

Gateway Interview:

Ken Dryden off the ice and on *The Game*

by Bernard Poitras

Ken Dryden, the Vezina Trophy winning goalie who shared 5 Stanley Cups with the Montreal Canadiens, was in Edmonton last week to talk about his first book, *The Game*. In it he describes his last year with les Habs and gives his views on the hockey of yesterday and today. He commented further on these subjects and on his University hockey career with *The Gateway* in the green room at ITV.

Gateway: How has the style of play, in the NHL, changed from when you were playing?

Dryden: It's a more wide open game than what it was. The scores are a lot higher. I think it was a style of play that needed to be opened up. I think, however, at this stage it is a style in transition, that we are just learning how to play an open ice game. We unfortunately equate an open ice game with a game that is out of control, where 6, 7, 8 goals come naturally. I think that as we come to be more comfortable with it we will put it under control. We will realize that there can be that sort of a game where defence does not disappear, where there is a bit of discipline and control and the score can be 4-1 and 3-2.

Gateway: Why did you pick Cornell University over a Canadian college?

Dryden: I decided I just wanted to go away from home, that was the first thing. I grew up in Toronto and that meant not going to the U of Toronto or York University or even McMaster. I had some friends that had gone to Princeton and that was really my first occasion of being interested. I just thought if I was going away, I wanted to go someplace different. So that was the principle reason and also at the time and, even now, that if you are playing college hockey, there is a greater degree of interest in college hockey in the US than there is in Canada.

Gateway: Should Canadian colleges increase their scholarship funds for students who want to continue their studies as well as hockey as the US does?

Dryden: I don't know. I have very mixed feelings about that. From a hockey point of view the Universities would be performing a terrific service if they were to encourage hockey through the Universities. Not only would it be a service to the players involved in the broadest sense of allowing them to continue in both activities (school and hockey) but it would help create a different mode of development of a player in Canada. A

player that would play fewer games and practise more often, a player that would learn a game, understand a game, and learn how to improve. Everybody needs to improve at what they do, and it is a skill to know how to improve, to know how to practise, to know how to work on your skills and make them better. The system we have, through junior hockey and even through minor hockey before that where the focus is almost completely on games and very little on practise it is not a good way to learn skills.

University hockey would bring to the fore some good hockey minds. There would be more innovative coaches. That would come out of it. We have paid a considerable price, that way, for the hockey development as it is.

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On the other hand, is the problem: Whether the Universities want to do that sort of thing. The record of combining athletics at a high and ambitious level and a University education is not a very good one. There are a lot of conflicts. There are a lot of incentives to abuse a system that seems to work on paper. So, if I was a University and I was interested in doing that sort of thing, I would be extremely careful. I would not be interested in abusing my University just for the sake of finding a place for some hockey players.

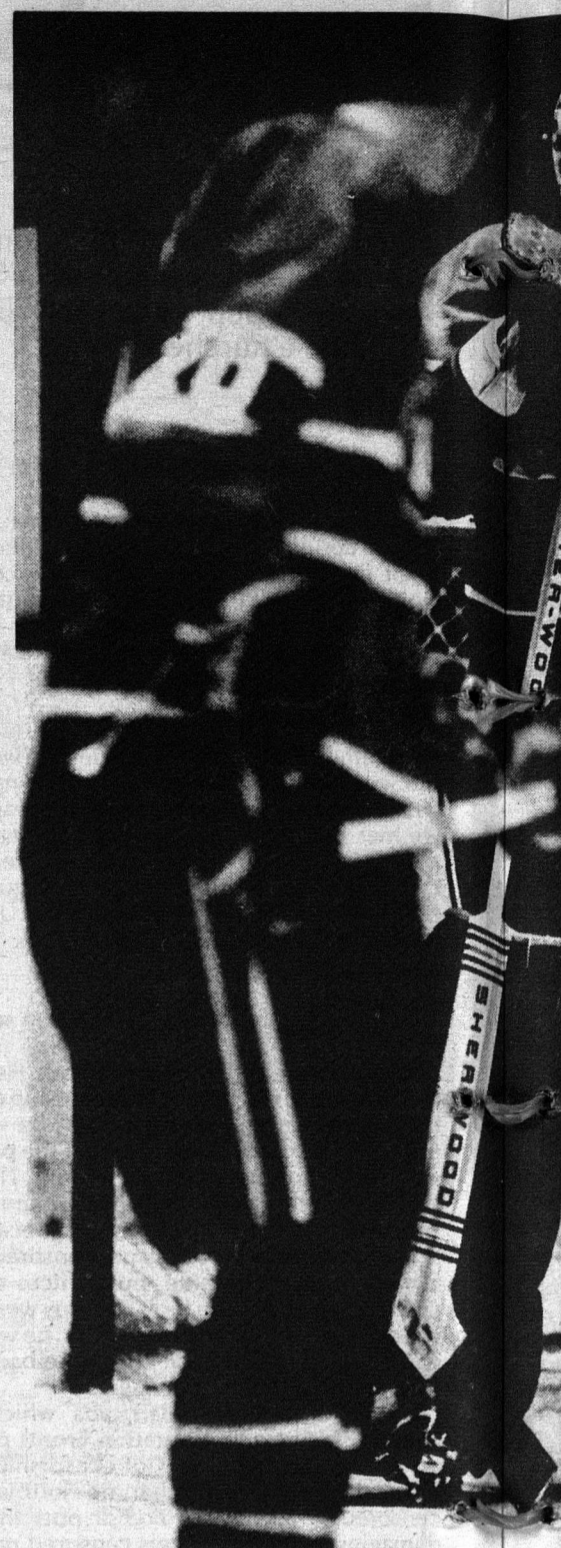
Gateway: How would you rate Canadian colleges vs. American colleges? In terms of hockey, combined with studies.

Dryden: Well, I haven't seen too many Canadian college games. I think, that in almost every case, the kind of schedule you have, in both countries, can work very comfortably. You only play a relative handful of games, of probably not more than 40 over a season, which means, on the average, one and a half games a week. You can schedule practices at opportune times.

In terms of the calibre of teams, again, I haven't seen them play against each other. But it's my impression that the best US college teams would beat the best Canadian college teams.

Gateway: What is it going to take for the NHL to sell hockey to the US; to sell a contract with a major US network?

Dryden: Oh. It won't get one. What it would take, is for hockey to become a US sport, a game that is not a regional sport, but a game that is played in almost every part of the country. Hockey is not going to be a game that is



"I think the Oilers have become a very special team, they certainly win a Stanley Cup."

