs were getting in game shape and he picked up some of Gretzky's shifts. The difference in this game, and ultimately the whole final, was the unwillingness of the USA coach Tip "don't call me Tippy unless you're my wife" Taylor. Maybe we should just call him Tippy for being drunk enough

by a punishing check by Gary Suter which threw his back into spasms reminiscent of his injury a couple of years ago. This one gets a B+

Canada 4 vs. USA 2 - Ok, this is the game where Canada proves that it is not an invertebrate when you take Gretzky out of the line-up. All jelly-fishes, amoebas and worms were encouraged to check their spines at the door and to leave quietly. Only nasty, gutsy and talented vertebrates need show up to this game. All Canadian doubters can file for the US immigration papers now. After going up 2-0 in the first period (mostly on the great play of Messier), the USA tied the score on goals where the Canadians looked uncharacteristically disorganized and chased the puck. Second period

out to kill the penalty? Steve Larmer (Gretzky's linemate). Who plays the point on the States' powerplay? Gary Suter (the accused). Want me to tell you a little story about payback, and who laughs last laughs loudest? How about one incredible irony? Well, on the face-off the puck ends up being passed over to Suter who takes it off his skate (poor guy), but the puck bounces up and over. Larmer knocks the puck away from Suter and skates in all alone on Richter (at this point, we were inching closer to the TV, anticipating the moment). Crawling at a snail's pace behind Larmer trying to catch up are Suter and Hull (that scum sucking traitor and Rob's old town-mate) Oops, we're getting bitter . . . Anyway, Larmer puts the classic deke on Richter and deposits the puck through the five hole and the cup is ours. Picture Scott screaming and scaring the cat as he does victory laps around the couch (no, I don't get out much). Larmer is (of course) player of the Game and Gretzky comes out to accept the trophy and we all sleep easy, feeling all warm and fuzzy inside. It's all over and justice is served when Ranford who posted a 1.75 GAA through the tournament was awarded the MVP for the tournament. (Note Ranford = MVP, Fuhr = tradebait). We give this one an A+

Yeesh, what a tourney. So far we're each 1-1 with predictions, but just wait for our incredibly accurate NHL predictions and training camp reports coming soon.

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