

HOCKEY FIRST PLAYED ON THE ARM?

Halifax Prominent In Early Stage Of Game

By FRANK POWER

It's too bad that hockey can't show us its birth certificate. It would save a lot of digging and delving to satisfy those who are so interested in its origin.

It has had a lot of relations—shinny, hoquet, hurley—and right now the question is up again as a trio of Canadian cities are claiming the popular old sport as their very own.

... Recalls Early Play

Andy Lytle, of the Toronto Star, takes the attitude of "Who cares? But, Kitchener, Ont., Montreal and Halifax do care. They care a whole lot. Civic officials are appointing committees to look back through the years and gather up the evidence to present to a National Hockey League board.

The origin of hockey has been talked about—and argued over—for many years. A half dozen years ago it was figuring prominently in the sport news. The discussion became hot.

Elmer Ferguson, sports editor of the Montreal Herald, who is heard so often on the Saturday night hockey broadcasts, said, after probing into Maritime hockey lore, that he was satisfied that ice hockey really began down here among the Micmac Indians.

Baz O'Meara, sporting scribe of the Montreal Star, came along later with the news that he had received a letter from a Montrealeur claiming that hurley had been played in Montreal early in the last century.

And, now as the subject is being brought before the public's eyes again, we hear that a Nova Scotian Indian told of playing what was known as hoquet on the ice at Tuft's Cove on the Eastern shore of Halifax Harbour long long ago.

When Foster Hewitt, the noted hockey broadcaster, wrote a book on the popular ice game, "Down the Ice", he said that "Captain Sutherland is the authority for the statement that in 1867 the Royal Canadian Rifles cleared the snow from the ice on Kingston Harbour and played a game requiring skates, sticks, pucks and goalposts."

"For more than a decade, following the year of Canada's Confederation, ice hockey was void of rule and reason; it was but a vehicle of enjoyment for good-natured mobs of club-swingers."

"The sticks were not the carefully turned, second-growth hickory weapons of today, for canes, tree branches, knotted roots, field hockey sticks, or even broom handles, were used to drive the puck."

"Like other evidences of early hockey it is difficult to confirm the testimony, but it is generally believed that when the young men in Kingston played their early games, the sticks had been imported from Halifax and Montreal," read "Down the Ice". Hewitt wrote that "in the opinion of most historians, ice hockey really did begin in Halifax when the English Garrison introduced the idea back in 1870, and, as the Army transferred its soldier athletes, the game eventually reached Quebec, Montreal and Ottawa."

Hockey Sticks

In 1940 J. C. Beauchamp of Montreal, who, at that time, was planning to write a book on hockey history, wrote to Creighton's, Ltd., Halifax, for information about hockey sticks. I saw this letter as it was turned over to my father, the late James W. Power who was then writing sport for The Halifax Herald and The Halifax Mail.

"The making of the first sticks, wrote Mr. Beauchamp, 'has a most important bearing on the origin and early development of hockey. It may also settle the old controversy as to whether Halifax or Montreal was the birthplace of the game.'

"My understanding is, he continued, that the firm of which the late James George Andrew Creighton was the head, acted as sort of an importing and distributing agency in connection with hockey sticks purchased alike by Nova Scotia and Upper Canadian Provinces clubs, and also purchased sticks made by the Micmac Indians.

"Recurring almost as frequently as the name of J. G. A. Creighton and Son in connection with hockey sticks, he added, in connection with his research, are the expressions: 'Halifax rules, Halifax Hockey club rules'."

Before Elmer Ferguson wrote his observations in the Montreal Herald on the origin of hockey in his "The Gist and Jest of It", in Jan. 1937, he told of writing my father, who at that time had been writing sport in the Maritimes for 57 years, and whom he termed the dean of Canadian sport writers, on the subject. Capt. Jim Sutherland of Kingston,



COL. B. A. WESTON

Ont., the Montreal columnist said, was part responsible for his determination to probe deeply and extensively into the origin of 'hockey in the Maritimes.

In an article, he continued, Capt. Jim had written that after the Crimean War, a regiment of soldiers was formed from discharged veterans known as the Royal Canadian Rifles, one-half of which was stationed at Halifax and the other half at Kingston, Ont.

They, Capt. Sutherland believed, adopted the game from the British field hockey and polo, and that in games between McGill and Victorias in 1874-77 they played under rules which had been prepared for the games in Halifax, and were known as the Halifax rules.

"What were these Halifax rules? What was more natural," said Elmer Ferguson than to go to the man who since 1879 had been sending sports news and observations from the Maritimes to the New York Spirit of the Times and penned daily sports for years.

"Anything previous to 1879 is not of my personal knowledge, the late James W. Power, responded modestly, but Colonel Byron Arthur Weston, then in his eighties,—now residing in Halifax, and a former resident of Dartmouth—who in his younger days was a prominent skater, tells men he played hockey in the sixties and that they had games with the Micmac Indians who resided near the lake.

"They played with a block of wood for a puck," said Col. Weston, and the stones marking the place to score goals were placed at opposite angles to those at present."

Points of Rules

"The main points of the rules," he continued, "were that there was to be no slashing, otherwise, no lifting the hockey stick above the shoulder and, when a goal was scored ends were changed. Players had to keep inside and the forward pass was permitted."

"Games were played between Halifax and Dartmouth teams, but Colonel Weston, who served in the Fenian Raid and the Northwest Rebellion, believes 'the Indians played the game on the Dartmouth Lakes long before the sixties'."

"The hockey sticks, which differed slightly from those in use today, were made by the Indians, who make them today, and it may not be generally known that for many years sticks manufactured by these Indians have been shipped from here to the Upper Provinces and the United States.

Halifax Prominent

The Chebucto Amateur Athletic Club of Dartmouth had a number of excellent skaters and hockey players, and they were the first to send a team from the Maritime Provinces to the Upper Provinces. It was during the 1887-88 season. They played at Quebec and Montreal.

The Chebucto players included John and Frank Young, George Pyke, Judson Hyde, John Brown, Charles Patterson and W. Faulkner

and were accompanied by H. D. Creighton, Charles A. Robinson and Collin McNab.

In Jan. 1937 Baz O'Meara wrote in the Montreal Star that he had a letter from John T. Knox of that city who contended the game was brought to Canada by four young men who came from Ireland in 1836. They brought four hurleys, and the sticks were carved out of hickory and were turned up at the point something like a golf stick.

Played Before

Apparently this was what known as hurley, but ex-Sergeant A. J. Sullivan of the Halifax Police Force, now 88 years of age, will tell you of playing hurley on the lake at Portuguese Cove in Halifax County seventy-four years ago, and that the hurley stick he used had been owned and similarly used by his father. This would indicate that hurley was being played down this way a century ago.

Right after Baz O'Meara told of Mr. Knox's letter, along came a letter to The Halifax Herald from William Gill—not big Bill of Moncton Hawks' fame—but the late William Gill, a talented scenic artist, who formerly lived in Halifax and later resided in Boston, that hockey was started in reality on the North West Arm, Halifax.

"I always played goal," he wrote. "Previous to the rubber puck, which came in about 1872, I made my own dead round ball. The first sticks came from the Indians. I had more than one—bought them at the Green Market."

This year, in January, a despatch came from Toronto telling of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association's committee which had been appointed to investigate the origin of hockey. It consisted of Captain James Sutherland, W. A. Hewitt and George Slater and the despatch included a statement credited to Capt. Sutherland that the first hockey nets were introduced at the Westmount Arena in a game between the Montreal Shamrocks and Victorias in 1899. When a check-up was made it was found that this game was played on Dec. 30 of that year while a Halifax newspaper's account of a game between the Halifax Wanderers and Crescents shows that the first goal net was used in this game at Halifax on Jan. 6, 1899—eleven months or almost a year earlier.

If the question about hockey's birthplace was to reach a courtroom, the judge, when addressing the jury, would probably remind the jurors that although shinny, hoquet, hurley and other forms of sport similar to hockey were played at different places years ago, he would point out that the forward pass was being used down this way in the sixties. That it is very evident that the first hockey sticks came from Halifax. Both those manufactured by the Indians and the ground hockey sticks imported from the Old Country. And there is proof available that the first goal nets used in a hockey game in Canada were used in a game at Halifax.

Cruikshank Is Golf Champion

PINEHURST, N. C., March 25—(AP)—Bobby Cruikshank of Richmond, Va., won the 41st annual North and South open golf tournament today with a 72-hole score of 292.

Joe Kirkwood of Philadelphia was second with 145-71-77-293. Joe Turnesa of Rockville Center, N. Y., third with 148-73-74—296. Gene Sarazen, Brookfield Center, Conn., fourth, with 147-74-75—296, and Johnny Farrell, Baltusrol, N. J., fifth, with 147-77-74—298.

ST. LOUIS, March 25—(AP)—New York Giants can start looking for a first baseman. Johnny Mize is in the United States Navy.

The fence-busting infielder was sworn into the service this afternoon after passing his physical at Jefferson Barracks. Now he has seven days to wind up his affairs.

Mrs. Mize said she didn't know how they'll spend the last week. She expressed surprise that Johnny was in the Navy. But that was his choice.

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