

coach of the Boston Bruins; a name, "Team Canada"; and a team of thirty-five of the best — Canada should win them all and if she didn't there could be no excuses. In truth, the Team was less than perfect; two of the very best would not be playing, Bobby Orr and Bobby Hull — Orr because his knee was still mending from an operation and Hull because he'd jumped to the new World Hockey Association and the NHL owners were saying flatly that if he or any other jumper played they would withdraw all the NHL men. It was a misfortune, but scarcely a calamity.

The Russians arrived in Canada and they seemed to be very nice, healthy young men. Sinden's scouts watched them in practice. They were, to be blunt, unimpressive, their pace slow and low-keyed. They seemed particularly vulnerable at the net; their goalie, Tretiak, had been observed in Europe and compared to NHL performances, he was something of a sieve.

Still, Harry Sinden was not entirely euphoric. There was always the chance of a fluke and, as Harry pointed out, it would be embarrassing to the NHL if the Canadians lost a single game. The series opened in Montreal on September 2.

Sinden started the Ratelle line — Jean Ratelle, Vic Hadfield and Rod Gilbert of the New York Rangers — and backed them up with four other lines of almost equal strength. Don Awrey, of the Bruins, Rod Seiling, Brad Park, Gary Berg-

man and Guy Lapointe were the defense men. Lapointe would be playing on his home base in Montreal. Ken Dryden (who once starred in hockey at Cornell) would be the goalie for the first game.

The Prime Minister dropped the puck for the first face-off and the historic series began. Team Canada lost 7 to 3.

"A little piece of all of us died today," Sinden wrote in his diary. "I've lost some tough games over the years, but I never thought I could feel as badly about losing a single game as I did about this one. Christ, it hurt."

His disappointment was shared by some less philosophical fans. One (or possibly two) sent him a telegram: "Will be in town tomorrow to inspect some of your clowns for our new circus. Barnum and Bailey."

Two nights later Team Canada won in Toronto, 4 to 1. So there.

Then on September 6, in Winnipeg, the two teams tied, 4 to 4. Oh oh.

No one was talking about straight wins any more.

After Vancouver they were hardly talking at all — the Russians won the fourth game, 5 to 3. That night, Sinden decided, the Russians were "as good as any team in the world." The Canadians, who had presumed a sweep, were leaving their home country a full game behind.

