



Soviets Swedes earned right to play for championship

MIDGET SABRES TOOK their second home decision of the season as they edged Elora 2-1 last night. Good tough checking and skating left

the opponents down and out, as demonstrated here, where Don Brouillard has outdistanced his Elora counterpart in a race for the puck.

Peewees victorious, 4-3 win over Fergus

Acton peewees edged Fergus last Friday in the arena, taking a 4-3 decision for their first win over Fergus in two years.

Randy Coverdale opened the scoring in the first period, giving the peewees a 1-0 lead from Mike Yalowica and Wayne McMillan. Fergus tied the score up before the period ended.

Acton outscored their guests 3-1 in the second period

to take command of the game. A final period goal by Fergus could only close the gap.

Joe Balkind was the first marksman of the second period as he converted a Brian Canary pass for the score. Chris Lobsinger also earned an assist on the goal.

The second marker of the period came from Brian Demone, who connected from Andy Cunningham. Canary

got the winner from Balkind and Lobsinger before Fergus could get back on the scoreboard.

McArthur leads bants

Acton minor bantams took a surprise 5-0 win from a AA Oakville team December 30 in the arena.

Gord McArthur was the big gun for the bants, potting four of their five goals. Rob Vermeulen got two assists on the

Coach Bill Weston singled out the play of Chris Lobsinger for praise, saying he played a good game.

McArthur leads bants

McArthur markers and Tim Evans and Rick Smith picked up an assist.

Jeff Gill played his first game for the rep team and performed well, picking up the remaining goal for the bants. Rick Smith assisted.

Denis Gibbons, formerly of the Acton Free Press now working for the Georgetown Independents five days at the World Cup of Junior Hockey in Montreal. This week he reports on his observations, which included attendance at the Czechoslovakia-Sweden, USSR-Sweden and Canada-Sweden games in the championship round. Sweden and the USSR were to meet for the championship in Montreal, last night (Tuesday).

Reporters moved cautiously when Team Canada coach Ernie "Punch" McLean nodded that it was all right for them to enter the Canadian dressing room and talk to his young players following the surprising 6-5 loss to Sweden which knocked the heavy favorites out of the running for the championship, Sunday.

McLean had been honest in his assessment of Team Canada's defeat, expressing the opinion that Soviet referee Yuri Karandzhin called at least four penalties, which would not be infractions in Canadian hockey, but that the officiating had not cost his team the game.

"In the final analysis," said McLean "we didn't have enough guys going for us at the right time. That's what beat us."

Team Canada players also demonstrated a lot of courage in a time of great adversity, refusing to alibi for the loss. Manager Punch Scherer, who said from the beginning that there could and would be no excuses with Canada using its best juniors and playing on home ice, was true to his word.

The fact is that the Soviet and Swedish teams which defeated Team Canada are excellent squads loaded with talented players, who earned

the right to play in the final with victories in pressure situations. Even the Czechs, who were buried 9-3 by Canada before a Christmas Day national TV audience, were down only 4-3 to the Canucks with less than two minutes to play in a championship round game, Saturday.

Alan Eagleson wasn't kidding when he returned from Moscow two months ago and said that three or four members of the Soviet national junior side could step right into the NHL. The best player I saw in the tournament was Soviet defenceman Vyacheslav Fetisov. Speedsters like Sergei Makarov, Nikolai Navilmanov and Aleksandr Kozhevnikov up front would be first round draft choices the same as the outstanding players on Team Canada will be this June.

glibly to play in next year's world junior cup in Stockholm. He looks like a budding Anders Hedberg. Swedish National "A" team coach Hans Lindbergh told me he's keeping a close eye on winger Bengt-Ake Gustafsson and defenceman Tomas Jonsson, a superb 17 year old defender who is on Montreal Canadiens negotiation list. Jonsson could still be playing in the European under 18 junior championships which are also being played at the same time in Helsinki, Finland.

The Europeans earned the right to play in the final. I don't buy the negative opinion that the Canadian kids choked. They're also excellent hockey players who did their best and could still beat both the Soviets and Swedes on different nights.

It is not a catastrophe that Canada lost anymore than it's a sign of decline in Soviet

hockey that their national team has failed to win at the last two world championships and at this year's Ivestia tournament. The idea is being promoted by some Canadian columnists, notably two in nearby Toronto, but it's absolute garbage.

Both Lindbergh and Dr. Ladislav Horak, coach of the Czech junior national team, told me that losses by the Soviet nationals are exactly that, losses by one group of 20 players. It does not mean they're producing no young players.

The truth is that Canada, Sweden, the Soviets and Czechs are now so equal at the national team level, both adult and junior, that each is capable of beating any of the three others on a given day. It's possible Canada has more depth in talent, but the days of international tournament cakewalks are over.

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