



## REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION

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## No. 97 CANADA IS A SPORTS-MINDED NATION

Canada's temperate climate offers full scope for sports around the calendar. Residents and visitors in few countries have such opportunities, either as participants or as spectators, to enjoy such a wide range of both summer and winter games.

The ten Canadian provinces have adopted at one time or another practically all the popular sports competitions of other lands. They have also fostered and developed one or two sports distinctly their own. These may be said to have been exported, as ice hockey has been taken up eagerly in the past forty years in the United States and in Europe, and lacrosse, once esteemed as Canada's national summer game, is growing steadily in popularity with students at many American universities.

Winter Sports

Judged by spectator interest, ice hockey must be given first rank among Canada's sports spectacles. Canada's two largest cities, Montreal and Toronto, have entries in the National Hockey League, which is actually international in range. The other four teams in a league of six are all in United States--cities--New York, Detroit, Chicago and Boston. The teams play a 70-game schedule stretching from early October to late March. The top four teams then engage in a series for the Stanley Cup, a trophy steeped in tradition. Symbolic of supremacy in professional hockey, it was donated by Lord Stanley of Preston in 1893 during his term as Governor General of Canada.

There are two other wholly professional hockey leagues operating in Canada--the Quebec League, in one of the oldest provinces, and the Western League, with teams playing in two sections. In the Prairie Division of the Western League are Winnipeg, Brandon, Calgary and Edmonton. The Coast Division includes Vancouver, New Westminster and Victoria, all in British Columbia, with a team in Seattle of Washington State added to provide an international flavour. Championships of the two leagues are decided by a system of playoffs, and the two league champions then meet in a series for the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy, presented by the Royal Consort in 1953.

All season long the rinks, some of them accommodating as many as 15,000 people including standees, are jammed. An outstanding example is the Forum in Montreal, where nearly 85 per cent of the 13,500 seats are reserved for the full season by subscribers who in many cases have held the same location for more than a decade.

Yet the intense interest in professional hockey and the high calibre of its talent would be impossible were it not for the great work in organization and administration carried on by the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association and its branches, which control activities in all ten provinces. In the 1956-57 season there were 79,693 players registered by the C.A.H.A. and playing on teams. These players are graded, from the Pee-Wees at 10 years of age up to the Seniors, who are over 21. In districts where sub-zero temperatures prevail, outdoor rinks of regulation hockey size are easily provided on lakes and streams. In the cities rinks are made available for the young fry by municipal playground departments. Montreal actually has more than 200 rinks when its prosperous suburbs are included. Toronto and Montreal have many artificial ice installations in operation now or in the planning stage.

Canadian winters, of course, provide full scope for practically every known outdoor sport, as well as those once played outdoors but since shifted under cover. Well-appointed curling rinks abound in every city and hamlet. In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, veterans of the game give children of high-school age wide encouragement, and thousands are playing the "roaring game" on outdoor ice. In the Laurentians and the Rocky Mountains, skiers throng the slopes, and the resort industry in the past 25 years has enjoyed a new winter prosperity.

Early settlers in North America found that some Indians used a strange footgear during the winter. To their feet they strapped racket-shaped frames of light wood strung and netted with narrow strips of raw hide. On these they could travel at a fairly rapid rate over the deepest snow through the fields and forests. Adopted by white settlers, snowshoes were used for hunting and trapping expeditions. With the advance of civilization, snow-shoe racing became a popular winter sports competition. In modern times snowshoeing in various forms has been superseded by skiing, because of the greater speed of the wooden runners. In many parts of Quebec, however, old snowshoe clubs still exist. Although their programmes now stress social activities, the clubs still participate in one or two large meets each winter.

Enjoyed by thousands of Canadians in all parts of the country, alley bowling is a leading winter sport, and cities and towns large and small have "bolodromes" where, each night from autumn to spring, people of all ages and of both sexes compete for team awards and individual prizes. The types of pins and balls used vary from area to area, but basically the game is the same across Canada. On the basis of numbers of competitions, bowling far outpaces its outdoor counterpart, curling.

Other sports enjoyed in winter include basketball, with well organized leagues functioning, and badminton, a game whose devotees are on the increase.

#### Summer and autumn sports

Professional hockey's claim to mass interest across the country, because of its wide radio and television presentation, has been rivalled only by that of football. The word "football" is here employed in the North American sense, as distinct from soccer or rugby. Canadian type football is actually a hybrid game which had its genesis in English rugby and has slowly embraced many principles of the American college game.

Before the Second World War there was little outright professional football in Canada. With the open payment of players under a contract the game has enjoyed a meteoric rise, stimulated by the importation of outstanding stars graduated from American universities. So that the Canadian-born players won't be totally submerged in this incoming tide of American talent, a limit of 12 "imports" has been set by the leaders of the three major leagues now operating in the east and the west.

The Inteprovincial Rugby Football Union, commonly known as the "Big Four", comprises teams in Montreal, Ottawa, Hamilton and Toronto, the latter three in the Province of Ontario. Rated of equal rank with the Big Four, the Western Conference embraces clubs in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Regina, Saskatchewan; Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta; and Vancouver, in British Columbia. Champions of the two leagues stage a sudden-death game for the Canadian professional championship for a trophy donated by Earl Grey in 1909 when he was Governor General.

With only one interruption - in 1955, when Vancouver was the site of the game-the championship contest for the Grey Cup has been awarded to the City of Toronto, despite frequent bids from rival cities. The authorities are firmly convinced that Ontario's metropolis offers the most reasonable chance of favorable weather on the last Saturday in November, when the big contest is usually scheduled. And the stadium at the University of Toronto, which seats 27,000, is always filled to capacity.

So popular has the Grey Cup game become in modern times that it has gained all the trappings of a national festival. On the eve of the game a huge banquet is held in one of the large hotels. On the morning of the contest a big street parade is staged. Most of Canada's larger cities are officially represented by marching delegations, floats and mobile exhibitions depicting historical events and personalities, industrial products, and natural resources. Cowboys and cowgirls, rearing broncos, and chuckwagons with a prairie-type meal in preparation, may be seen, symbolic of the old west and its pioneer spirit. The tuques and moccasins of the "coureur de bois", along with his snowshoes, will be Quebec's reminder that civilization was brought to the New World by such voyageurs three centuries ago.

Though ranked a shade below the Big Four and Western Conference, the Ontario Rugby Football Union is noted for robust competition. Its devotees are now irked that O.R.F.U. champions aren't permitted to play a sudden-death game with one of the other champions, the surviving team to enter the Grey Cup final. This is a matter of legislation within the football hierarchy.

On an amateur or semi-professional scale there are intermediate and junior leagues, and the game thrives in high schools and colleges.

Soccer is also well-organized. Until a few years ago the game was played and patronized largely by recent settlers from the British Isles and their first-generation descendants. But heavy immigration in the decade since the Second World War has widened its popularity. The calibre of play has vastly improved with the influx of many European nationals adept in the game.

English rugby has its scattered groups of zealots, but finds most patrons and players either in the Atlantic Provinces or in British Columbia.

Games of individual skill, such as rifle shooting, archery, track and field sports and marathon running, have their hard core of eager competitors who engage in city and provincial meets, pointing to the Canadian championships, held late each summer. And these sports are usually found to gain more attention from the general public when the Olympic Games come around every four years. Canada usually sends a full quota to the Games, wherever they are held.

In summertime, baseball is the greatest spectator sport. Montreal and Toronto are represented in the International League, which also includes a club in Havana, Cuba, besides five in the United States. Vancouver has a team in the Pacific Coast League, which embraces seven cities in the U.S.A. Baseball was imported from the United States in the 1880's and is today played throughout Canada at all levels of competition. In most centres, it has displaced lacrosse, which was one Canada's national game by repute, and so spoken of more than once in the House of Commons at Ottawa.

Golf has spread at an amazing rate in Canada, and the game is now played by the masses to such an extent that it can claim to be one of the most popular participant sports. More than 600 golf clubs now dot the provinces, ranging in size from modest 9-hole layouts to clubs which have two complete courses. Founded in 1872, Royal Montreal lays claim to being the oldest club in continuous operation in North America. Its present property 11 miles west of the heart of Montreal has now been practically surrounded by suburban housing developments. So Royal Montreal has acquired new property on Ile Bizard, to the northwest of the city, where a five-million dollar project is planned, including 45 holes and a specious clubhouse.

Lawn tennis vies with golf for summer popularity. It is estimated by the Canadian Lawn Tennis Association that 500 affiliated clubs have from 15,000 to 20,000 members playing on 2,500 courts across the country, and that there are more than 1,000 privately-owned courts on which families and guests or small groups also enjoy the game. Canada has been represented in Davis Cup competition since 1903.

Boating of all kinds is given full scope in the lakes and streams with which Canada is so richly endowed. At St. Catharines, Ontario, on a nearby river, the Canadian Henley regatta is held each year. It could reasonably be styled a copy of the famed regatta at the older Henley, in England. As the name implies, Canada's Henley is chiefly devoted to rowing, through there is no counter-part to the Oxford-Cambridge race. Still, Canada's high level of competition by intercollegiate crews is pointed up in the fact that the University of British Columbia's four-oared crew won an Olympic Gold Medal at the 1956 Games in Australia.

Paddling is another popular sport. Regattas are held in most large communities each Saturday, and on all national holidays during the summer months. Craft range from single canoes to war-canoes manned by fifteen paddlers.

Every summer resort holds its regatta late in the season. This combines a sports competition with a social get-together, and the slate includes everything from amateur, or "fun" events, where small crews compete in flat-bottomed rowboats, to full-scale competitions in canoes, outboard motorboats and high-powered launches.

Swimming has developed some great competitors, and an annual marathon swim is a part of the sports background of the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. Marilyn Bell brought fame to Canada when, in 1954, she became the first swimmer to conquer Lake Ontario, making the difficult 32-mile crossing from New York side to Toronto, where she received a tumultuous welcome. In 1955, Miss Bell, then 17, swam the treacherous English Channel. She later added new laurels to an illustrious career by swimming the Strait of Juan de Fuca, a tide-swept stretch of water between the State of Washington and Vancouver Island.

Practically every large city has its athletic clubs or other institutions boasting regulation-sized swimming pools where speed-swimming is part of the winter programme. In the summer, the sprinters, the middle-distance stars and the long distance swimmers switch their attention to the out-of-doors. Water-polo and water-skiing are natural developments to provide added thrills for the proficient swimmers.

The larger lakes and coastal waters also encourage sailing in all rigs and classes, and those who never tire of racing under canvas extend their energies to ice-boating in the winter-time, though their numbers are less than those who are zealots for the more orthodox type of sailing.

Other summer sports introduced to Canada by British immigrants are cricket and lawn bowling. Interest in cricket is increasing with the upswing in numbers of newcomers from the British Isles, and growing numbers of native Canadians have taken up the game. Occasional tours by teams from England and Scotland provide impetus to this sport. Spirited competition is enjoyed by the members of the many lawn bowling clubs in Canada.

#### All-year Sports

Amateur boxing has its enthusiasts throughout the year, and interest reaches its zenith in the trials for Olympic representation. From these simon-pures have been developed a few outstanding pugilists. Noted professionals of the present era are Pate Supple of Montreal, a bantam-weight; Yvon Durelle of Baie Ste. Annes, N.B., light heavy-weight; Bob Cleroux a Montreal beginner of whom much is expected in the heavyweight ranks, and Gaby Poliotti, a featherweight, and another Montrealer. Wrestling attracts many spectators throughout Canada.

Of course, not every sport enjoyed by Canadians is outlined here, and some enthusiasts may feel that the game of their choice has been overlooked. Scores of fully appointed gymnasias and hundreds of playgrounds, ice-rinks, football fields, and municipal golf courses in such cities as Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver offer concrete testimony to the fact that Canadians are a sports-loving people.

Every summer, however, holds its regular late in the season. This combined canoe competition with a social get-together, and the whole includes everything from regatta on "flat" events, where small crews compete in flat-bottomed rowboats, to full-scale competitions in canoes, outboard motorboats and high-powered launches.

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Practically every large city has its athletic clubs or other institutions possessing recreation-sized swimming pools where speed-swimming is a part of the winter programme. In the summer, the swimmers switch to distance stars and the long distance swimmers switch their attention to the out-of-door, water-polo and water-skiing are natural developments to provide added thrills for the winter and summer.

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### All-year Sports

Amateur boxing has long attracted many sports fans, and interest reaches its height in the trials for Olympic representation. From these athletes have been developed a few outstanding pugilists. Noted professionals of the present era are Patrice Baillie of Montreal, a bantam-weight; Yvon Doreille of Belle Ste. Anne, a light-heavy-weight; Bob Clonoux a Montreal bantam of whom much is expected in the heavy-weight class; and Guy Pollock, featherweight, and another Montrealer, wrestling attracts many spectators throughout Canada.

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