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## ICE HOCKEY - CANADA'S MOST POPULAR SPORT

The first game of ice hockey was played in Canada shortly before the start of this century. Although there is some controversy as to where this historic game was played, and who participated in it, there is no question of the sport's popularity among Canadians. Today, more than 260,000 Canadians play hockey in organized leagues, where adults and boys as young as six years of age find skilled coaching and well-matched competition.

The game is played by two teams on skates. The players move a cylindrical piece of hard rubber (the puck), approximately one inch thick and three inches in diameter, along the surface of an ice-covered playing arena (the rink) by means of a bladed stick.

### Description

The object of the game is to score goals by driving or shooting the puck with the hockey-stick into the opposing team's goal area, which is defended by a goaltender. If the puck is not stopped by the goaltender, one goal is counted for the attacking team. The team generally consists of from 15 to 20 players, six of whom may be on the ice at any time as the playing team. The members of the playing team are alternated throughout the game, though the goaltender usually plays the entire game without substitution. The game is one hour in length and is divided into three playing periods of 20 minutes, with intervening rest periods.

Besides giving many Canadians hours of recreation and exercise, hockey provides entertainment as a spectator sport. Each week thousands of people attend games in their home cities and towns, and millions regularly watch professional hockey on television.

### Professional leagues

The foremost professional hockey league is the National Hockey League, which, in spite of its name, is international in scope. At present there are 18 teams in the league, three in Canada and 15 in the United States. The Canadian teams are the Montreal Canadians, the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Vancouver Canucks. The U.S. teams are the Boston Bruins, New York Rangers, New York Islanders, Chicago Black Hawks, Detroit Red Wings, California Golden Seals, Los Angeles Kings, Philadelphia Flyers, Pittsburg Penguins, St. Louis Blues, Minnesota North Stars, Buffalo Sabres, Washington Capitals, Kansas City Scouts and Atlanta Flames.

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National Hockey League teams play a 76-game schedule, extending from early October to late March and culminating in an eight-team play-off. The symbol of professional hockey supremacy is the Stanley Cup, donated in 1893 by Lord Stanley of Preston during his term as Governor General of Canada.

A second major professional hockey league - the World Hockey Association - was formed in 1971. Ten teams took part in the 70-game schedule for the 1972-73 season. Today the WHA comprises the following 14 teams: Canada -- Quebec City Nordiques, Toronto Toros, Winnipeg Jets, Edmonton Oilers and Calgary Cowboys; United States -- New England Whalers (Hartford, Connecticut), Baltimore Clippers, Chicago Cougars, Cleveland Crusaders, Minnesota Fighting Saints (St. Paul), Indianapolis Racers, Phoenix Roadrunners, Houston Aeros and San Diego Mariners.

The viability of the new league was all but guaranteed by the acquisition of the NHL star player Bobby Hull by the Winnipeg team -- a move that encouraged other top players from the NHL to cast in their lot with the fledgling WHA.

The WHA trophy, the Avco Cup, was won in the league's founding year by the New England Whalers. For the 1973-74 season, it was won by the Houston Aeros, with the aid of the great Gordie Howe.

A recent move by the five Canadian teams to form their own division of the WHA is regarded by Canadians as a step in the "repatriation" of their national game.

Professional hockey is also played in three other North American Leagues -- the American Hockey League, the Western Hockey League and the Central Professional Hockey League. Canada has only one team in these leagues -- the Halifax Voyageurs of the American Hockey League. With few exceptions, however, professional hockey players are Canadian-born. Canadians generally take an intense interest in the fortunes of all professional teams, no matter where "home ice" may be situated.

#### Amateur leagues

Canada's top amateur trophy, the Allan Cup, was first awarded in 1908. Each spring Canada's various senior leagues declare winners and those from each province compete in the national senior finals for this coveted trophy. Though played in smaller arenas than the Montreal Forum or Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens, the Allan Cup finals often set attendance marks of nearly 50,000 for the entire playoff series.

Equal in prestige to the Allan Cup is the Memorial Cup, which is awarded to the best Canadian junior hockey team. This cup was donated in 1919 as a memorial to the many Canadian hockey players who had served in the First World War. Memorial Cup competition is for junior teams with players of 19 and 20 years of age, a group that includes practically all the professional "stars of tomorrow". The national playoffs attract large numbers of spectators, the record being a total of over 100,000 for a seven-game series.

The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, which stimulates interest and encourages ability in hockey through Canada, does not provide for national competition below the junior level. CAHA branches stage provincial championships for juveniles (players aged 16 to 17), midgets (14 and 15), and bantams (12 and 13). Intermediate divisions for adults, and junior classes below Memorial Cup calibre, have their own championships.

One reason for an upsurge of interest in hockey is the annual "Minor Hockey Week in Canada", held under the auspices of the CAHA and its branches. National publicity, thousands of community "minor hockey nights", and the support of public figures, including the Prime Minister of Canada, have all contributed to the success of this national institution.

#### Hockey Canada

As a result of the report in 1969 of the Task Force on Sport for Canadians, an organization entitled Hockey Canada was established. This organization has on its board of directors representatives of all hockey interests in Canada, including the National Hockey League, the World Hockey Association, the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association and the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union. In addition, it has representatives from the Federal Government and from the public at large.

Hockey Canada has assumed responsibility for Canada's participation in international hockey. In addition, it offers scholarships to outstanding young hockey players who wish to continue their education, and conducts research into coaching methods.

#### International competition

Hockey has made great strides internationally since the first recognized world hockey competition took place at Antwerp in connection with the 1920 Winter Olympic Games. The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association has each year (with one or two notable exceptions, such as the Winter Olympics in Moscow in 1957, at which Canada was not represented) provided the Canadian representative. Club teams (as

distinct from national "all-star" teams) have won 19 world championships and six Olympic hockey titles for Canada. In addition, Canada has, since 1945, sent many amateur teams on exhibition tours through such countries as Japan, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and East and West Germany.

In the last few years, the calibre of hockey in other countries has so improved that Canada now feels justified in moving into the all-star classification, rather than sending a strengthened club team into world competition. The experiment with a national team started with the Ninth Winter Olympic Games at Innsbruck in 1964, at which Canada was represented by a group of young Canadians, mostly university students, between the ages of 19 and 27. The improvement in European teams was dramatically shown by a three-way tie for second place among Canada, Czechoslovakia and Sweden. When the goal averages were calculated, Canada, for the first time in history, failed to win an Olympic hockey medal.

In 1970, Canada withdrew from international competition on the ground that it was not allowed to send its best (i.e. professional) players. The issue has not yet been resolved, although negotiations at the 1975 meetings of the International Ice Hockey Federation seem to indicate that a solution may be reached in the near future.

#### Team Canada 1972 and 1974

Years of negotiation between hockey officials of the Soviet Union and Canada culminated in September 1972 in an agreement that a series of eight games would be played pitting Canadian professionals from the National Hockey League against the amateur world champions from the U.S.S.R. After a first-game defeat, the ill-prepared Canadians stumbled across Canada losing three of four games played in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

Accompanied by nearly 3,000 devoted fans, Team Canada went on to defeat the Soviet team in Moscow, thereby regaining some of the prestige lost during the Canadian half of the series.

In 1974, the newly-formed World Hockey Association, with a group of players far better prepared physically and psychologically than the 1972 Team Canada, took up the challenge of the Soviet Union to play a second series of eight games. This time the Soviet team defeated the Canadian "selects" fairly easily.

#### International rules and style of play

International hockey, under the rules of the International Ice

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Hockey Federation, is largely the same game as Canadian hockey; indeed, the IIHF rules were originally adopted, with a few exceptions, from the Canadian game. One of the more noticeable exceptions is the prohibition of the aggressive style of body contact allowed in the Canadian game.

There is also a difference between the size of the ice surface used in international competition and that used in Canadian hockey. Though rink surfaces are generally about the same length (60 metres), the Canadian surfaces are only about 26 metres wide, compared to 30 metres for international rinks. This wider ice-surface tends to "open up" the international game, placing more emphasis on speed and less on "body-checking" and individual puck control. Both the 1972 and 1974 Canada-U.S.S.R. series were played according to international rules.

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## Corrigendum

Page 4, first paragraph under heading "Team Canada 1972 and 1974"  
-- for final sentence, substitute: "The Canadians, who were ill-  
prepared for this half of the series, lost the first game in  
Montreal, won the second in Toronto, tied the third in Winnipeg  
and lost the fourth in Vancouver."

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