



REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 97 CANADA IS A SPORTS-MINDED NATION

Canada's temperate climate offers full scope for sports around the calendar. Residents and visitors in few countries have such opportunities, either as participants or as spectators, to enjoy such a wide range of both summer and winter games.

The ten Canadian provinces have adopted at one time or another practically all the popular sports competitions of other lands. They have also fostered and developed one or two sports distinctly their own. These may be said to have been exported, as ice hockey has been taken up eagerly in the past forty years in the United States and in Europe, and lacrosse, once esteemed as Canada's national summer game, is growing steadily in popularity with students at many American universities.

Winter Sports

Judged by spectator interest, ice hockey must be given first rank among Canada's sports spectacles. Canada's two largest cities, Montreal and Toronto, have entries in the National Hockey League, which is actually international in range. The other four teams in a league of six are all in United States--cities--New York, Detroit, Chicago and Boston. The teams play a 70-game schedule stretching from early October to late March. The top four teams then engage in a series for the Stanley Cup, a trophy steeped in tradition. Symbolic of supremacy in professional hockey, it was donated by Lord Stanley of Preston in 1893 during his term as Governor General of Canada.

There are two other wholly professional hockey leagues operating in Canada--the Quebec League, in one of the oldest provinces, and the Western League, with teams playing in two sections. In the Prairie Division of the Western League are Winnipeg, Brandon, Calgary and Edmonton. The Coast Division includes Vancouver, New Westminster and Victoria, all in British Columbia, with a team in Seattle of Washington State added to provide an international flavour. Championships of the two leagues are decided by a system of playoffs, and the two league champions then meet in a series for the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy, presented by the Royal Consort in 1953.

All season long the rinks, some of them accommodating as many as 15,000 people including standees, are jammed. An outstanding example is the Forum in Montreal, where nearly 85 per cent of the 13,500 seats are reserved for the full season by subscribers who in many cases have held the same location for more than a decade.