

# Van der Merwe vindicated with success at World Cup

By JAMES HOGGETT

A year of controversy has ended with the World Cup bronze medal for the Canadian Women's field hockey team.

By defeating New Zealand 3-2 in overtime, Canada finished third behind the Netherlands and West Germany in the 12-nation championship, held in Amsterdam, Netherlands during August.

"We've proven that we can play in the top four," exclaimed coach Marina Van der Merwe, who is also the coach of the York Yeowomen field hockey team. "On top of that, we have a medal and we will clutch that to our bosom and carry on from here."

Controversy erupted last summer when Van der Merwe's contract was not renewed due to complaints from senior players on the national team about her handling of the team.

In August, 1985, a six-member selection committee from the Canadian Women's Field Hockey Association (CWFHA) voted to rehire Van der Merwe over the only other applicant, Shiaz Virjee, the former manager of the men's national team.

However, CWFHA's Board of Governors refused to ratify the selection of Van der Merwe. To break the impasse, the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, Otto Jelinek, stepped in. Jelinek reinstated Van der Merwe as coach and she was given a one year contract, after which a formal appraisal of her work would be conducted.

As a result, several senior players quit the national team and many

observers dismissed the team's international chances, saying it would not go far with Van der Merwe at the helm.

But the Canadian squad proved the skeptics wrong with their strong showing. Canada's biggest win in this year's World Cup came when they upset the Netherlands 2-1. Canada became the first team to beat the Netherlands since West Germany accomplished the feat in July, 1984. Prior to this loss to Canada the Netherlands was undefeated in its last 32 games.

Canada's record was now 3-1 with their only loss coming against Australia.

Canada's next game was against England who they defeated 1-0 with the only goal coming with just six

minutes remaining to play. This win gave Canada a berth in the semi-finals.

Canada then lost their semi-final match against West Germany by a score of 4-1. This enabled West Germany to move into the finals against the Netherlands and Canada to play New Zealand for the bronze medal.

Although the Canadians could no longer match their silver medal performance in the 1983 World Cup, Van der Merwe said they would be fighting just as fiercely for the bronze. "I think that a letdown like this does touch at the pride," Van der Merwe said. And they know that they had chances and they blew it. And now they've got to make sure that they are very sharp and not blow

those chances again."

By capitalizing on their chances, Canada came away with a 3-2 overtime victory against New Zealand and by doing so won the bronze medal.

Van der Merwe said the Canadians' physical training was a deciding factor in the prolonged game. "It's such a nerve-racking affair when the goals are so difficult to score, (there's) tremendous defense by New Zealand, (and) then to go into overtime," Van der Merwe said. "And here again, it's fitness, fitness, fitness. And it paid off again."

A highlight for the Canadian squad was the stellar goaltending of Sharon Bayes, who is also the goalie for the Yeowomen. Her skills kept the Canadians close in a number of

games until they were able to get their scoring on track.

The only sour note for Canada is the continued uncertainty surrounding Olympic qualifications for 1988. With a top-three finish at the sport's premier event, Canadian officials thought the team should have gained a berth at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. However, it will be much later—no one knows when—before qualification is confirmed.

In the gold medal match the Netherlands shut out West Germany 3-0 for their second consecutive title. The Dutch and Canadians were the only teams to reach the medal round at both this World Cup and the previous one, three years ago in Malaysia.

## Final football roster in flux as season opener approaches

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Rick Lyall and Steve Valriote will have their hands full in filling the vacancies.

At this point it is too early to say where the Yeomen will end up as the roster is still far from being finalized. Training camp opened on August 23 and the coaching staff was faced with a hundred players from which to rebuild a team and provide a nucleus to carry the Yeomen for the next two or three years.

Meanwhile, the cross town rival—UofT Blues have been rebuilding for the past two seasons and feel that this is their chance to peak. Laurier and McMaster are always strong contenders. How the Yeomen will do depends on how strong a squad coach Cosentino is able to muster.

The first pre-season game kicks off on September 6 against Queens at North York Civic Stadium, and the first regular season game is set for September 13.



ROBERTA DI MAIO

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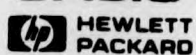
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