

Special

Present look at Soviet sport system

For the past three weeks Acton Free Press sports editor Denis Gibbons and Bruce Andrews, chairman of the physical education department at Acton High School and coach of the North Halton Harriers Track Club have been studying the Soviet system of sport and physical education at Moscow's famous Institute of Sport and Physical Culture. They were part of a group of 100 post-grad students, teachers, coaches and recreation directors from across Canada and the Eastern U.S. who took advantage of the study tour offered by Loyola University's Institute of Comparative Physical Education under the direction of Dr. Ed Enos.

The study tour, the first of its kind in the area of sport and physical education was sanctioned by Soviet authorities under the terms of the Canada-USSR general exchange agreement signed by Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Kosygin in 1972. While in Moscow, participants received lectures and practical instruction from top Soviet professors and coaches daily and were treated to a host of cultural events like the Bolshoi Ballet, Moscow Circus and Moscow Symphony as guests of the Soviet government during the evenings. Denis was one of approximately 40

participants who concentrated their study of the Soviet scientific approach to hockey, while Bruce joined the regular study group which allowed him to visit elementary and secondary schools in Moscow, examine sports club facilities and have private interviews with top Soviet coaches and athletes in his specialty, track and field.

Fred Shero, coach of the Stanley Cup champion Philadelphia Flyers, Iton Ryan coach of the New England Whalers, and top college coaches like Bob Boucher of St. Mary's of Halifax, John Melnick of Michigan Tech and Bob Crocker of Penn were part of the hockey study group, while the regular study group included former Canadian Olympic track competitor Bruce Kidd who is presently making a comeback. Bruce took part in two city meets in Moscow, winning his first race and placing eighth in a field of 10 in a 10,000 metre run in the second at Lenin Stadium.

This week readers of the Milton Champion, Georgetown Independent and Acton Free Press may read about what Mr. Shero observed, while future editions of the three IHPs publications will carry stories on education, track and field, cultural life, etc. in Moscow, with Denis and Bruce combining their observations.

CCCP CANADA



SOKOLNIKI ICE PALACE, ONE OF ONLY FOUR COVERED ARTIFICIAL ICE ARENAS IN THE CITY OF MOSCOW



WELL AT LEAST part of the time their eyes were on the ice. When attractive young ladies came to Sokolniki to clean the arena for an upcoming show on the final day however, concentration on training techniques became difficult!

Shero exclusive

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Alexandrov was wearing and replace it with a winged "P" and orange and black trim. Alexandrov, you see, even at the age of 40-plus was still handling the puck like few NHL players can, in the opinion of the Flyer coach.

Shero spoke further of his admiration for Russian hockey tactics and how they had helped the Flyers go all the way. In lectures he delivered at the Institute at the request of the Russians who were every bit as anxious to learn about NHL training systems as we were about to learn theirs. While the other 15 NHL clubs were following the old "take the puck behind your net" system, the Flyers, he explained, adopted the Russian system of quick counter-attack, moving the puck quickly to a man in the open instead of wasting valuable time.

Other Russian drills, although they benefitted the team in the long run were much more difficult to introduce, Fred explained with a bit of humor. A shooting drill he had seen the Soviet National team using during a tour of the U.S. drew only complaints when first announced at a Flyer practice.

"Finally I decided to put up a cash prize for the players to get them to do it," he said. "The winner gets the money, then goes against the goalie at the end of the practice. If he beats him 1 out of 2 he keeps the money, if not it's the goalie's."

The instance was just one of many Shero used to explain that although the Soviet hockey methods are excellent, applying them to professional hockey in North America where players are hauling home money in wheelbarrows is quite a different question.

"What is included in a typical Philadelphia practice?" asked one Soviet Ice Hockey Federation official during a question and answer period.

"The first thing I do," replied Shero "is call them all to one corner of the ice where we kid each other a bit and tell a few jokes to loosen up. Then I ask them if they'd like to do some work. If they say yes, we start."

That "if" caused the group of First Division coaches in the lecture room, including Merited Master of Sport for the Soviet Union, Stanislav Petukhov, now a coach with Dynamo Sports Club to break up laughing. Our conclusion from this was that there probably are no such things as "ifs" in Russian hockey and that when Anatoli Tarasov wrote of players being suspended for a year for smoking, he wasn't kidding.

"What are conditions like for Canadian pro players," asked another Russian coach. "Well they're beautiful," replied Shero. "They're making so much money they don't know what to do with it. Complete health coverage is paid by the NHL, they can go to university in the off-season and they've got such a strong players' association that you can't fine them!"

Soviet officials in a counter question period, on the other hand explained that all of their players also have other occupations and although they receive some material benefits, these are for their achievements at their place of work and not for playing hockey. The answer didn't quite digest with all of us, but it apparently has been good enough for the International Olympic Committee over the years.

Coaches from the Central Army Sports Club, Dynamo and Spartak were also surprised to learn most NHLers do little but relax and play golf during the off-season.

"Some guys start to run about August 15," Shero added, "but most of them arrive in camp about 10 to 12 pounds overweight."

The Soviet National team in contrast will return from the Black Sea resort area where they are now vacationing on July 1 to

begin dry land training in preparation for their series against the WHA all-stars in September and October. After six weeks of weight training and off the ice conditioning, they will take to the ice about the second week of August and it is also believed, although not confirmed, play some warmup games in the Soviet Union before coming to Canada, September 15.

Shero admitted that Canadians could also learn from the Soviet system of training coaches which calls for candidates to attend schools and write examinations before becoming qualified.

"Coaches in our country are not considered masters of anything," he said. "In fact they're considered dummies in a lot of cases. If I wanted my son to get some coaching back home I'd send him to a high school or college coach, not to a pro."

What Fred saw in Moscow that particularly interested him were demonstrations of off-season exercises for goal-tenders. We sat and watched Andrey Chizkov, backup goalie for Wings of the Soviet go through 60 reflex-sharpening exercises one day, most of them performed with nothing more than a tennis ball. Many of the on-ice drills he had already used or at least seen. Nevertheless, he observed them carefully and by the time they were completed was already suggesting ways in which they could be made even more effective. The Russians were always attentive whenever he spoke. We got the feeling they held a lot of respect for the man who was able to stop "Pheel Esposito" and "Bobby Orr" who both are almost national heroes among Soviet youngsters inclined to hockey.

On the negative side, Fred can see definite weaknesses in the Russian defensive system. Scores of games where their teams have tallied in doubled figures, but still allowed five goals would seem to support his theory. Our Russian lecturers themselves conceded that they have much to learn in the area of checking and particularly bodychecking.

It is my personal feeling that Fred Shero did more in Moscow than just pick up information for his own use. He was an exemplary good will ambassador for Canada and the NHL. In particular, he was available to talk hockey or answer questions either from the Russians or members of our own group anytime of the day and he did it with politeness and sincerity. There were no brushtuffs or thumbing gestures. When daily programs sometimes became disorganized, he appreciated the difficulty our guides were having and was not ready to blow his top as some did. Fred's attractive wife Mariette was completely tolerant of the amount of time her husband was devoting each day to hockey talk, just a week after the close of a long season.



Aleksandr Volchkov of the Soviet National Team helped with on the ice drills for the Canadian audience.



Denis Gibbons and Fred Shero in Moscow

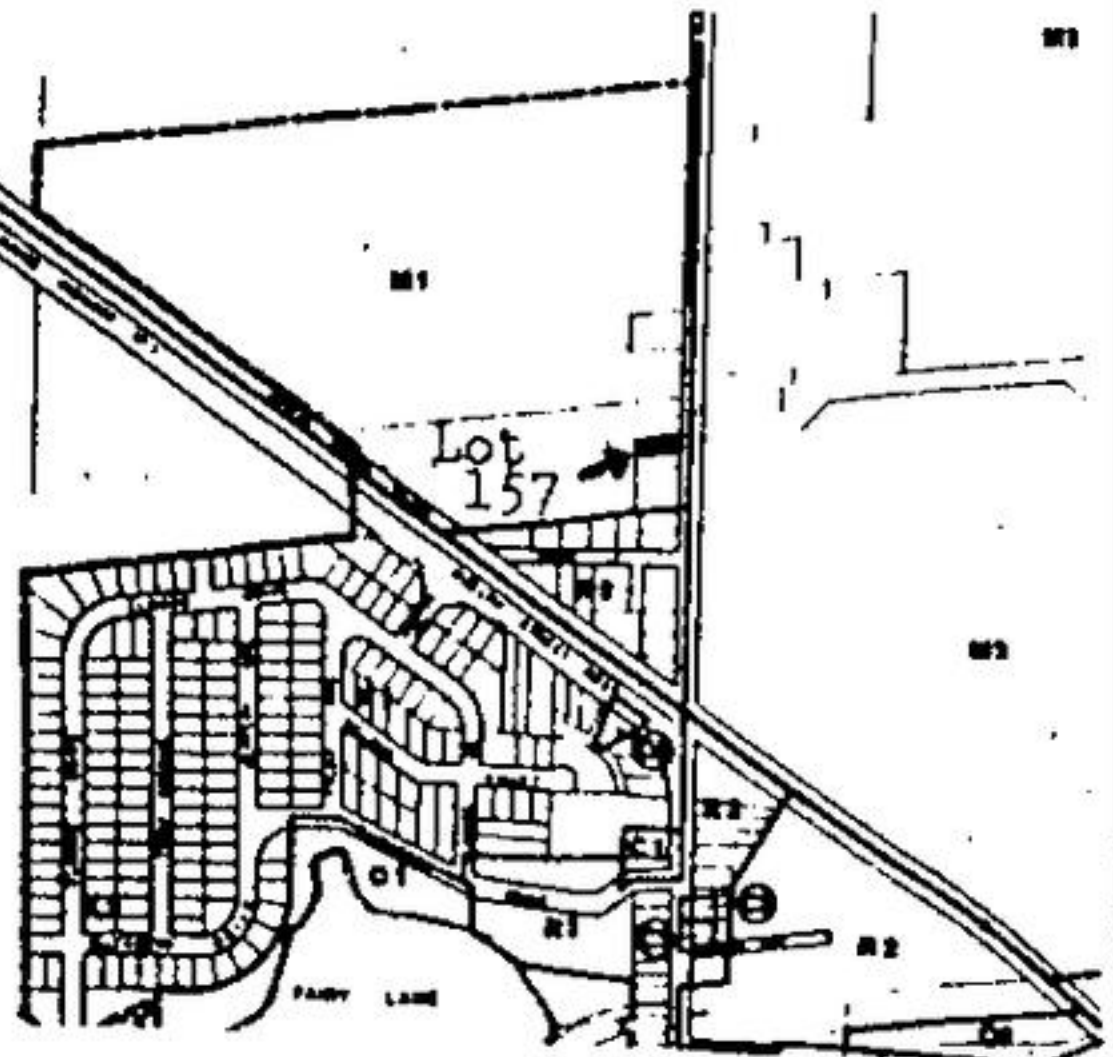
"This man (Shero) is the greatest guy in the NHL today," our group leader Dr. Ed Enos confided to me. "A lot of the other coaches wouldn't give you the time of day."

According to Enos, only Al Arbour of the New York Islanders among the league's 15 other coaches had even called him to ask for information on the study tour to Moscow. Arbour was forced to cancel out at the last minute because of draft meeting obligations.

And now Fred Shero is back home in Philadelphia for a rest, but you can bet it will be a short one. The desire to have his Flyers establish themselves as true world champions in a series against Wings of the Soviet or Central Army remains with him. He is confident that with another year of preparation his team would win, yet fully aware of the potential of Russian teams. Unlike Harold Ballard, for instance, who thought he had conquered the world when his Toronto Marlboros edged the Wings, minus seven of their best players 5-4 after being outshot 48-20 at Christmas time, he realizes that in a matchup with the Wings he would have to control the likes of Anisim, Lebedev and Bodunov, a line which almost made a shambles of the Gilbert, Hadfield Ratelle unit the last time around, face the Soviets' second best goalie in Sidelnikov and be tested by four new members of the National team Kapustin, Repnev, Kusnetsov and Klimov.

December 1975 hopefully will be the date for such a series providing of course, the Flyers repeat as Stanley Cup champions. If dedication and hard work mean anything and they usually do, the Flyers likely will repeat and North American hockey fans could be treated to an international series that would rival the '72 Joust for excitement.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING



That the General Administration Committee for the Town of Halton Hills, will hold a Public Meeting to discuss and explain a proposed Amendment to the Acton Official Plan. This amendment deals with the redesignation of Lot 157, Plan 227 Main Street North from Light M1 Zone to Residential R23 Zone.

ALL INTERESTED CITIZENS ARE WELCOME.
Time: 7:30 p.m. Monday June 24th, 1974.
Place: Esquering Municipal Building, 7th Line, R. R. 1, Georgetown, Ontario.

M.P. Venditti, Town Planner, Town of Halton Hills.

ACTON CENTENNIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

AT
HALTON HEIGHTS
SATURDAY, JULY 6, 1974

"Shotgun Start at 9:30 a.m."
(Limited to 48 Players - 12 Foursomes)

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- Roast beef dinner at Legion
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