

# SPORTS

## Naive or nasty? Controversial Eric Lindros

BY SUZY KOVINSKY

It is painful to imagine the day when children playing shinny on frozen ponds will speak of how many dollars they will make when they get to the Big Leagues, rather than how many points they will score or how many Stanley Cups they will drink out of. This fear, or wrenching anticipation, possibly explains the negative public reaction to the attitude of rising hockey star Eric Lindros.

### Sports EDITORIAL

It is not Lindros' decision to go for the big bucks which is irritating fans from coast to coast. Canadians have all chosen to live in a democratic, capitalist society which, for better or for worse, encourages upward mobility. The players attitude is what has sparked this controversy.

Supposedly, every junior player

dreams of being chosen in the NHL. It's like the Academy Awards of hockey: you don't care if you win the big prize, you should be just as happy as hell that you were nominated!

Lindros was more than nominated. He was chosen first over all and at a time when most young men would have had tears in their eyes, all the optometrists could see in Eric's eyes was dollar signs.

The phrase "franchise player," is brought up frequently by defenders of Lindros's salary demands. Since when does bankrupting the franchise count toward your team contribution? If Lindros is truly interested in becoming an impact player he should learn a few lessons from the almost legendary Mario Lemieux.

When Lemieux was drafted by Pittsburgh in 1984 he did not have nearly as much talent to work with and learn from than Lindros would have in Quebec with a Joe Sakic or a Matt Sundin. Lemieux spent seven literally back breaking years building up his own skills and driving the Penguins toward a Stanley

Cup Championship. Lindros should look up Lemieux as a definition of most valuable player before he designates himself as one.

Lindros' agent claims that Toronto is the only Canadian city in which Lindros could gain the fame needed to receive the corporate sponsorship (\$\$) that he feels he deserves. Yet, by some freak of nature, eleven years ago a teenager in Edmonton, Alberta became the best know Canadian in the country's history. School children who cannot identify the Prime Minister all know that the numbers "99" stand for the "Great One." It was talent and sheer perseverance which got Gretzky where he is today. Yes, he has made more money with L.A. then in all his years with the Oilers, but Edmonton is where he became a superstar. No one, especially Gretzky himself, denies that building the Oiler's dynasty got him where he is today.

It is possible that athletes should be judged only by their performances while playing the game and not by their mothers or their

snotty attitudes. Lindros has played well so far in the 1991 Canada Cup Tournament yet he has never skated in a professional hockey game.

There are players with superior hockey skills who do not have what it takes to be true NHL champions or to carry their teams to the highest levels..

However, one should not criticize Lindros for his businesslike attitude. If the players are treated like commodities by the owners, then an individual who, for whatever reason, is worth a lot of money has the right to respond with his own demands.

Yet one must not forget that Eric Lindros grew up in the Canadian Junior Hockey system, reaping all of its benefits and thereby becoming a marketable force in professional hockey. It is doubtful he would be in the same profitable position had he been playing for the UCLA Bruins.

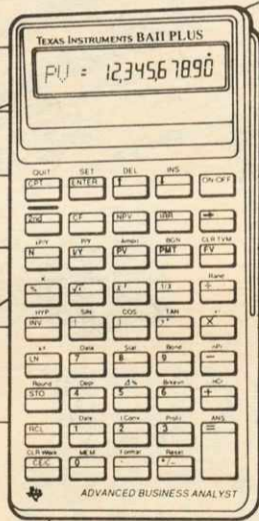
Yet Lindros does not owe Canadian hockey anything just because he played here but it

should disturb him that its future is in jeopardy if many young, talented players ask for more money than any small franchise can afford. This so called "Americanization" of the NHL is extremely frightening to Canadians who have perceived their uniqueness being traded or sold without their consent.

Hockey is the one tradition that ties French and English Canada together. It's sad to see the whole phenomenon in jeopardy just because of one player and a lot of media hype.

Personally, the passionate hockey fan inside of me would like to see Lindros become an extraordinary hockey player with his name on many Stanley Cups regardless of where he plays. But I must admit that a small, patriotic and sentimental part of me would find justice served if after a failed stint with Cleveland in the Continental Hockey League, Eric Lindros ends up in a Herb Tarlek suit with a bad back selling used cars and dreaming of the salad days in Oshawa.

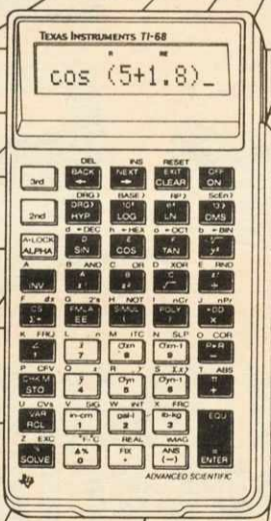
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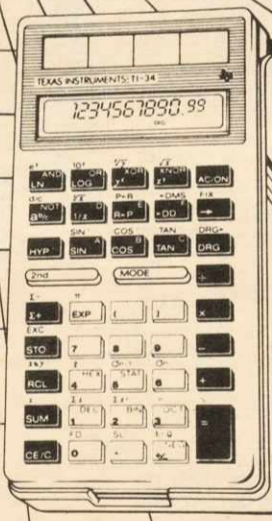
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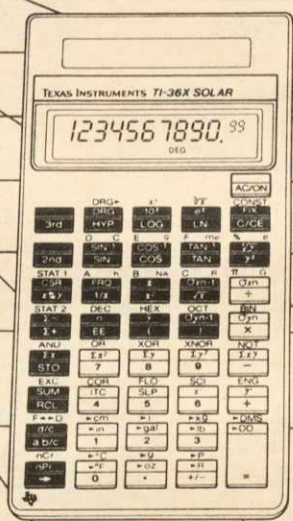
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