

Amateur Leagues

Canada's top amateur trophy is the Allan Cup, emblematic of senior hockey supremacy in Canada since 1908. Each spring Canada's various senior leagues declare winners and those from each province compete in the national senior finals for this coveted trophy. Though played in smaller arenas than the Montreal Forum or Maple Leaf Gardens, Allan Cup finals often set attendance marks of nearly 50,000 for the entire playoff series.

Equal in prestige to the Allan Cup is the OHA (Ontario Hockey Association) Memorial Cup, emblematic of Canadian junior hockey supremacy. This cup was donated in 1919 as a memorial to the many Canadian hockey players who served their country in the First World War. The Memorial Cup competition is for junior teams with players of 19 and 20 years of age, a group that includes practically all the professional "stars of tomorrow". The national playoffs attract large numbers of spectators, the record being a total of over 100,000 for a seven-game series.

CAHA

The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, which stimulates interest and encourages ability in hockey throughout Canada, does not provide for national competition below the junior level. CAHA branches stage provincial championships for juveniles (players aged 16 and 17), midgets (14 and 15), and bantams (12 and 13). Intermediate divisions for adults, and junior classes below Memorial Cup calibre, have their own championships.

One reason for an upsurge of interest in hockey is the annual "Minor Hockey Week in Canada", held under the auspices of the CAHA and its branches. National publicity, thousands of community "minor hockey nights", and the support of public figures, including the Prime Minister of Canada, have all contributed to the success of this national institution.

With thousands of boys donning hockey skates for the first time, the national association has expanded its coach-training programme. Assisted by the Canadian Government's Fitness and Amateur Sports Directorate, the CAHA has inaugurated amateur hockey leadership "clinics" at several Canadian universities. From these practical seminars, new coaches or coaches with new skills return to their work at the local level. Another pressing problem -- that of ice facilities -- is being met through government aid for winter-works projects, and may be eased further as communities plan new sports centres to celebrate Canada's centennial year in 1967.

International Competition

Hockey has made great strides internationally since the first recognized world hockey competition took place at Antwerp in connection with the 1920 Winter Olympic Games. The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association has each year (with one or two notable exceptions, such as the Winter Olympics in Moscow in 1957, at which Canada was not represented) provided the Canadian representative. In that time, club teams (as distinct from national "all-star" teams) have won 19 world championships and six Olympic hockey titles for Canada. In addition, Canada has, since 1945, sent many amateur teams on exhibition tours through such countries as Japan, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and East and West Germany.

In the last few years, the calibre of hockey in other countries has so improved that Canada now feels justified in moving into the all-star classification, rather than sending a strengthened club team into world competition. The experiment with a national team started with the IX Winter Olympic Games at Innsbruck in 1964, at which Canada was represented by a group of young Canadians, mostly university students, between the ages of 19 and 27. The improvement in European teams was dramatically shown by a three-way tie for second place among Canada, Czechoslovakia and Sweden. When the goal averages were calculated, Canada, for the first time in history, failed to win an Olympic hockey medal.