

Dollars draw top players to USA

American hockey is built towards academics," explained Perron. "If a Canadian player doesn't make it in Juniors, he'll try an (American) college."

In fact, most players play junior hockey when they're still in high school, so when they get out they either stay in juniors or accept an American scholarship.

The list of ex-NCAA players on NHL rosters is far longer than that of ex-CIAU players.

The number of ex-CIAU players is extremely low. Here are some names: Oiler's defenceman Randy Gregg, Flames' forward Dave Hindmarch, Jets' defencemen Wade Campbell and Don Springs, all of whom came out of the U of A and Flames' defenceman Charile Bourgeois, who played at U of New Brunswick. After these five gentlemen, the list becomes shorter and shorter.

Furthermore, to prove that junior hockey is indeed what Canadian hockey is structure around, all you have to do is look at this weekend's Concordia Stinger lineup.

Of the 24 players listed, only four weren't listed as previously playing junior hockey - three of which were university transfer.

Added Concordia Coach Paul Arsenault, "the pros (NHL) give up on them because they develop and mature late (when they enter collegiate hockey)."

Hockey brass at this weekend's final were brutally realistic about keeping kids from fleeing south of the border. Executive Vice-President of the CIAU, Bob Pugh, stated that even with the offering of maximum (\$1000) scholarships at Canadian universities, it won't shut the door (on players' leaving Canada). He also noted that "in the past two years, financial aid has gone up,"

but that "it's up to each university how much is handed out."

One obvious worry of players on American scholarships is that of the players missing out on their academics. One can only wonder, with the ridiculous story of the football player who went through four years of university and couldn't even read his pro contract. That's exactly what happened to Gary Anderson, a running back with the USFL's Tampa Bay Bandits, after it was found out that he had to get his wife to read the contract to him.

That, however, is an extreme case, and according to Perron, "they (American universities) took care of academics and athletics."

Perron cited one instance in which at Michigan State, Norm Baines, who later went on to play for the Philadelphia Flyers, wasn't allowed on the ice, until he passed some exams that he had earlier failed.

"The programs differ everywhere, but there's a happy medium," explained Perron. "But if you want to play high calibre hockey, then you have to take a lighter load (than most students)."

Perron also added, however, that there will be some players who won't graduate this year. Among those players are Pat Flateley, who went to the U of North Dakota and is now an Islander, and James Patrick, who went to the U of Wisconsin, and who is now a member of the Rangers.

Perron also said that the "exposure" for the players made them feel that they got "their money's worth."

As far as crowds are concerned, this is where CIAU has taken its greatest fall. While the fans are plentiful in Moncton at the U of New Brunswick (2 playoff crowds of over 3500) and in Saskatchewan

(800, sellout every game), places like our own U of Alberta (500 average in regular season) and Toronto (400 average in 5000 seat arena) are sadly lacking.

The main reason for this imbalance is competition. The Bears, for example, really only had good competition from Saskatchewan and Manitoba (who are not even in the Bears' conference).

A GPAC Canada West merger would only help both divisions and would probably draw some better crowds.

Stinger Coach Arsenault has even gone as far as to ask for a reduced conference (QUAA) schedule so that his team could play more non-conference, in other words better, teams. Arsenault has never lost a QUAA title since he's been at Concordia (20 seasons) so it would appear his request is more than justified.

"The only way we can get that (high level of competition) is if we put the teams back into a nationwide conference," stated Arsenault. "Until then, hockey in this country will remain a stagnant sport."

Pugh said that while there will probably be more inter-conference play, a "coast-to-coast league" is not probably. He cited "finances" and "time away from school" as reasons for it not happening.

"Only when athletic directors decide that football and basketball are no longer priorities over hockey, as they are now, it won't change," explained Arsenault. "Until that day, we'll always be second class citizens."

Unfortunate but probably true, let's hope that the CIAU recognizes this "second-rate citizenship" and puts college

hockey where it belongs, back on top.

From the Den: Best words to describe the Bears' misfortune in Trois-Rivieres? They were uttered by a Bears' forward on the bus trip back to Montreal to catch a plane ride home. Said the forward "it was like reading a bad book." A book that the Bears couldn't just put down either; a book that hopefully has some good sequels to it...

Ex-Oiler Jim Corsi's brother Rick is one of the team managers for the Stingers...

Quipped one reporter at the final game, which was televised, approached starting time and the stands (4000) were still empty, "looks like they're going to have to paint faces on the seats opposite the cameras to make it look good."

Average attendance for the 3 days was 1400 a day.

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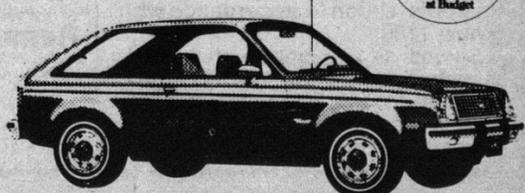
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