

Let's hear it Canada

by Philip Preville

Yet another Canada Cup has ended dramatically. Win or lose, they say, one cannot help but appreciate the calibre of hockey being played. It is, no doubt, the best hockey ever played.

Even at that, there is something else about Canada Cup time that is really enjoyable. International hockey seems to be one of the few things in post-war Canada that arouses the deep sense of identification between Canadians and their country. Suddenly, people start waving red and white flags and painting their faces. We all get shipped into a nationalistic frenzy. I love it.

Canadian nationalism is different from the peculiar behaviours of our neighbours to the south. Canadians have never been "my-country-right-or-wrong" types. The citizens of Smalltown, Canada are not prepared to rush into the streets totin' their double-barrel rifles to defend any perceived threat to truth, justice, and the Canadian way. Canadians do not have their constitution memorized.

American nationalism is blind nationalism. Laughter is usually the only appropriate response to their attitude. They are rather naive.

Ours is nationalism of a different kind. Canadians are much more

even-tempered. We always have been. We're not braggarts, presumably because we've never had much to brag about. We're also much more analytical.

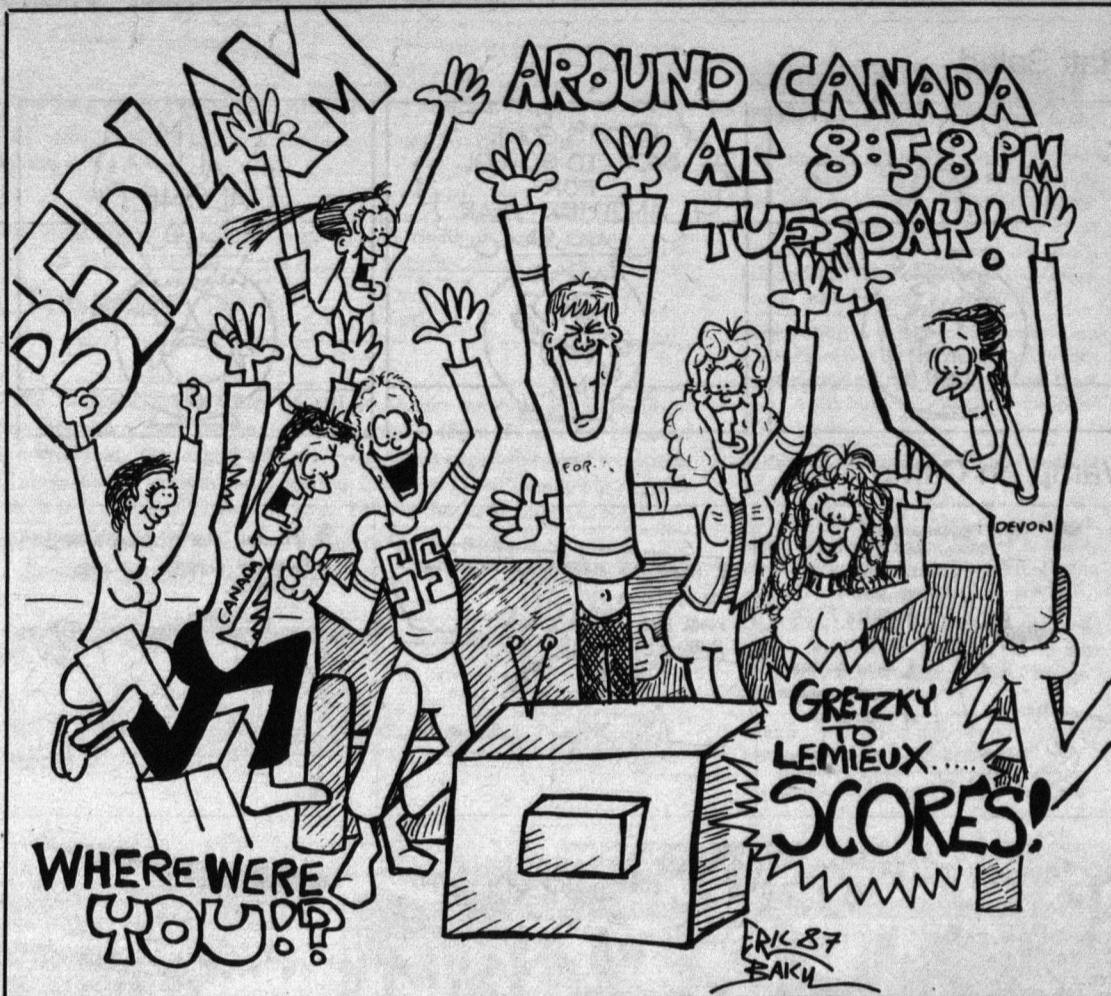
If Wayne Gretzky were American, he would be recognized everywhere he went. He would be considered "a Great American". Americans do silly things like that. Americans latch on to overachievers and adopt them in every household as their own. The U.S.A. is one big hero factory.

When Gretzky travels in Canada during the season, people quietly go to watch him play. They cast a critical eye on him, trying to figure out just what it is that makes him great. Gretzky is a Great Canadian, and we know it. We just don't say it. It sounds funny.

It's not that we don't appreciate Gretzky's talent. We do. We admire his attitude very much. We also find pride through him; we are home to the greatest team-sport player the world has ever known. We just don't announce it to the world. We're much smarter than that. We're discreet.

We're also not afraid to admit error or defeat, and in such a case we still don't disown our national identity.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee. Quietly.



Canada has it where it counts

by Randal Smathers

Wayne Gretzky almost said it. He said that Canada won the Canada Cup on guts. Al Eagleson almost said it when he said Canada showed a lot of character.

What they meant of course, is that Canada won the Cup on balls.

Player for player, the Soviets were the equal of the Canadians in talent. By the end of the tournament, there was little or no difference in the team play of either side. That alone is a tremendous complement to the ability of the Canadian team,

thrown together after a short summer to face the best of the rest.

Mike Keenan and the rest who put this squad together knew what they were about when they made room for players like Rick Tocchet and Brent Sutter. They knew that we weren't going to out-finesse the Soviets, even with Gretzky and Mario Lemieux.

That proved to be true in the final when the Russians stopped Lemieux by using judo techniques on him in front of the net, thus removing Gretzky's favorite target. It was the big guns that put it away late, of course. Only because Dale Hawerchuk skated over the Soviet defenseman who was hurrying back to provide the usual over-tight coverage on Lemieux, giving him room to roll.

For the most part though, the wheelers and dekers were held in check, literally and figuratively. Obviously both coaches were counting on ref Don Koharski to be slow to blow his whistle, and that's just what they got.

As a result, the game was decided in the trenches, and that's where Canada's edge in, ahem, equipment, really shone.

Face facts: it would have been easy for any team to quit against the Soviets, and Canada was down deep and often in this series. Instead what do we get?

We get N.H.L. snipers playing more like Wendel Clark than Denis Savard. Dale Hawerchuk of all people, sacrificing his body to make a play for his team, and doing it repeatedly.

Canada's tough guys, Mark Messier, Tocchet and Sutter, putting a beating on the small Soviet forwards to the extent that Canada could move with impunity along the boards. Even Gretzky threw a few body checks. True they were generally ineffectual, but the spirit was there.

Why did we get such an effort, such a show, such a win?

Guts, character, pride — balls.

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