



## Ron Ternoway

from my square

corner

It's a typical chilly January evening in 1974.

The boys on fifth Henday are congregating around the color television set to watch their favorite program, Hockey Night in Canada.

It's the red hot New Sarepta Kubasa-Crunchers against the high-flying South American Bananas in a do-or-die battle for fourteenth place in the best of the nine divisions of the NHL.

The boys are gathered around to watch their hero, Crock D'Merde, number one draft choice in the NHL season. He played his junior hockey for the Rycroft Rutabaggas, and scored three goals and one assist in his stellar career with the 'Baggag, who played against teams in the South Peace River pee-wee loop. He's one of over a thousand young players who have made the jump directly from the pee-wee ranks to the NHL, and he's a good one.

The referee calls the teams to centre ice, and play begins. D'Merde, playing on left wing for the Kubasa-Crunchers, picks up the puck and starts down the ice. Unfortunately, his mother didn't tie his skates up too well and one lace comes undone, causing D'Merde to trip over the blue line. Undaunted by this minor setback, Crock rushes over to the bench, where his mother apologizes and reties his skates ....

Sounds a little surrealistic, doesn't it?

But the way things are going in the ranks of professional hockey, I'm afraid that just that sort of thing could happen.

Unchecked expansion in the NHL and the advent of the new WHA are doing their best to relegate hockey to just a shadow of its former self.

Proponents of the newscheme point at the success of the AFL and ABA when questioned about the feasibility of the WHA. However, what they don't seem to realise is that the source of hockey talent is very limited in comparison, and that by expanding hockey to numerous centres, everyone is going to get just a watered-down version of the game.

I was just looking at a few elementary figures the other day, and the calculations made seem to bear this out.

Take for example professional football. There are 26 American teams plus 9 Canadian ones with rosters averaging forty players. That makes a total of 1400 football players. Taking an American and Canadian combined population of 220,000,000, that makes one football player for every 160,000 people. Hockey, on the other hand, has a source population of only 20,000,000 as almost all good hockey players are Canadian. There are a few exceptions as hockey is growing in Minnesota and Massachusetts, but their numbers are not significant in my calculations. Anyway, with the proposed NHL expansion and the new WHA entries, that makes a total of 30 teams with average rosters of 20 for a total of 600 professional-grade players. Figuring that out of a population of 20 million, it comes to one hockey player per 33 thousand. Include the myriads of farm clubs necessary for each of the professional entries, and it's pretty easy to see that there are going to be a lot of players of Crock's calibre playing in the NHL and WHA.

And in the light of inter-team drafts and limited protection lists, it is going to be a case of all teams being dragged down into mediocrity and worse than the established teams remaining at their high standard and the new ones struggling. I mean, some day Los Angeles is going to beat Montreal. It's pretty frightening, isn't it?

Another thing I think the promoters are neglecting to gauge is the appeal of hockey in particular centres. There's no problem of poor crowds in most areas of Canada, but in the U.S. hockey just doesn't have the appeal in a lot of places. Take for example the aforementioned L.A.Kings, whose management goes wild when attendance reaches that magical four-figure mark. I can just see hockey in Atlanta or somewhere one night where the combined total of players and officials out numbers the fans three to one. American fans are just not hockey-oriented, and while they're learning, assuming they ever do, the promoters are going to take a financial pounding.

But it's not the promoters that I feel sorry for. If they're foolish enough to be innovative, that's their problem. It is with the fans that my sympathies lie. We the spectators are being screwed by professional hockey and I, for one, don't like it one bit. (Apologies to John Lennon.)

## Bears win in overtime Sat. but now share first place with T'Birds



### DYNAMIC DUO

Two key factors in Bears' success this season has been the play of Steve Carlyle (5) and Dave Couves (10).

Dinos 5, Bears 3  
Bears 4, Dinos 3 (OT)

by Stu Layfield

Pandemonium reigned in the visitors dressing room at Foothills Arena in Calgary on Saturday night. Players and managers jubilantly shouted at the tops of their voices, pounded each other on the backs and shook hands with Clare Drake as the Golden Bear coach circulated through the crowded quarters congratulating his players. As one of the key Bear performers, Billy Moores was to exclaim later, "You'd think this team had just won the Stanley Cup or something."

The Bears hadn't won the Stanley Cup, or the W.C.I.A.A. championship; they hadn't even clinched first-place in the W.C.I.A.A. Western Division. But only seconds before they had posted a come-from-behind 4-3 overtime victory over the Calgary Dinosaurs in a pressure-packed contest before a near-capacity crowd. A number of factors including the heated rivalry between the two teams,

the physically aggressive Dino style of play, the Bears smarting from a 5-3 defeat from the same Dinneys the night before, and perhaps most significant of all, the vital importance of the game, all combined to produce a contest with the action and emotional tension that is generally associated with the best playoff hockey. It was almost fitting that the game did go into overtime.

A goal by Dave Couves at the three minute mark of the first ten minute overtime period gave the Bears the victory and enabled them to retain a share of first place in the W.C.I.A.A. Western Division. Couves won a face-off in the Calgary end, and got the puck back to linemate Rick Wyrozub. The Lacombe native's backhander went just wide of the Calgary net, but as the shot bounced off the boards and started to come out the other side, Jack Gibson beat a Calgary defenceman to the puck, carried it to the front of the net as if to shoot and then slipped a perfect pass across the goalmouth to Couves, who was standing all alone at the edge of the crease. All the veteran centre

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had to do was drive the puck into the yawning Dinnies net.

Couves, whose talent and value to the Bears is only lately being appreciated by local fans, also scored the tying marker with only a minute and four seconds remaining in regulation time, deflecting a drive from the point by Paul St. Cyr past a number of bodies in front of the Dinnies net.

As they had done the night before, the Dinneys opened the scoring early in the first period on a goal by Tom Wiseman. The Dinosaurs should have added to their one goal lead in the rest of the period as the Bears were called for five consecutive minor penalties and were forced to play two men short on two different occasions, once for a minute and eleven seconds. But some steady defensive work by various Bear penalty-killers and fine saves by goaltender Barry Richardson, whose shaky play the night before had forced Coach Drake to pull him early in the second period, kept the Dinneys' power-play at bay.

The Bears took the lead early in the second period on successive goals by Rick Wyrozub and Cal Botterill. But the lead was short-lived as on two separate instances Calgary forward Rob "Weasel" Wright stole the puck in the Bear end and fed passes to Steve Richardson who beat Richardson on rather soft shots. This gave the Dinneys a 3-2 lead going into the third period and set the stage for Couves' scoring heroics.

The game was a fine, closely-played, but bitterly-contested affair, marred only by the officiating of one G. Smith and a pair of equally incompetent linesmen. Not one normally accustomed to such behavior, Coach Drake found himself on more than one occasion standing with one foot on the top of the sideboards and the other on a player's bench protesting loudly as the officials failed to call some gross violation of the rules only to whistle down routine plays that coaches and players alike from all teams universally regard as simply a part of the game. And Jerry LeGrandeur, always a mild-mannered and even-tempered hockey player, drew a misconduct for mildly questioning an interference call on him that verged on utter insanity. The Dinos did take 12 of the 22 penalties called and Richardson made 46 saves for the Bears, while Dave Margach in the Dinosaur nets stopped 44 shots.

Friday night the Bears simply weren't ready to play hockey against a team like the Dinneys, having prepared for an easy series against the University of Victoria Vikings. But as a result of the air controller's strike and a subsequent change in schedule, the Bears were forced to meet the high-flying Dinneys. And while the Golden Ones came up mentally and physically flat, the Dinosaurs were hungry for their eighth straight victory. For the first two periods they outplayed the Bears in every phase of the

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Contrary to popular belief, the Golden Bear curling playdowns were not held this weekend.

The eight-team double knockout event will be run Feb. 4 and 5 at SUB.