



by Eddie MacCabe

How the Flyers got it done

We were rattling along yesterday about the RCAF Flyers of 1948, Canada's last Olympic hockey champions, when we ran off the bottom of the page.

So we pick up the Ottawa based Flyers again on Friday, February 6, the day of their big test against the heavily favored Czechs.

That game was played to a scoreless tie but it was not without some tension and drama. With five minutes remaining, Frank Dunster was penalized and the Canadians were hard-pressed to keep the Czechs from scoring.

Once the Canadians had tied that game, they were in decent shape to win it all . . . if they kept on winning. They drubbed Austria 12 to 0, Dowey scoring his fourth shutout in "a swirling snow-storm." Halder and Mara counted four each in that one and Reg Schroeter got three. That same day, the Czechs beat Switzerland 7 to 1 so Canada and the Czechs were tied on top with six wins and a tie each.

Canada had one game remaining, against the Swiss, and the Czechs were to go against the States.

At this point, the strange mechinations of Olympic minds resulted in a complete flip flop and they decided to award official recognition to the hockey games after all.

The Czechs beat United States 4 to 3, so the Canadians had to win to grab the gold.

A 'running' goal

The ice was so soft and slushy that players had to run on their skates and the Canadians were given all the worst of it by the officials, Eric De Marcwicz of Britain and Van Reyshoot of Belgium. In addition, the partison crowd pelted the Canadians with snowballs during play, hardly a measure designed to contribute to slick puck-handling.

In the first period, Wally Halder ran on his skates the length of the ice and scored. Patsy Guzzo added a second goal and Reg Schroeter got a third and the game ended 3 to 0, with Dowey putting up his fifth shutout of the Games. Not bad for a guy who was lifted out of a Toronto mercantile league at the last minute and joined the team just in time to catch the boat.

That win meant Canada and the Czechs finished with 7 and 1 records but the Czechs had scored 80 goals and allowed 18 for an overall "quotient" of 4 to 3. Canada had scored 69 and allowed only five for a "quotient" of 13 to 8. By virtue of the goals then, Canada took the gold.

They mounted the platform and took their medals, and some got them casually on the way out of the arena. They were inundated with cables from home . . . more than 200 of them, including one from Prime Minister Mackenzie King which read in part:

"The victory of our team will be received with rejoicing throughout all parts of Canada"

Got it done

So it was done, and in the euphoria of the moment, there were claims that this was "the greatest team in the world."

Which it wasn't, of course, but it was up to the job it was sent to do, and it labored under a cloud of pessimism most of the way.

It sounds a trifle bush now to think of Olympic hockey being played in rain and snow and sluch on open air ice, but those conditions should have penalized the Canadian players more than the Europeans who were used to such off-tracks.

Very likely too, the adverse publicity served as a glue for this hastily assembled club, and under the lash of scorn they became a team much quicker than they might have under more agreeable circumstances.

They rose to it, and for most of them that tournament provided a high in their lives. An old pro suggested to us yesterday that the Flyers would be run out of the building by the international teams of today.

But if we're going to make comparisons of that kind, why not make some others to test the validity of such claims? Today, the women high jumpers are soaring higher than the male medal winners did before World War II. Today, athletes have to make times and records beyond medal standards of those days, just to qualify for their country's teams. A ski medallist from the '48 Games, inserting his run of that time into last Winter's Innsbruck scene, would be nowhere at all.

When the Flyers won, even those who had flogged them prior to their departure, accepted it as an expected development. Like . . . Canada owns hockey!

But we didn't win the next Olympics, or the next, etc. So it's easy and convenient to say, as our old pro did yesterday, that the RCAF Flyers of that time could not compete respectably in the old Quebec League, and very likely they couldn't.

It would be just as accurate to suggest, though, that those old Quebec League clubs couldn't handle the Russians of today, or the Czechs.

All of which, really, is irrelevant. The Flyers went undefeated, and they won the gold . . . 28 years ago. We haven't seen Olympic hockey gold since.



by Eddie MacCabe

How the Flyers got it done

We were rattling along yesterday about the RCAF Flyers of 1948, Canada's last Olympic hockey champions, when we ran off the bottom of the page.

So we pick up the Ottawa based Flyers again on Friday, February 6, the day of their big test against the heavily favored Czechs.

That game was played to a scoreless tie but it was not without some tension and drama. With five minutes remaining, Frank Dunster was penalized and the Canadians were hard-pressed to keep the Czechs from scoring.

Once the Canadians had tied that game, they were in decent shape to win it all . . . if they kept on winning. They drubbed Austria 12 to 0, Dowe scoring his fourth shutout in "a swirling snow-storm." Halder and Mara counted four each in that one and Reg Schroeter got three. That same day, the Czechs beat Switzerland 7 to 1 so Canada and the Czechs were tied on top with six wins and a tie each.

Canada had one game remaining, against the Swiss, and the Czechs were to go against the States.

At this point, the strange mechinations of Olympic minds resulted in a complete flip flop and they decided to award official recognition to the hockey games after all.

The Czechs beat United States 4 to 3, so the Canadians had to win to grab the gold.

A 'running' goal

The ice was so soft and slushy that players had to run on their skates and the Canadians were given all the worst of it by the officials, Eric De Marcwicz of Britain and Van Reyshoot of Belgium. In addition, the partison crowd pelted the Canadians with snowballs during play, hardly a measure designed to contribute to slick puck-handling.

In the first period, Wally Halder ran on his skates the length of the ice and scored. Patsy Guzzo added a second goal and Reg Schroeter got a third and the game ended 3 to 0, with Dowe putting up his fifth shutout of the Games. Not bad for a guy who was lifted out of a Toronto mercantile league at the last minute and joined the team just in time to catch the boat.

That win meant Canada and the Czechs finished with 7 and 1 records but the Czechs had scored 80 goals and allowed 18 for an overall "quotient" of 4 to 3. Canada had scored 69 and allowed only five for a "quotient" of 13 to 8. By virtue of the goals then, Canada took the gold.

They mounted the platform and took their medals, and some got them casually on the way out of the arena. They were inundated with cables from home . . . more than 200 of them, including one from Prime Minister Mackenzie King which read in part:

"The victory of our team will be received with rejoicing throughout all parts of Canada"

Got it done

So it was done, and in the euphoria of the moment, there were claims that this was "the greatest team in the world."

Which it wasn't, of course, but it was up to the job it was sent to do, and it labored under a cloud of pessimism most of the way.

It sounds a trifle bush now to think of Olympic hockey being played in rain and snow and slush on open air ice, but those conditions should have penalized the Canadian players more than the Europeans who were used to such off-tracks.

Very likely too, the adverse publicity served as a glue for this hastily assembled club, and under the lash of scorn they became a team much quicker than they might have under more agreeable circumstances.

They rose to it, and for most of them that tournament provided a high in their lives. An old pro suggested to us yesterday that the Flyers would be run out of the building by the international teams of today.

But if we're going to make comparisons of that kind, why not make some others to test the validity of such claims? Today, the women high jumpers are soaring higher than the male medal winners did before World War II. Today, athletes have to make times and records beyond medal standards of those days, just to qualify for their country's teams. A ski medallist from the '48 Games, inserting his run of that time into last Winter's Innsbruck scene, would be nowhere at all.

When the Flyers won, even those who had flogged them prior to their departure, accepted it as an expected development. Like . . . Canada owns hockey!

But we didn't win the next Olympics, or the next, etc. So it's easy and convenient to say, as our old pro did yesterday, that the RCAF Flyers of that time could not compete respectably in the old Quebec League, and very likely they couldn't.

It would be just as accurate to suggest, though, that those old Quebec League clubs couldn't handle the Russians of today, or the Czechs.

All of which, really, is irrelevant. The Flyers went undefeated, and they won the gold . . . 28 years ago. We haven't seen Olympic hockey gold since.