

# View From the Cheap Seats

By Mark Savoie

Last year the Calgary Flames and the Washington Capitals travelled to the Soviet Union to play their pre-season games against Soviet competition. This was a particularly important move for at least one Calgary player: Sergei Makarov, as this was his first opportunity to play against his former compatriots. The ironic thing was that the most important of these compatriots were no longer there. Captain Fetisov was in New Jersey, and linemen Larionov and Krutov were both in Vancouver. Only coach Tikhonov was still there, but perhaps that was enough.

This year the same sojourn was made by two new teams: the Minnesota North Stars and the venerable Montreal Canadiens. During these games we found out the true major effects of Glasnost, as the North Stars played through two bench clearing brawls and the Canadiens played through one. The Canadiens' brawl was against Red Army, that great institution of Soviet hockey. In days of Soviet hockey lore events such as this would have been impossible.

Later this year all 21 NHL teams will play host to a Soviet team for an exhibition game. These games will not count in the standings, despite some lobbying to the contrary. Thank God! The WHA counted games against the Soviets in the standings many years ago. Remember the WHA? To do this would turn the NHL into a freakshow league, the type of league that *Sports Illustrated* (that great bastion of sports and sex (not necessarily in that order)) would like the NHL to become.

I would prefer that the games weren't even played at all. They don't mean anything anymore. It's no longer our nation against their nation, as many of their stars play over here. It's no longer our system against their system, as the brawling in Moscow can attest. It's just another exhibition game. Leave the exhibition games to pre-season. Why force the players to play an exhibition game with no meaning in the middle of a regular season that is already 80 games long?

Back in 1975, when the Canadiens and Red Army battled to a thrilling 3-3 tie on New Year's Eve, the game meant something. And when Fred Shero and his Broad Street Bullies gave the Red Army a beating (both physically and on the scoreboard) two weeks later the game meant something. But now it is different. Familiarity breeds contempt, and the Soviets are just too familiar to us now for us to get excited about facing them.

The series won't stop. It makes money. Fans go see the games out of nostalgia, and come away feeling disappointed. Nevertheless, when Alan Eagleson arranges another 'Superseries' for next year, those same disappointed fans will show up hoping to see someone as shockingly surprising as Vladislav Tretiak or Valery Kharlamov. They won't... and they'll go home disappointed for another year.

The gap between Soviet and Canadian hockey has diminished to the point of being inconsequential. This is good, as it means that both styles have grown, taking from the other. But I know that I will always miss the thrill of Paul Henderson's series winning goal in 1972. Nothing like it will ever happen again.

## Red Shirts cont'd

ball rested on the goal line and was not pushed across, was as one unidentified fan put it, "very, very poor." This was strike three.

Coach Brown's reaction to the loss was quite philosophical. His quote of the day, "the bubble had to burst" corresponded with his equal, coach Hornibrook's opinion. Hornibrook merely said that this loss may have been good for the Shirts: "It may have been for the better." It should give the team incentive for the next time we meet them.

UNB's Ross Knodell typifies the players' reaction to the game with, "It was our game." Even Mt. A. seemed cautious about gloating over their win. As Peter Duffy, Mt. A.'s starting centre half said, "we were lucky to survive that last half." The Mt. A. win - with 7 points - enables them to share first with the Shirts.

Next game will be played on Chapman Field, Saturday at 3:00 pm where UNB will battle UCCB.



# UNB hit again

Once again that institution called Varsity-Mania had another event that went off without a hitch. It was raining Saturday but that didn't dampen anybody's enthusiasm. It was vocal chords ablazing on the weekend as over 700 rowdy fans watched the Red Shirts get upset by Mount Allison, 1-nil.

Fans were glad to see the extra stands in place for that game. Not many were without seats because seating capacity at Chapman Field has just recently almost doubled.

The Varsity-Mania crew is now gearing up for the roadtrip to Mount Allison. They will be taking as many buses as they can fill. This is the second

year in a row that Varsity-Mania has put on the roadtrip. They are sure that at 15 dollars a ticket, return and word of mouth that they will see a huge turnout by UNB fans.

"When we go to see the Red Shirts at Mt. A. it becomes an adventure. A party on wheels is a good description", says Kirk Briggan, Media Relations Officer for Varsity Mania.

## ATTENTION!

The UNB RED DEVILS are currently looking for 4 or 5 personable and outgoing individuals to be involved with their home game promotions at the Aitken Center this year.

For more information please contact:

Mike McCready at 457-0759

or

Mike Johnston at 453-4575

\* Attractive incentives are offered

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# A bri friend

Lately, the much contro television, ne concerning ste began from Games in Se 1988 where athletes were enhance athle and muscular a

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