

Time Out

How to beat the Russians

The Russians are gone now. After slaking (look it up, Chubey) their enormous thirst for Coca-cola and hard currency, the Soviet hockey team has left us with a shuddering NHL and a whole new reason not to buy Ladas. Yup, they whupped us again.

How can Canadian hockey avoid this kind of embarrassment? There are two things this scribe would like to suggest. The first is that we shoot Alan Eagleson. I would like to suggest that, however, the Gateway legal advisors (good friends one and all) have threatened to put my head through the big screen in RATT. So if the idea catches on, you didn't hear it from me.

The other suggestion is more complicated but the long term results may be even greater. Let's shoot junior hockey.

Figure it out; how did the Soviets beat us? Well the consensus of Canadian sportswriters (the ULTIMATE authority) is that Soviet hockey players skate better than our boys. The Russian Red Wings also seem to have the amazing ability to pass and shoot at full speed. So we've got three things: skating, passing and shooting. For sake of argument, let's call these the basic skills.

Now why are the Soviets better at these basic skills? Is it because they eat more borscht than we do? Is it part of the ultimate destiny of world communism? No, it is because they practise. For all its fancy strategies and preplanned plays Russian hockey is basically a bunch of guys who skate in circles Monday to Friday so they can skate circles around their opposition on the weekend.

It would seem, then, that all our professional players need to do is to practise more. But when you play three games a week and travel coast to coast there isn't much time to practise. We are not going to change the NHL schedule or its basic, money-grubbing principles and CP Air would probably frown upon freezing the aisles of their 747s so if Canadian hockey players are going to learn the basic skills they are going to have to do it before they turn pro.

Right now, what comes before pro hockey is junior. With an equally arduous (look it up Matheson) schedule and at least token attendance in high school, junior A players have less time to practise than the pros. Even the most talented players who come out of junior hockey such as Brian Bellows or Marc Habschied come out with bad habits, particularly on defense.

Instead of indenturing (that's for you Jones) our young hockey talent to small town Steinbrenners we should be sending them someplace where they could actually learn hockey. And if they also learned enough about life and the English language to understand a contract, so much the better. We should be sending them to university.

The players coming out of Canadian and American universities are generally much stronger in the basic skills than those coming out of junior. They also handle the pressure of professional hockey better. What would happen if our most talented players went to college? Try to imagine Mark Messier with Glen Anderson's discipline. Paul Coffey with Randy Gregg's confidence.

If universities become the primary development center of Canadian hockey it will also benefit minor hockey. University entrance requirements would stop teams from stealing high school age players (in fact high school might be taken seriously). Talented youngsters would not feel they had to prove themselves at age 10 if they wanted to make the NHL.

Of course there would be options for people who do not want to go to university. If a young man is so talented as to make the pros or the minors right out of high school, good luck to him. The AHJL and other junior B leagues would be a good place for players to develop their skills, more often with an eye towards playing at the university level later. But university would be the place where the most serious hockey development took place.

All this is not likely to happen. The teams in the NHL would rather ruin dozens of Pat Prices and Denis Sobchucks than miss out on a Brian Bellows. So be prepared for another decade of embarrassing losses to the Soviets. Unless something happens to Alan Eagleson.

Kent Blinston

Countdown continues

Bears take on UBC Thunderbirds

by Martin Couits

The Golden Bears hockey team has moved up to fifth spot in the national rankings as they prepare for this weekend's series with the UBC Thunderbirds.

The two teams meet on Friday and Saturday evening at Varsity Arena with the "Clare Drake Countdown" at 497 wins. The face-off is set for 7:30 pm on both nights.

Despite not having played a CIAU opponent in over a month, the Bears moved up a notch in the rankings because of the performance of other Canada West teams in exhibition play. Most notable in this respect was the play of the Calgary Dinosaurus. They won the tough Micron Tournament hosted by Concordia University in Montreal and beat the number one ranked Toronto Varsity Blues in the process. The surprise result elevated the previously unranked Dinos to the number nine spot in the nation.

Meanwhile, the Saskatchewan Huskies were consolidating their hold on the number two spot with a pair of victories over number three ranked Moncton last weekend. The Huskies beat the Golden Eagles 7-5 and 6-1 in front of impressive crowds of 2500 and 2100 at the Saskatoon Arena.

These results leave this weekend's visitors as the only unranked team in what is clearly the strongest Conference in the country. What's more, the Thunderbirds, not to be outdone, merely beat Saskatchewan over the Christmas break at the University of Manitoba Invitational Tournament.

Needless to say, Bears' Coach Clare Drake is not taking UBC lightly. He realizes that this series

is a pivotal one as far as the Bears' playoff chances are concerned.

"If they were to come in here and win two they could have a really good shot (at a playoff spot), especially if Calgary does well against Saskatchewan and the whole league tightens up. But if they were to lose another 3 or 4 games their chances would be very slim."

Drake is also worried about the long layoff since the Bears last played a league opponent. However, he notes that, "we did play a couple of pretty competitive games against NAIT (in the NAIT Invitational Tournament)."

In that same tourney, the Bears also had to play twice in one day to finish the double round robin event. Coach Drake is hoping that experience will help the team to find their form early on against UBC.

"It was very helpful in a game conditioning sense to play two

games in one day," he said. "I hope it will carry over to this weekend."

What he doesn't want to see carrying over to the weekend is the lack of scoring punch and shooting accuracy that the team exhibited against NAIT. "I don't think we're converting enough of our chances," said Drake. "It's a combination of not bearing down around the net and not concentrating. Our shooting accuracy is not nearly as good as it could be, either. We're missing the net on a lot of shots, particularly from our point men."

Their shooting accuracy may not be healthy but those doing the shooting certainly are. The only injury of note was suffered in practice last week by right winger Darrell Turnbull who fell into the boards and suffered a 2nd degree sprain of the acromio clavicular shoulder joint.

Stevens and Ross head gymnasts

This weekend will be one of the busiest for U of A teams on the road.

In gymnastics, the Pandas will be in California this weekend. On Friday, they will be at Stanford University and on Saturday, the Pandas will be competing in the San Francisco State Invitational.

The roster is as follows: Kathy Stevens, Heidi Ross, Audrey Gee, Elise Dworkin, Carrie Nawata, Shelley Spanner, Janice Neill, Margie Dysdale, and Heather Raven.

In wrestling, the Bears travel to Saskatoon. In the 100 kg category, the ever-flexible Blake Dermott is ranked number one in Canada. In the 57 kg division, Mike Payette is ranked number three.

In swimming and diving, the Bears and Pandas travel to the west coast with meets at UBC, Simon Fraser, and the University of Washington.

Last weekend, Cam Henning set a new U of A record with a time of 2:07.06 in the 200m backstroke. Megan Watson also set a record, eclipsing her own record time, with a swift 2:44.61 in the 200m backstroke.

In volleyball, the Bears and Pandas will be in Lethbridge for a seeding tournament.

In basketball, the Bears travel to Vancouver for the Canada West

Classic.
In Santa Barbara, California, Brian Heaney's squad lost 94-49 to Westmount and 71-68 to a college from Canton, Ohio.

Campus Recreation

INTRAMURALS

Entry Deadlines:
Men's-
Bowling, Badminton, and Indoor Soccer - Tues. Jan. 18, 1 pm.
Co-Rec-
Volleyball Tournament - Mon. Jan. 17, 1 pm.
Women's Curling - Wed. Jan. 19, 1 pm.

Attention Student Groups

The Florence E. Dodd Award (value \$500 per year) is available to registered student groups organizing an activity of interest and benefit to students on campus. The purpose of this award is to encourage student group program initiatives that contribute to student life.

Submit a detailed description of event scheduled for anytime in 1983, including budget, other sources of funding, date and target group to

225 Athabasca Hall
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