

How hockey came to Edmonton ... or the continuing story of "The Fiery Red Prince"

There's nothing like a good fairy tale to cheer up a beleaguered sports fan. In our city it seems that everyone is wailing along with one team or another. So I have set about in one of my seldom moods of good nature to cheer up the sporting populace. This fable may not rival the tales of Grimm and may even set Aesop back 50 years, but positive steps have to be taken to keep our sports fans sane. So sit back and float into the world of fantasy.

Once upon a time in a land far off from the kingdom where the evil King Campbell ruled there lived the fiery red Prince named Hunter. He was not allowed to have his own army and to fight in Campbell's kingdom, that was reserved for armies from the south and a few famous old kingdoms in the New World.

Hunter grew furious and grew red with rage (origin of his title the fiery red Prince). He wanted his people to be able to watch the armies take to the arenas and battle. He assembled all the smaller kingdoms and Princes who were also refused permission to play with Campbell's armies and they decided to set up their own kingdom.

They searched for mighty warriors all over the New World. They promised vast riches, unbounded popularity and a chance for wrong doers who had been fighting for minor league armies. In return for these promises Hunter and many Princes like him received warriors with no courage or skill, who failed to bring riches from the crusades and many small Kingdoms were forced to disband or go bankrupt.

But the fiery red Prince who also was known as Hunter the Optimist told his people that he would find warriors who could do the job. Some kingdoms had gone to the Old World and brought back some Vikings and other Scandinavians who were swifter and more skillful than most of the players in the New World. But Hunter the Optimist had faith in his own descendants and scouted all the hamlets and villages for warriors for his own army. He returned exhorting to his people that these new warriors along with a Knight named Sir Drake would make them one of the strongest armies among the new found kingdoms.

But alas all did not go well for our heroes and they were defeated battle after battle by even the weaker armies. Sir Drake was wounded by one of the town criers called Overland and finally mortally wounded by the fiery red Prince himself.

Hunter the Optimist then took over as General and promised that he would lead the army into battle and come out victorious. The fiery red Prince proceeded to trade some of his warriors to other armies in an attempt to shake up the troops. When all this failed to bring glory to Hunter's army he declared the Gods were against him.

Rabble rousers wanted an army from Campbell's kingdom to fight it's battles in their Coliseum, but Hunter laughed at the idea, he knew where he could get superior warriors - from Eagleson the magician. This was to be only one of Hunter's plans for saving his army from collapse. He would institute any one of a number of battle plans that had already been drawn up in case of an emergency.

Since this is no ordinary fairy tale it has no rules which bind it to have a happy ending or for that matter any ending. So as the tale of our hero unfolds stay tuned to this column for more tales of "The Fiery Red Prince."

Bears limp into stretch drive

by Keith Steinbach

The magic number is 3. All the Alberta Golden Bear hockey squad has to do is win 3 of their 5 games. But it's not going to be easy as the Bears face the always tough UBC team three times and second place Calgary twice.

Because of injuries to key players one should say that the Alberta team will limp into this weekend's play. But how does one limp on a seven game winning streak?

The Bears are hurt though. Leading the list of wounded is Clark Jantzie. "Jantz" is second on the team in scoring and is now recuperating from surgery on his separated shoulder. He is lost for the rest of the year as is Dale Fischer. His shoulder injury is similar to Jantzie's.

Bruce Crawford's ailment has been described as a very nasty charliehorse. He received it on his last shift in Friday night's game with Saskatchewan. He is back on skates but will be a question mark for this weekend's series in Vancouver.

Another doubtful for this weekend is little Oliver Steward. He aggravated his groin injury two weeks ago in Saskatchewan. His return to the line up would certainly be welcomed.

The thing that has kept Alberta going through these inconvenient injuries? It's not bribes, threats, or even magic. It's just good, hard-skating, heads up hockey, not only by the regulars but also by those seldom used players. Darrell Zaperniuk, Rick Venance, and Blair Burgess are these seldom used players who have been playing some kind of hockey. Of course the regulars have been turning in their usual solid performances illustrated by Jim Ofrim's league leading scoring stats and the fact that the Alberta goaltenders are ranked

one, two, three in the league. Harking back to the upcoming game's in Vancouver, Coach Abbott said that it would be important for his team to

continue their winning ways. "I hope we won't be looking too far ahead," he said referring to the showdown series with Calgary in the southern city Feb. 20, 21.

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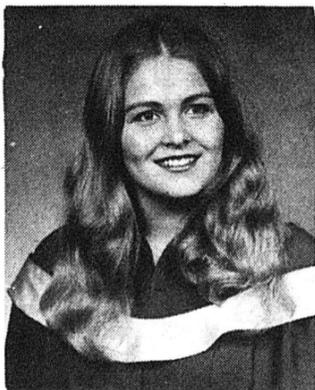
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