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PHOTOS BY ROBERTA DI MAIO

Back door Bears undeserving 1986 CIAU champs

The entire CIAU hockey championships were a joke. And so for that matter, was the organization of the same.

Terry Jones, Columnist
Edmonton Sun

Even though the home team won the big game, no one in Edmonton admitted that it was a great Canadian University hockey final. There were just too many things that took away the value of the championship for the Alberta Golden Bears.

First of all, Alberta had absolutely no right to be in the final. They lost in their own league's semi-final to the Saskatchewan Huskies, who lost in the conference final to the Calgary Dinosaurs, who had to qualify for the national finals by playing Trois Rivieres on the Quebec team's home ice. As one of the Yeomen noted over the weekend, "when you have to play in Quebec, you're down two goals before the game even starts."

Calgary lost big in two straight games while Alberta was at home preparing for the finals.

But it's not the first time something like this has happened. Just last year, York downed the University of Toronto in OUAA semi-final play, but Toronto as host team was assured a spot in the CIAU tournament. Fortunately for the CIAU, York won the University Cup and Toronto was eliminated early. Can you imagine the embarrassment if what happened this year had happened two years in a row?

Thankfully, the host team format will be going the way of Laurentian and RMC football teams. By the end of next year's season, host teams will be an extinct breed.

The tournament will be hosted by Alberta for the next two years, but if they make it into the finals in the future it will be solely because of their own merits. The way it should be.

But being a host team was not the only thing the Golden Bears had going for them. As hosts, they were allowed to choose on which date they wished to play, Thursday or Saturday. Naturally they picked the Thursday date, giving themselves two full days of rest before Sunday's final. Meanwhile, they other finalists, UQTR had to play its second game on Sunday in less than 22 hours.

Is it any wonder that Alberta won the 1986 hockey crown?

The tournament's format will undergo some revisions over the summer months when the coaches association will meet with the CIAU in June.

Gone will be the regional playdowns—a bad idea from the start—as well as the host teams.

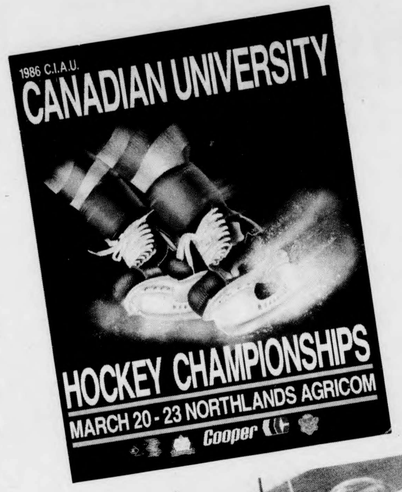
The proposal that the coaches association agreed upon in Edmonton will include just the four conference champions. It sounds so simple it makes you wonder why it was not implemented before.

Imagine it, representatives from each geographic and cultural area of Canada. The West, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes meeting once every year for an exchange of body checks, hospitality and culture.

Yeomen head coach Dave Chambers is in favor of the four conference champion meeting in the national final. No host team or regional playdowns for Chambers, "As far as I'm concerned, if we don't win the OUAA we don't deserve to go to Edmonton," he said during the league playoffs.

"The Final Four is exciting, but the CIAU has to market and sell the event," Chambers said in Edmonton, "The NCAA does it and draws 18-19,000 fans. There's no reason we can't."

It seems for now at least, that the Vanier Cup will have to remain as the only properly promoted and financially viable CIAU event of the athletic season.



The Agricom is a multi purpose facility. During York's semi-final game 200 horses changed hands in the adjacent auction pit. The smell was contagious.

Fan apathy not solely a York problem

It seems that lack of fan support for varsity teams is not solely a York problem. The pipeline that fuels the York campus with apathy continues on westward and is directly connected to the campus of the University of Alberta.

With the host team in the national final—supposedly the big draw of the tournament—Sunday's game lured a mere 2,964 fans.

In all fairness, York was in the final last year at Varsity Arena and the stands were just as empty. But York literally came out of nowhere, with little advance warning and with a string of poor seasons behind them. Last year no one expected much from the Yeomen.

On the other hand, Alberta has one of the most successful hockey programs in the country, with seven CIAU titles to their credit. College hockey is a big deal in Edmonton. A glance over the tournament weekend's press clippings will prove that. It's just that the people responsible for promoting the event could not promote their way out of a paper bag. The entire tournament drew a total 4,921 fans. The final game of the York-U of T series drew close to that with 4,200.

According to one newspaper reporter, the number of combined fans for the CIAU hockey championship was more than the Alberta Golden Bears football team had for the entire season.

But empty seats in the crowd was just one of the problems with the tournament.

Organizers chose to shift the tournament from the Northlands Colliseum to the Northlands Agricom. This saved embarrassment leaving only 1,000 seats vacant instead of 15,000 in the final game, but infuriated the broadcast media, especially TSN and CTV.

The Agricom has no press box, and the broadcast crews had to build their own makeshift broadcast booth. Instead of proper facilities, camera angles and the rest, they had to start from scratch costing both added time and money. Things were such a shambles, TSN did not even bother to broadcast the Moncton-Alberta semi-final game on Thursday night. Without proper television coverage, how can the CIAU begin to promote itself properly?

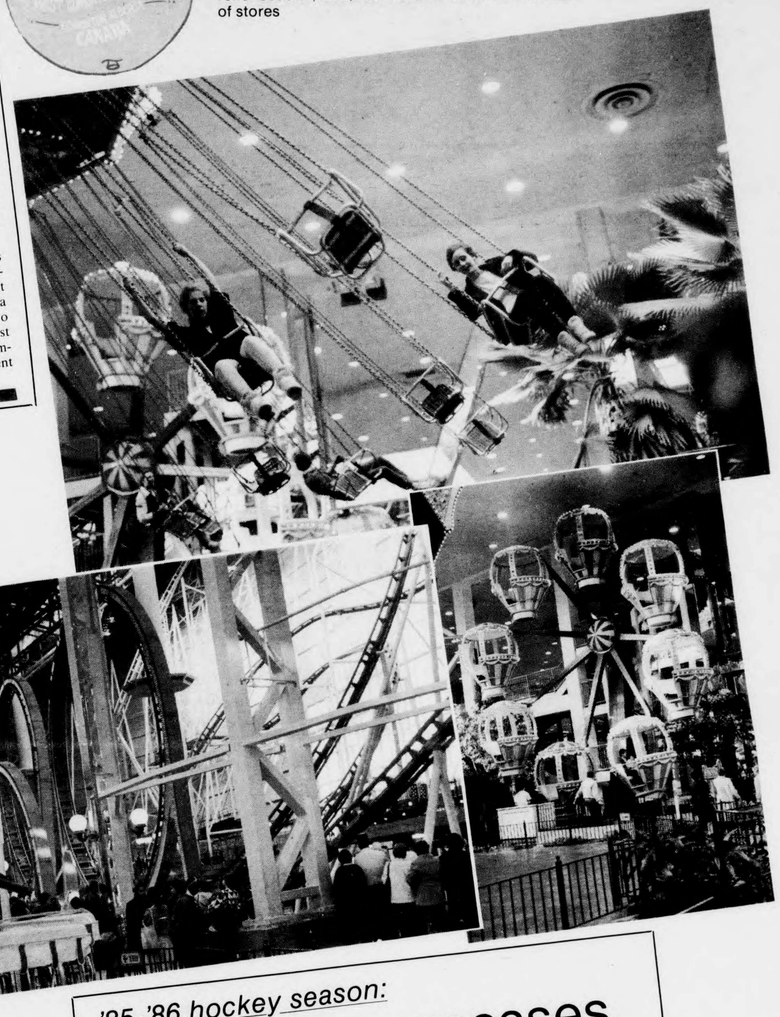
Everything had to be paid for as well, including tickets for awards banquets and tickets for the final game. Players who competed in the tournament but where not involved in the final, along with dignitaries from the competing universities, had to pay for entry into the arena. This is much like inviting someone over for dinner and then asking them to pay for their meal.

The tournament is a money losing venture, period. No matter how many things the organizers found they could charge for, and even if they had three consecutive sell-outs in the Agricom, they still would have lost money.

This problem once again reflects on the problem of promotion that should be going on year round and across the country. Things have been on the upswing this year in the OUAA and with the CIAU players joining NHL teams and the Olympic program, CIAU hockey is sure to become higher in profile and respect in the near future.

The puck is now in the CIAU's and Alberta's end of the rink. With the championship tournament being held in Edmonton for the next two years, perhaps we will be able to see a properly run final in 1988. Organizers have two years to work out the kinks and hand the host school for 1989 a viable, profitable and streamlined model of how a final four tournament should be run.

The West Edmonton Mall is the largest facility of its kind in Canada. It covers an area equal to 19 football fields and houses an entire amusement park complete with roller coaster, lake, ice rink and of course hundreds of stores



"Even though the home team won the big game, no one in Edmonton admitted it was a great university hockey final. There were just too many problems that took away the value of the championship for the Alberta Golden Bears."

Macdonald member of Hockey Canada

With 47 years as a hockey player and a former presidency of the third largest university in Canada behind him, Ian Macdonald has the right stuff and credentials for the position of Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee for Hockey Canada. Former York president Macdonald attended the 1986 CIAU hockey championships as one of Hockey Canada's official representatives.

Macdonald began playing hockey at the age of 10 and has not given it up yet, playing the game today with the York faculty hockey team each and every Friday morning at the Ice Palace. He was asked to join Hockey Canada during his presidency (1974-1984), because as president of a university and an avid hockey fan he could act as a liaison with the CIAU.

Macdonald was instrumental in the reformation of the National Student Team that competed against an NCAA all-star team and a team from Czechoslovakia in Battlecreek, Michigan over the Christmas holidays. Yeomen head coach Dave Chambers coached the team, which beat the Americans 6-5 in overtime, while Yeomen Bill Maguire and Brian Small were also members of the team.

He is also responsible for the Centre of Excellence in Calgary and the development of hockey up to and beyond the Calgary Olympics in 1988.

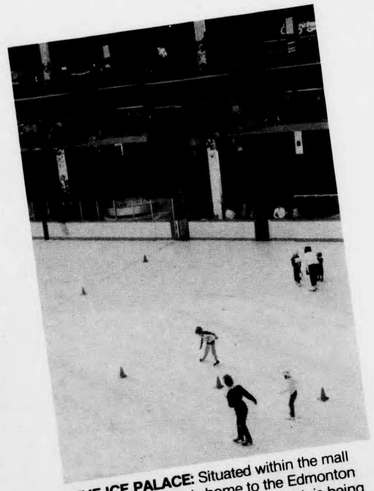
"One of our strong objectives is to support the CIAU," Macdonald said, "the more support we give to the CIAU, the more potential there is for building a strong national team."

Evidence of the commitment Hockey Canada is showing for the development of CIAU hockey can be seen with a quick glance down the current Olympic team roster. The present team now includes seven former CIAU players. All-Canadians Kevin Hamlin of Toronto, and John Leblanc of New Brunswick were both recently added to the squad as was Mike Tomlak of Western. Other CIAU players are Parie Proft—Alberta, Serge Roy—Moncton, Vaughn Karpan—Manitoba, and of course Don Mclaren of York.

Mcdonald realizes that schooling can no longer be touted as one of the benefits of playing for the Olympic team as only two players were able to complete their already reduced course loads. With a 71 game schedule that saw the team in Japan, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, and the Soviet Union, there is little time, if any, for concentrated study efforts.

"We will have to look at the problem and schedule time a little differently in future. There are other ways of doing it (getting an education). Perhaps the players will be attending school during the summer session," Mcdonald said.

IAN MACDONALD: President of York from '74 to '84 is currently a member of Hockey Canada's Planning and Development Committee.



THE ICE PALACE: Situated within the mall complex, this rink is home to the Edmonton Oilers' practices when their own rink is being used.

'85-'86 hockey season:

A year of successes

Despite a poor showing in the national championship semi-final game, the York Yeomen's hockey season can be placed in the category of success.

Last year York won its first OUAA and CIAU hockey crowns in their history. In 1986 the Yeomen repeated as Ontario champions and were among only four teams to reach the national final tournament.

With 11 new players on this year's roster, the Yeomen took some time getting into a cohesive unit, but showed great promise winning the pre-season York/Seneca tournament. The Yeomen also came out as winners in the inaugral York trounament, downing Acadia and Western on their way to the championship.

Regular season play also improved greatly as they lost just a single home game. Only two surprising losses to McMaster and U of T prevented York from finishing higher than third in the OUAA standings.

But the greatest thrills came in the playoffs, the subway series in particular. The Yeomen and the Blues battled it out in three exciting games before thousands of fans, laying the groundwork for a good following of fans in the future.

The Yeomen had two players named as OUAA all-stars with both Scott Mosey and Bill Maguire being chosen as second team all-stars. It was the first time two Yeomen were chosen all-stars since the 1980-81 season. Maguire, along with Brian Small played for the National Student Team which was coached by Yeomen head coach Dave Chambers. In addition, York had eight representatives in the first OUAA all-star game which was held at Varsity Arena.

There will be few changes to the team for next year as almost all players are in only their first or second year of eligibility. Only Rick Simpson and Mark Applewhaite will be leaving the team. Simpson will spend next year teaching and playing hockey in England while Applewhaite will concentrate on academics in the Business program.

The Yeomen missed in this year's bid for a second consecutive national title but are sure to repeat in a few years when players gain more experience and a balance of veterans and freshmen is established.

"We finished in the top three in our league, which was one of our pre-season goals," said head coach Chambers. "We were disappointed at the final four but in retrospect we've won two OUAA and one CIAU championships in the last two years and we're quite happy with that."

Chambers feels that not too many changes have to be made to the team for next year except in one crucial area, "We don't need a lot of players, but we do need a couple of goal scorers. That seemed to be our problem this year."