

Charities gamble on drafts

by Alan Small

Spring must be in the air. No, the robins aren't in Edmonton yet, but a much more reliable sign of spring is the NHL playoffs. They always start in the first week of April, but when people all over Canada start talking about playoff hockey draft pools in the middle of March,

based in Saskatchewan, had done.

"They have their ads in *The Hockey News*," Elliott said, "but the Gaming Commission won't let us advertise outside the province of Alberta."

The Gaming Commission treats the hockey pools like a raffle, but as Elliott says, some definite skill is

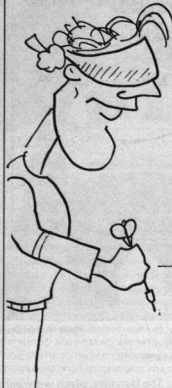
peripheral.

"We're going to have a review of all the licence issues after the Stanley Cup playoffs are over," said Jose Villa-Arse, research officer for the Alberta Gaming Commission. "It's a learning process for the charities and for us."

"One potential problem for play-off hockey drafts is the verification of results. If a complaint in the addition or the accuracy of the final statistics is put forward, the aftermath could be quite messy."

"Complaints on final standings have to be investigated into by an outside accounting function," Villa-

THE LUCK ANGLE



"We bugged the Alberta Gaming Commission for three years before they let us try it."
— Elliott

anyone can tell that the playoffs are coming.

Before, drafts would be set up between a group of friends on the day before the playoffs. One of the combatants would do the stats after Lord Stanley's Cup was awarded. To the victor went the spoils, usually small amounts of spending money that would end up in the coffers of the owner of the local tavern.

Those competitions still remain, and will probably continue to remain in the culture of Canadians. However, many charitable organizations are taking advantage of hockey: Canada's weakness.

All one has to do is flip through the sports sections of the major dailies in town to see how hockey pools are being run today. In Tuesday's *Edmonton Sun*, two advertisements, one from the Kinsmen Club of Fort Edmonton, the other from the Canadian Progress Club are shown prominently, with order forms to enter the contests. Proceeds from both go to charity.

But for some charitable organizations, the hockey pool concept to raise money hasn't been the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

"It's been slow," said Carey Elliott, spokesman for the Kinsmen Club of Fort Edmonton, about ticket sales. "We have a long haul yet to go before April 1st."

Gateway columnist and hockey draft enthusiast Gord Stech has a reason for the slow turnout. "I find that those drafts are just lotteries," Stech said. "You have to get three or four entries to have a chance."

Their playoff pool is the richest one in Edmonton with a first prize of \$20,000, second prize of \$10,000, and a third prize of \$5,000. To enter however, someone must come up with a rather steep \$100.

Elliott came up with the idea of hockey drafts for charity a few years ago, but the Alberta Gaming Commission was wary of the idea.

"We bugged the Alberta Gaming Commission for three years before they let us try it."

Elliott decided upon the idea after seeing how well a similar pool,

needed to win the large money prizes.

"You're relying totally on the skill of the hockey players," Elliott said, "but you have to pick the right players. It's not like a lottery where you get your entry picked out of a hat."

The Gaming Commission has authorized "between 15 and 20" of these hockey drafts throughout the province in 1988.

Since draft licences are in their first issuing year, the idea of hockey drafts supporting charity is still ex-

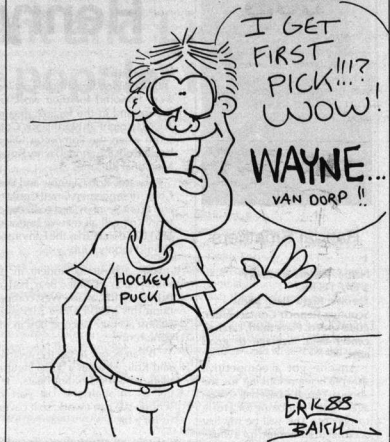
Arse said.

Villa-Arse also stressed that all the drafts must have a two-part entry form, as "certain kinds of information" must be supplied by the organizers of the contest to ensure fairness.

The *Edmonton Journal* has held a hockey draft for the second year, which has no entry fee, and it has been a rousing success. Last year, they set a maximum of 20,000 entries and met it quickly. This year, they waived that, and had more than 35,000 entries. Prizes are won on a weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. With a draft of such size, it is an administrative nightmare.

"Actually, three different companies are involved with running the draft," said Mary Ellen Piotrowski, who works in the *Journal* community relations department. "It's a lot of work keeping all the stats."

THE STUPID ANGLE



Hockey pool fools

by Alan Small

Even though the small office hockey draft has turned into a bonanza for charities, the small office pool itself has become more complex.

Take the Original Six Hockey League, a hockey draft that takes place over the NHL regular season. Not only the drafting of players is done, but trading between teams, and use of farm teams are also employed.

"It's patterned after the book, *The Rotisserie League*" by Daniel Okrent and Glen Waggoner," said Blaine Ostapovich, one of the league's founders.

Not only does the pool add the goals, assists, and points of its players, but it also stresses penalty minutes, shooting percentage, power

play goals, and plus-minus ratings. Minutes played and goals against averages are the criteria for picking your netminders.

One can wonder why penalty minutes and shooting percentage would be important in a hockey pool, but the founders of the league defend the practice.

"Penalty minutes count just like in real life," franchise owner Bob Fedun said, "you can't have a team of prima donnas."

"They're hockey players too," owner Cam McCulloch said, "you have two scoring lines, one checking line, and a couple of thugs so the other team doesn't take advantage of your small guys. You also have to have players that can capitalize on their chances."

cont. next page

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