

# Canada Cup critique

by the Evil Robot Users (Scott Simpson and Rob Ellison)

This year's edition of Team Canada has been chalk full of surprises. What with Stevie Y not making the team, Messier arriving at the midnight hour to make the squad (complete with subsequent statement that he will not be an Oiler next year), the big name no-shows, Lindros making the team and making headlines nation-wide for his Quebec situation. Heck, we had to consciously remind ourselves that these guys actually played hockey over the past couple of weeks, too. Let's see, it all started way back in the start of August.

## Training Camp

Many of the country's superstars are not on this year's incarnation of Team Canada. Some, like Super Mario and Patrick Roy had injury problems whereas others (Bourque and Richer) cited "personal reasons". Fuhr was waiting for his wife his child, and Recchi (among others) reacted the end of their NHL contracts and would have had to buy their own insurance for playing. Suffice it to say, TC had many noticeable no-shows.

However, Canada did have a powerful squad in camp, too. Powerful enough for "Iron" Mike Keenan to cut three of the leagues most prolific scorers in Steve Yzerman, Joe Sakic and Adam Oates (Yzerman was technically put on the "taxi squad", but was sent home after it was apparent he wouldn't see any action). Many were befuddled at Keenan's selection of Lindros and Graham (among others) over these talents. But, as Keenan the Barbarian is quick to point out, "TC should not have the nation's 23 best players, it should have the 23 players that make the best team". Heck, sounds logical to us.

Further headlines were made after the oh-so-successful coup of the Soviet Union (quick, for 25 points and a shot at the bonus round, name the leader of the ill-fated coup). Alan Eagleson went so far as to speculate that two Canadian teams could be entered if the mighty Soviet could not attend the party. However, the Russians did show up in time for the tournament (although as it turns out maybe they shouldn't have bothered).

## Game 1 - Canada 2 vs Finland 2

Maybe it was all the press about who did/didn't make the team. Maybe it was the absence of Stevie Y/Theo Fleury. Maybe they were drunk. Whatever the reason, Canada played a less-than-brilliant Game 1 as they tied the Finns who had never won a game in Canada Cup play since the tournament's inception in 1976. The Finns are led by Esa Tikkanen and Jari Kurri, but it was Lumme's two goals and Ketterer's goaltending that led the Finns on this night to an unexpected tie with TC. Ranford made some impressive saves and No-Check 99 provided what little spark the Canadians had in the TC effort. The winner of the "unique Inuit sculpture" for TC: Wild Bill Ranford. Overall, we rate this game a B- for Canada.

## Game 2 - Canada 6 vs USA 3

To provide some much needed spark that was evidently missing from Game 1, Keenan hailed a cab and out came that perky little Theoren Fleury (don'tcha just love watching that little guy throw his weight around?) TC rolled to a 5-0 lead and then kicked back, had a smoke and coasted to an easy 6-3 victory. One of the few bright spots for the Yanks was Hull's second goal of the tourney (including exhibition games). During the Team USA training camp, Badger Bob Johnson looked as if Hull had been on the Golf and Luncheon Circuit for the whole summer.

Johnson wasn't the coach of Team USA during the tournament however, as he went to take care of a nasty toothache before the tourney began and ended up having a malignant brain tumor removed, with another tumor left in to be treated separately. Yeesh.

The USA continued on with a replacement coach and eventually ended up with second place in the tournament. Gretzky won his first of four consecutive players of the game. We give this game an A.

## Game 3 - Canada 4 vs Sweden 1

An easy win for TC, with the "Wayne Gretzky Hockey Circus and Grandstand Extravaganza" coming to the Gardens in Trahnnah. Once again, TC showed up early, jumped to a big lead and then relaxed (geez, this is vintage mid-80's Oiler hockey, here). Wayne particularly impressed Rob, who after #99 sat behind the net unchecked for a couple of weeks, evaded an oncoming Swede by bouncing the puck off the back of the net (passing it back to himself), proclaimed "I'm not worthy! I'm not worthy" and proceeded to bow before the Great One's greatness. We give this game an A+. Oooh...

## Game 4 - Canada 6 vs CSFR 2

Good day, and welcome to Montreal and the Eric Lindros Boo-a-thon. Poor wee Eric was pelted with boos every time he touched the puck (we clapped, politely in Eric's defense quiet enough to not upset the large anti-Eric crowd sitting around us at the Forum). However, many jeers turned to cheers when Eric the Red decimated his second player of the tournament midway through the third. Otherwise Canada coasted to an easy win (great start, relaxing finish) with Dominik "I can't see the puck" Hasek looking like he doesn't belong being Belfour's backup in Chicago. Overall, a solid B+.

*Sidenote: Rob almost got us beat up and thrown out of the Forum. In all the Cup games, he took, like three rolls of film/game. Midway through the first, we were politely(?) informed no pictures allowed. As we were leaving we saw all sorts of cameras being confiscated by the Forum Security dudes. Rob managed to smuggle his out without incident, just to bring you lovely people the action shots you see along with this article.*

## Game 5 - Canada 3 vs USSR 3

Yawn. What? Hey? Hmmm? Sorry, seemed to be drifting off to sleep there for a minute. Uninspired



play by the Canucks, a good game by the Soviets (if they played like this earlier, they would not be out of the tournament). Not really exciting, a C game, at best. The whole story of this game was the classy reception given Eric, particularly when judged against the Montreal reaction two nights earlier. No eggs, no tomatoes. Not much excitement in the crowd at all after the 5 minute standing for the Flower. A good night to do laundry.

*Sidenote: The player of the game should have been almost anyone except Gretzky (the look on his face when he won shows he thinks the same as us). It probably should have been Ranford, but I guess when you're stuck for a choice, Wayner's a good bet.*

And now, predictions for the Semi-Finals (already played by the time you read this and we probably look like idiots for our choices)

## Finland vs USA

Scott: Finland 5-3 over the USA. I know, I know. The USA will probably squeeze this one out, but the Finns are playing inspired hockey. Besides, I know Rob is picking the States in this one, and I want to create a "Siskel and Ebert" - like repartee, so I had to be different.

Rob: USA 6-2 over Finland. The US should easily win this game over the overmatched Finns. They have incredible firepower and great goaltending in Mike Richter. However, if Ketterer stands on his head, the Finns could make it close.

## Sweden vs Canada

Rob: Canada 5-4 (OT) over Sweden. If Canada goes back to the quick start, relaxing style of play it used during the tournament, it could be in trouble. Only a sparkling performance by Ranford saved the round-

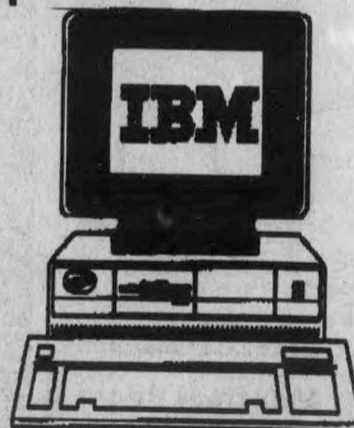
robin TC Sweden matchup. But, I know we'll hang on to win.

Scott: Canada 7-3 over Sweden. What? 5-4 in OT? Are you drunk Rob? (See, I've got the "Siskel Over-reaction" down already). This shouldn't even be close. Since the game matters, we should see an inspired Team Canada. Watch for the surprise addition of Ed Belfour on the wing, with Steve Yzerman coming in as a late replacement for assistance coach Pat Burns, who is recovering from a food-related injury.

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