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Blades

In 1975 Roger Baikie, a Montreal bottler of Coca Cola and Canada Dry, gave his brother Hugh, a natural-born tinkerer, \$60,000 and told him to find a way to make a better ice-skate blade.

Hugh spent \$500,000 and came up with the Tuuk, which rhymes with book and is the Inuit word for ice chisel. The Tuuk was made of plastic with a Swedish surgical steel runner. The blade could be bolted to any leather or plastic boot.

The plastic top was merlon polycarbonate, molded in hollow, lopsided cups at heel and toe. The shape was designed to distribute the weight evenly on the outside of the foot. The most remarkable thing about the blade was the runner — traditional carbon steel ones needed to be sharpened frequently, often after every game. The Tuuk needed sharpening only five or six times a season. The Tuuk was also cheaper to build, rustproof, and 40 per cent lighter.

The Tuuk caught on with the Montreal Canadiens first and then with the rest of the National

Hockey League teams. Soon all the principal skate manufacturers were putting Tuuk blades on their best skates, but in 1977 disaster struck. The factory got a defective shipment of polycarbonate which shattered when hit by a puck. The company replaced 60,000 blades at a cost of three-quarters of a million dollars. Sales Manager Dave Johnson says the only thing that saved the company was the fact that by that time the NHL players were so hooked on Tuuks they were willing to give them another chance.

In 1979-80 Tuuk turned out 570,000 pairs of blades itself and Bauer, a skate manufacturer which it had authorized to manufacture Tuuks, added another million.

Tuuks come in a rich variety of types, including figure blades and blades for goalies, at prices up to \$50.

For more information write or call CANPRO Sports Inc., 5790 Ferrier, Montreal, Quebec H4P 1M7, (514) 735-2277.

