

A Cool, Refreshing History of the Game

Hockey is the result of a legitimate union of ice skating and field hockey.

Children have been skating on the frozen fens, canals and rivers of England, Holland and Denmark since the 11th century, when they tied sharpened runners of bone to their boots with leather thongs.

Somewhat more recently, the English began playing field hockey on grassy fields with a ball and curved sticks.

In 1855 (possibly sooner) ice hockey began in Kingston's Tete du Pont Barracks (or possibly in Halifax or Montreal). The Tete du Pont version is that on Christmas Day of that year some restless soldiers cleared the snow from the harbour, tied skates to boots, borrowed field hockey sticks and an old lacrosse ball and began to body check each other. Around 1875 a few university students offered to play all comers under what came to be the McGill Rules. Soon teams from Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec, Halifax and Kingston were competing. In 1891 the Ontario Hockey Association was formed to supervise the annual selection of a Provincial champion. A couple of years later, Lord Stanley, of Preston, then the Governor General, sponsored a team at Rideau Hall (his residence in Ottawa) and achieved a measure of immortality by offering a sterling silver bowl, the Stanley Cup, to be awarded to the best team. The best teams were originally amateurs, but soon amateur clubs began paying some of the stars and even importing stars from other cities. Since Lord Stanley had mentioned only the "best" team, it was argued effectively that professionals could not be excluded. The result was that amateurs were excluded, and in 1909 Sir Montagu

Allan presented the Allan Cup as an award for amateurs.

By 1920 hockey had spread to the United States and Europe, and teams abroad were willing to challenge the best of the amateurs for a world championship. The Winnipeg Falcons won the first winter Olympics in Antwerp (losing not a game) and became the first official world's ice hockey champions. In 1924 the Toronto Granites followed suit and in 1928 the University of Toronto Grads continued the succession. Winnipeg won in 1932 at Lake Placid, N.Y. Then, when it was beginning to get boring, Canada sent a team to Germany, which lost to Great Britain. There was an explanation—the team first chosen to represent the Dominion was disbanded before the games began and a second team, hastily chosen, took its place.

By 1948 the country and the Royal Canadian Air Force team had sufficiently recovered from the shock to regain the title at St. Moritz. The Edmonton Mercurys followed successfully in 1952 in Oslo.

Then, in 1956, the Russians won at Cortina, Italy. Canada came in third. In 1964 Canada was represented by a group of young Canadians, mostly university students, rather than by a club team. Canada did better than in 1956, but not much; it gained a three-way tie with Czechoslovakia and Sweden, but when the goal averages were struck, Canada came in fourth—for the first time in history, it had failed to win an Olympic hockey medal.

In 1970, Canada withdrew from international competition pending a resolution of its problem in sending nonprofessional players to play against

