

Sports editorial: The NHL experience by Bruce Denis

Over the holidays, I was fortunate enough to attend a Montreal Canadiens hockey game. Being from Montreal, I have attended countless games. However, this time was different. This time I got the whole experience.

Armed with my *Brunswickan* VIP media pass, I made arrangements to see the Canadiens host the New York Islanders on December 23. I went on the premise of doing a story on former Fredericton inmate Sean Hill.

On the morning of the game I made the short walk from my house to the Forum to watch the teams practice and talk with Mr. Hill. Amazed at the lack of security, I was able to walk through the press entrance unhassled. I then made my way under the stands and on to ice level. Looking up at some 17,054 empty seats, a blank scoreboard and the soft lights that leave the ice somewhat darker for practices, the Forum seemed lifeless. Slowly but surely, Jacques Demers and his troops broke the uneasy silence that is so foreign to this arena. A visiting Pee wee team from Ontario marched past me, their jaws wide open in awe, and assumed seats behind the players bench. I followed, but opted to seat myself by the few media personnel that bothered waking up early that morning.

The players seemed happy that, this being a game-day practice, they wouldn't be victims of a leg breaking workout. Denis Savard and Stephane Lebeau enjoyed conversation as they skated laps leisurely, occasionally firing a puck at Patrick Roy. Other players mingled and joked until Demers organized them all at center ice to coordinate the morning's drills, simple passing drills, 2 on 0's and 2 on 1's. Something to get the blood flowing and the mind focused. A half hour later, the players returned to the dressing room to go home and prepare for the game. J.J. Daigneault, Sean Hill, Patrick Kjellberg and Patrick Carnback did not dress that night and remained on the ice for more conditioning.

It took alot of courage to ask Sean Hill for an interview. Not only had he just been told he wouldn't dress for the game but he had done countless painful laps under the watchful eye of an assistant coach. He could barely get a breath of air let alone give an interview. Despite this, he graciously accepted and led me into the dressing room. He gave me short and simple answers that included everything I needed. We shook hands, he was happy, I was happy. I took a quick look around the room out of curiosity. Kevin Haller was still peeling off his equipment, trading secrets with John LeClair about how to tape his stick. The list of Canadiens' award winners written onto those hallowed walls had no effect on the seven or so individuals remaining in the room. Twenty-three Stanley Cups had been celebrated in that room and on one cold December morning you would have never guessed it. The hundreds of sticks, the rolls of black and white stick tape, the cups of Gatorade all seemed to be taken for granted.

I left the room and returned to the stands to watch the Islanders repeat the same rituals the Canadiens had practiced moments earlier. A few minutes later, I decided to return home after becoming uncomfortably bored in a building infamous for its intensity.

Decked out in a suit and tie, I headed back to the Forum for the game four hours later with the theme music from Ken Dryden's "Home Game" series on CBC playing in my head. I checked my media pass with the security guard at the entrance and was ushered upstairs to the press room. I was welcomed by a kindly man offering a plethora of press information on the night's game. I collected all he had to offer and made my way past a dozen dining tables and hung up my coat. My eyes bulged at the sight of the free food bar displayed in front of me. I filled a plate, sat down and thumbed through the press notes to kill some time before the game, occasionally noticing some very familiar faces and voices: Steve Shutt, Dick Irvin, John Davidson, Harry Neale and Yvan Cormoyer to name a few.

I took my drink and followed the other reporters into the press box for the game. I had seat number 9 out of 70, which meant I was behind the ice surface. The view was interesting, but not great. One corner of the ice was actually obscured by a suspension support but a monitor insured I wouldn't miss any of the action.

The game was relatively uneventful as the Canadiens fell 6-2. However, I was more interested in the press room between periods. I would consistently stuff my face and watch TV in the company of the four players that did not dress, countless press and hockey figures as well as Miss Manon Rheaume who was a guest commentator for the french station covering the game.

With 1 minute remaining in the game, I ran through the maze of hallways and escalators to the dressing room. I had to push my way through a crowd of 100 screaming fans craning to catch a glimpse of their heroes. After ten minutes of waiting, the press was finally given the go ahead to enter. About 20 of us fanned around the stars to hear their excuses for their lackluster performance. Standing in the Canadian's dressing room after the game, with 100 people outside who would die to be in my shoes, I couldn't help but feel this was the most anti-climactic part of my experience. It was just a bunch of sweaty, pissed-off hockey players taking their equipment off. It might well have been the Social Club Shooters dressing room.

Afterwards, I returned to the press room to collect my jacket, feeling saturated and ready to go home. A lot of the mystique of professional hockey seemed to disappear as I walked out through the media entrance that, only a few years ago, seemed so elusive and intangible. Stars don't seem like stars and meccas don't seem like meccas anymore. Despite this, I feel privileged to have been able to experienced the whole NHL experience for a day and would do it all over again anytime.

Campus recreation Serving the campus community

Facilities and services

Ice Skating

Ice skating for UNB/STU students and Recreation members at the Aitken Centre will begin on January 11, Monday to Friday, 12:30 to 1:30 pm. Wednesdays are reserved for parents who wish to bring their children (family membership is required). Please bring your I.D. to show the recreation staff attendant for admission. No door admission will be accepted. The last day of skating will be April 16 with cancellations on March 1-5, 11, 12, 18, 19, and April 9.

Non-credit instruction

Weight Training

Registration for Beginning Weight Training classes takes place at the Business office from January 6 to 20. The class meets Mondays and Wednesdays from 7 to 8 pm, January 25 to February 24. The cost is \$25 for UNB/STU students and recreation members; \$50 for non-members.

Squash

Registration for "Basic" and "Follow-up" Squash instruction takes place at the Business office from January 6 to 20. The class meets Tuesdays between 7:10 and 8:30pm, January 26 to February 23. The cost is \$25 for UNB/STU students and recreation members; \$50 for non-members.

National Lifeguard Service NLS (pool option)

This is a 40 hour course to train lifeguards for pool supervision.

Prerequisites:	16 years of age minimum Bronze Cross
Dates:	January 17 to March 28 (8 weeks + examinations) Sunday and Monday evenings
Registration:	begins January 6 at the UNB Recreation Office.
Fees:	\$100 for students and recreation members \$115 for non-members add \$5 after Jan. 16

Intramural sports

Co-ed Sports

Ball Hockey registration began on Jan. 12 and the deadline is Jan. 26, with play on Saturdays. Squash and Raquetball ladders are going again this term, so drop downstairs and post your challenge.

Men's Sports

Volleyball registration began on Jan 12 and the deadline is Jan. 26., with play on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Women's Sports

Registration for Indoor Soccer begins on Jan. 26 and the deadline is February 2. Get your teams in early because this sport fills up fast!

On campus this weekend

Red Raiders

vs. Memorial, Sat, 8pm at L.B. Gym
vs. Memorial, Sun, 1pm at L.B. Gym

Beavers

vs. Acadia, Sat, 7pm at Max Aitken Pool
vs. Dalhousie, Sun, 2pm at Max Aitken Pool

Red Devils

vs. St. Mary's, 2pm, Sat, at Aitken Centre

The first 15,000 spectators at each event will witness the most exciting action in town.

UNBelievable!

Pepsi/Pizza Hut Player Profile

Donna Retson

#4 UNB Red Bloomers

Forward, 5'8", Age:19

1st year BED

Accomplishments: 1992 Cobequid High Athlete of the year. NS Junior team member

Hometown: Truro, NS

Hobbies: Card games and board games

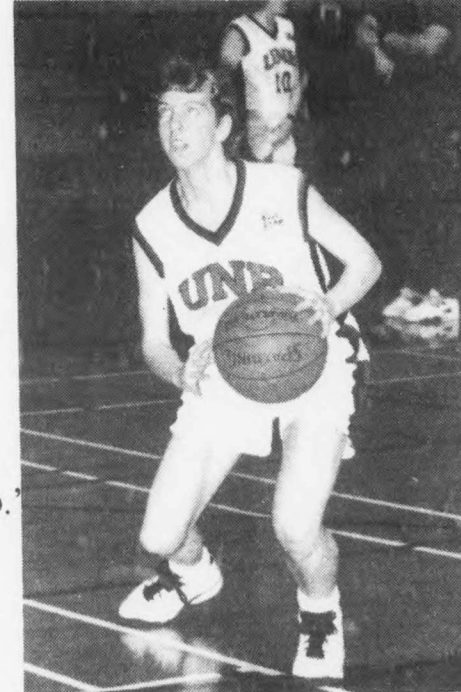
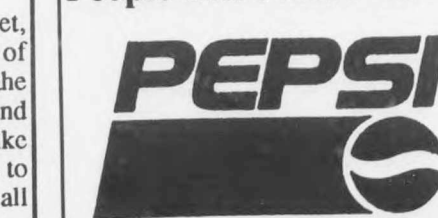
TV Show: Wonder Years

Favorite Team: Duke Blue Devils

Favorite Athlete: Katarina Witt

Future Aspirations: Making the Dean's list

People don't know I.... love to eat non-stop.



Donna Retson