

Golden Bears' Centre discusses life

interview by Bernie Poitras

As a rookie Dan Peacocke played on the last Golden Bear hockey team to win the national championship. Now, five seasons later, he is team captain and his team has a strong chance to be in the finals once again. Bookend national championships would be a fine record for the 24 year old

Peacocke whose other accomplishments include winning the Bears' most improved player trophy in 1979-80 and playing in the World Student Games in Spain in 1981. Recently he talked to the Gateway about his hockey career and Canadian Intercollegiate hockey in general.

Gateway: Was playing intercollegiate hockey one of your goals when you enrolled at the University of Alberta?

Peacocke: It wasn't the reason I came to university as such, but it was a factor. I tried out the first year that I came and the first two years I was here I didn't make the hockey team.

But those years (79-80, 80-81), they had pretty strong teams; they won the national title both years. In those two years they picked up one defenseman and that was Larry Riggin — who I played with my first year and learned a great deal from. I was discouraged in some ways, but when I figured out what the actual possibilities were, it made me come back.

Gateway: What is the scholarship system like at the U of A?

Peacocke: When I started — five years ago — there weren't any scholarships to be offered. Now recently, the Oilers have started a scholarship; it has been going for a couple of years. There's also the Heritage Trust Fund Scholarship and that is for all athletes and for all teams. But the hockey team gets eighteen, and obviously we have more players than that, so it still comes down to a selection process. If you're thinking that it's anywhere like the States where people are asked to come or lured into going to their particular school because of a scholarship, there's nothing like that.

I'm not sure how they're used now. I think, legally, as far as the rules are going, it's still not allowed — to entice players.



On balancing sports and studies: "It's a matter of the attitude you take."

Gateway: Were your parents supportive of your combining academics with hockey?

Peacocke: Oh yeah. My mom and dad have always been behind my hockey and backed my hockey. They come to all the games still, as long as they're in town; they show up for the games. They've been good. They've always been very supportive in basically anything I've wanted to do.

Gateway: So many Canadian kids flee south to American universities on hockey scholarships. Should Canadian universities make more of an effort, if they can, to keep the students here?

Peacocke: I think that it's starting to change around a little bit. Even though the scholarships that are offered down in the States are much greater in terms of monetary value, it's still very expensive to go live down in the States. Even if you are on a full scholarship. I think that a lot of people are misled when they get down there and they find that it can be very expensive.

Having some funds, some scholarships available for the hockey players is added incentive to stay here. As far as the program goes, I think they realize that this program is an excellent program. Particularly now that we're starting to win a little more.

Years ago when the Bears were continually on top and dominating the league and winning national championships, they had to do very little recruiting. The program was known; the university was known. It wasn't as big an effort for recruiting. The last couple of years, we've slipped down a bit as far as winning percentage. So it required a little more recruiting by the coaches. Going out and just making contact with people and suggesting that we do have a good program here.

So I don't think, from my perspective anyway, that it's quite as big a deal as it's made out to be. Obviously we have some players here, with the team this year, that would have had the option of going down to the States and chose to stay here.

I also think that, partly because of the whole economic situation of both countries, it's more profitable to stay here.

Gateway: Has it been difficult for you, personally, to combine academics with hockey?

Peacocke: It really hasn't been difficult. People have always asked me about that and people continually say "Oh, gee, I don't know how you're doing a masters degree and playing hockey every day." Because hockey has been such a big part of my life it's something I really enjoy doing. It's not like it's a big effort to do it. It's something that I've accepted that hockey takes a certain amount of time and I've planned my studies around that. It doesn't take away from the work I've done here. I suppose I'd be wrong in saying it never, ever interferes at all. But there's nobody here at this university who is so busy that they can't do something extra other than study. What I do extra is play hockey.

Gateway: In your five years here at the U of A, have you known of any teammates who have had problems with balancing hockey and academic and therefore had to leave either one?

Peacocke: Definitely there's some people who have had trouble but I don't know that you could ever make any direct connection to the hockey. Because there's been so many people that have gone through it. One obvious example is Randy Gregg; he went through and became a doctor and is



"The new players on the team are easily the best group

now in the NHL. There's guys from every faculty so we're very well represented.

Dave Otto, (Bears' centre) I know for sure, is trying to get into medicine and doing very well this year. His marks are right at the top of his class.

It's more a matter of the attitude you take and how well you use your time. If you're going to come here and waste your time then it doesn't matter whether you play hockey or not. You're going to find some way not to study or not work hard on the books.

Gateway: How would you rate your division (CWUAA) as opposed to other divisions in Canada College Hockey and with other leagues such as the NHL junior leagues?

Peacocke: Across our own league, the Canada West division has been very strong for the last 6 or 7 years. It's always been a strong league. I think that's representative in that you can look at who has been in the national finals the last several years; it's either been the Golden Bears or Saskatchewan — the last few years.

It's a very strong league that we are in out here. You get much more defensive hockey and I think that's identifiable by our goals against average. Steve Knowles (Sports Information Director) has just informed the team that we've got a very good chance, this year, of breaking the record for fewest goals against in a season. So that would be a very nice objective or goal to reach.

If you want to compare it to junior leagues or the NHL, it's quite a different type of game. We have 24 league games. We practise all week and play two games on a weekend. So our style of play, I think, is much more intense than the NHL or junior hockey.

As far as calibre is going, obviously you're not going to compare with the NHL. They have some fantastic players there. Against a junior club, we would compete very well, against any junior team, Tier I or Tier II.

The big thing you gain in university hockey is you learn much more about the game than you do in junior hockey. and that's just because you practise so much more. In junior hockey, when you play 80

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