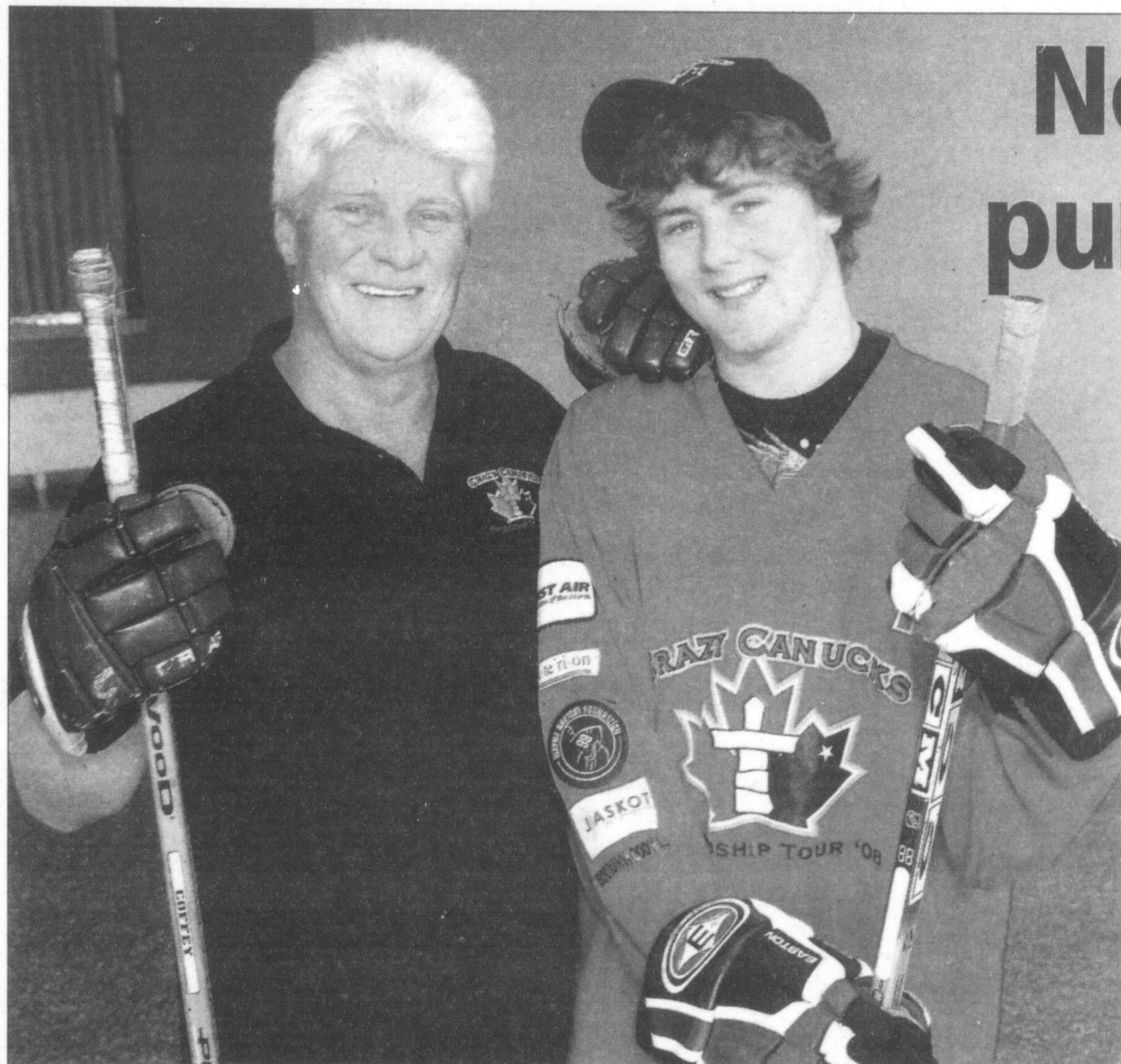


SPORTS

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Northern excursion pure gold for Eagles

*Father and son
enjoy memorable
trip to Nunavut*

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

It was a golden experience for the Eagles — in more ways than one. Recently venturing into Canada's great white north, 16-year-old Jack and father Allan were part of the Crazy Canucks North team that competed at the annual Toonik Tyme Tournament in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

Comprised of midget age players from the Hamilton and surrounding areas, the Canucks went unbeaten at the friendship showcase — capping their 5-0-1 gold-medal run with a 7-2 championship victory over the hosts.

But that was just the tip of the iceberg — no pun intended — in terms of what the Eagles got out of their north-

ern exposure, which was organized by head coach Alex Belgrade through the Cops For Kids and Nunavut All-Stars programs.

"It was an amazing time," said the elder Eagles, who serves with Belgrade on the Toronto police force and was an assistant coach and manager for the spring sojourn, which was a follow-up to the Canucks' Sweden-Finland trip last fall, during which they took two Inuit players. "And the boys were great ambassadors for this area. The Inuit people don't invite you into their home unless you're of good character, and they loved our guys."

In what could only be described as complete culture shock, the area teens got an up-close-and-personal taste of life in Nunavut. Their six-day schedule was highlighted by such activities as the actual building of an igloo, a hearty sampling of such Arctic cuisine as caribou stew and a tour of the Legislature Building.

Not part of the original itinerary was a rather in-your-face example of the harsh realities of the arctic region that presented itself during a visit with one of the host families.

"We saw a 12-year-old cousin of one of the players have to kill a polar bear that was threatening their home," explained Jack, an assistant captain for the trip who highlighted a 10-point tournament with three goals and an assist against Pangnirtung. "He kept scaring him off but eventually had to shoot him. It was pretty incredible to see a 12-year-old do that."

Leaving even more of an impression on the Milton District 11th grader — who played for his high school team this past year after several seasons at the AA ranks — was just how bleak things are in Nunavut.

• see TRIP on page A24

TRIUMPHANT RETURN: Father and son Allan and Jack Eagles are all smiles following their gold-medal showing at the Toonik Tyme Tournament in Nunavut.

Brittain wins Under-18 gold with Canada

Josh Brittain has punctuated his 2007/08 season with a golden exclamation mark.

The six-foot-four-inch, 210-pound left winger was part of the Canadian team that struck gold at the World IIHF Under-18 Championships in Kazan, Russia Wednesday afternoon — annihilating the hosts 8-0.

The lopsided shutout served as payback for a 4-2 round-robin defeat to Russia and gave Canada just its second gold medal at the event, which it's been competing at since 2002. The other triumph — in 2003 — also came by way of shutout, when Slovakia was the victim in a 3-0 whitewash.

In what was expected to be a heavyweight clash, the Pat Quinn-coached Canucks exploded for five first-

period goals and were relentless from start to finish.

Seeing limited play at the tournament, 18-year-old Brittain got the nod from Quinn to stay on the ice following a couple of late penalties Wednesday (for slashing and charging) and was further rewarded with a last-minute powerplay shift.

Recently finishing a personally productive but play-off-less sophomore season with the Kingston Frontenacs, the 2006 first-round draft pick drew an assist in last Friday's 6-0 rout of Slovakia.

He and his Team Canada mates returned home last night.

See Tuesday's *Champion* for the Milton OHLer's thoughts on the international experience.



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