

Philadelphia *Flyers*, Pittsburgh *Penguins*, St. Louis *Blues*, Minnesota *North Stars* and Buffalo *Sabres*.

National Hockey League teams play a 76-game schedule, extending from early October to late March and culminating in an eight-team play-off. The symbol of professional hockey supremacy is the Stanley Cup, donated in 1893 by Lord Stanley of Preston during his term as Governor General of Canada.

Professional hockey is also played in three other North American Leagues -- the American Hockey League, the Western Hockey League and the Central Professional Hockey League. Canada has only one team in these leagues -- the Halifax *Voyageurs* of the American Hockey League. With few exceptions, however, professional hockey players are Canadian-born. Canadians generally take an intense interest in the fortunes of all professional teams, no matter where "home ice" may be situated.

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 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.

The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, which stimulates interest and encourages ability in hockey through Canada, does not provide for national competition below the junior level. CAHA branches stage provincial championships for *juveniles* (players aged 16 to 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.

Hockey Canada

As a result of the report of the Task Force on Sport For Canadians in 1969, an organization entitled Hockey Canada was established. This