Canadian skaters shine

Canadians won two gold medals and a silver at the Richmond international skating competition held recently in London, England.

Brian Pockar of Calgary won the men's title, while Barbara Underhill of Oshawa, Ontario and Paul Martini of Toronto captured the pairs title. Tracey Wainman of Toronto placed second in the women's competition.

Pockar, the Canadian champion, had fewer points and more ordinals than Scott Hamilton of the United States, but because Pockar was placed first by four of seven judges he took the title. Pockar finished first in the free-skating long program and had an aggregate total of 137.58 points and 12 ordinals, while Hamilton had 137.82 points and 11 ordinals.

Underhill and Martini placed first in both the free-skating and short program to beat Ilena Volianskaia and Vaseli Spiridonov of the Soviet Union. The Canadians were marked first by all seven judges, finishing with 105.88 points; the Soviet couple won the silver with 21 ordinals and 99.32 points.

Wainman, with 130.18 points and 16 ordinals, finished second behind Sandy Lenz of the United States.

Seadogs instead of hotdogs?

Canadian researchers have developed the seadog, also known as the fish frankfurter or fish hotdog. It is cheaper, less fattening, more nutritious and easier to digest than a red meat wiener.

The wiener's contents, which include cod, squid, non-fat dry milk, corn oil, seasoning and a preservative, are molded into hotdog form, steamed for seven minutes and then cooled. The seadog is then ready for the consumer, who can cook it like a hotdog.

Professor Eileen LeBlanc of the home economics department of Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax said she and research assistant Judy Colye developed the new food product – now awaiting a patent – during the past year-and-a-half at a cost of about $8,000, including staff time.

If seafood companies, which have already expressed interest, soon begin marketing and promotion, the product could be on supermarket shelves within months, at about $1.40 a pound compared to $1.89 to $2.19 for hotdogs, she said.

While Japan and the Soviet Union have seafood sausages, higher in fat than the new seadog and with a surrounding skin, a fish hotdog has not been developed before, to Professor LeBlanc's knowledge.

The idea occurred to her when she pondered the popularity of fast food and the abundance of fish on the east coast. "We're a convenience-food-oriented society, so we should be looking for things that are fast but have good nutritional value."

The product is higher in protein than a red-meat hotdog, has vitamin A (absent in hotdogs) and contains about 80 calories a dog compared to the competition's 134 calories.

Taste-testers at the university have scrutinized the seadog for colour, chewiness, elasticity, moisture, aftertaste and particle size, and have given it a rave review.

Year-round Macs

Canada is the home of the McIntosh apple, but even in this country these apples are only available part of the year because of storage limitations.

Now high-quality Macs may soon be available year-round as a result of a new storage system developed by Agriculture Canada.

After the fall harvest, McIntosh apples are stored in special controlled atmosphere (CA) storages so they can be marketed during the winter. However, quality is reduced and the apples can only be kept in storage for about six months.

"But, with a few improvements to storage facilities, we have developed a system that increases the storage life potential by about 50 per cent," said Perry Lidster, a plant physiologist at the department's Kentville, Nova Scotia research station.

The new system also enhances shelf-life after the apples are taken out of storage and gives the apples a flavour and quality similar to just-picked fruit.

In conventional CA storage facilities, the apples are placed in a large room, the temperature is lowered to just above freezing and the oxygen content of the air is reduced.

The researchers found that by making the room air-tight, lowering the oxygen level even further to 1 per cent or less, and raising the temperature to about 2.8 degrees Celsius (37 degrees Fahrenheit), apples keep better and longer.

By raising the temperature and lowering the oxygen level, high-quality fruit can be maintained for eight to 12 months.

When apples are removed from the Kentville CA storage system, and placed in a simple cold storage at 0 degrees C (32 degrees F), they are capable of regenerating some of their lost flavour.

Gold discovered in lake

Four men say they have found a load of gold concentrate lost almost half a century ago when a tractor and dogsleds carrying the shipment across Island Lake in Manitoba, plunged through the ice. They say the haul may be worth up to $3.5 million.

The group has already salvaged one ton of the concentrate, and say that Warnock Hersey Appraisal Company of Winnipeg has assayed it at eight to ten ounces of gold a ton.

The members of the four-way partnership are Don McIvor, regional vice-president of the Manitoba Métis Federation, who instigated the hunt after hearing rumours of the missing gold; Bruce Kontartuk, a Manitoba Hydro engineer and trained diver; Wayne Wambolt, a Nova Scotian diver and Abraham McPherson, a veteran trapper who found the exact spot where the gold disappeared in 1934.

The concentrate was found 24 metres (80 feet) under the surface of the lake, which is about 420 kilometres (255 miles) northeast of Winnipeg.

According to the now almost-legendary accounts, two sleds with 500 bags of the concentrate were being dragged across the lake by a tractor. The ice gave way, and while the crew had time to leap to safety, the tractor and two sleds vanished, along with five dogs chained to the second sled.

Apparently, no salvage operations were ever attempted.

Mr. McIvor says there could be 30 tons of concentrate on the sleighs. Because the concentrate contains chemically-bound gold, he believes it could contain a greater amount of the metal than the assay shows. On that basis he calculates a possible value, with gold selling at more than $650 U.S. ($750 Canadian) an ounce, at $3.5 million.