

A native Oregonian looks at hockey

During the last week of March, thousands and thousands of students sped south in search of the very limits of their alcohol tolerance. While this certainly appealed to me, too, I decided instead to drive north to Canada in search of something else.

I drove up to Vancouver, B.C., and it was there where I saw my first professional hockey game. As a life-long resident of Oregon, I had little knowledge or interest in hockey.

Most of the highlights I had seen on the news were of fights, and most pictures of hockey players showed an amazing toothlessness problem. The sport had always seemed barbaric and minor compared to basketball, baseball and football.

It lacks any highly visible celebrities. But I guess without exposure from a major TV network and with shoe promo-

tions pretty much out of the question), how can you possibly tell one player from the next?

Loving the excitement a large crowd creates at a pro game, I went along with my Canadian friends to see the Vancouver Canucks battle the Quebec Nordiques.

My friend Andy, another University student, accompanied Fred as they approached the scalper. They had been given money to buy seven tickets. Fred tried bargaining with them and told them he had only \$50. The scalper appeared firm until Andy jumped in and

vicious checks.

Our tickets placed us high in the arena. As we watched the first period, Fred explained things. Oh, so little had I known! For example, the sport has rules! Icing, high sticking, fighting, hooking — these are all bad things. For me, it was simple: just cheer good things and boo bad things.

The first period was dominated by Quebec. It was clear even to me that their passing and skating was much better than the sluggish Canucks. As the period ended, Quebec, 3-2. At that time, we spotted empty seats four rows behind one of the goals and sneaked down past the ushers.

In our new seats, we found ourselves sitting between an old couple in their 60s and three intoxicated men in jackets and ties. The couple tended to say "Come on guys, let's go. Play hard." The guys in the jackets and ties tossed out some

English and some language I couldn't identify. However, the English they used was not suitable for family audiences.

Vancouver owned the second period. At the time, they were still fighting for the last playoff spot in their conference and a date with the Edmonton Oilers and Wayne Gretzky. Actually, that's not really a great reward to be fighting over. It would be much like the Christians running a 100-meter dash with the winner having to enter the arena to face the lions.

Throughout the period, the goal near us was the center of action. In hockey, the cheers grow as the puck gets passed around closer to the goal. The thunder of the fans when a player finally slaps one past the goalie is similar to a homerun swing or a slam dunk. By the end of the second period, the Canucks held a 7-4 lead.

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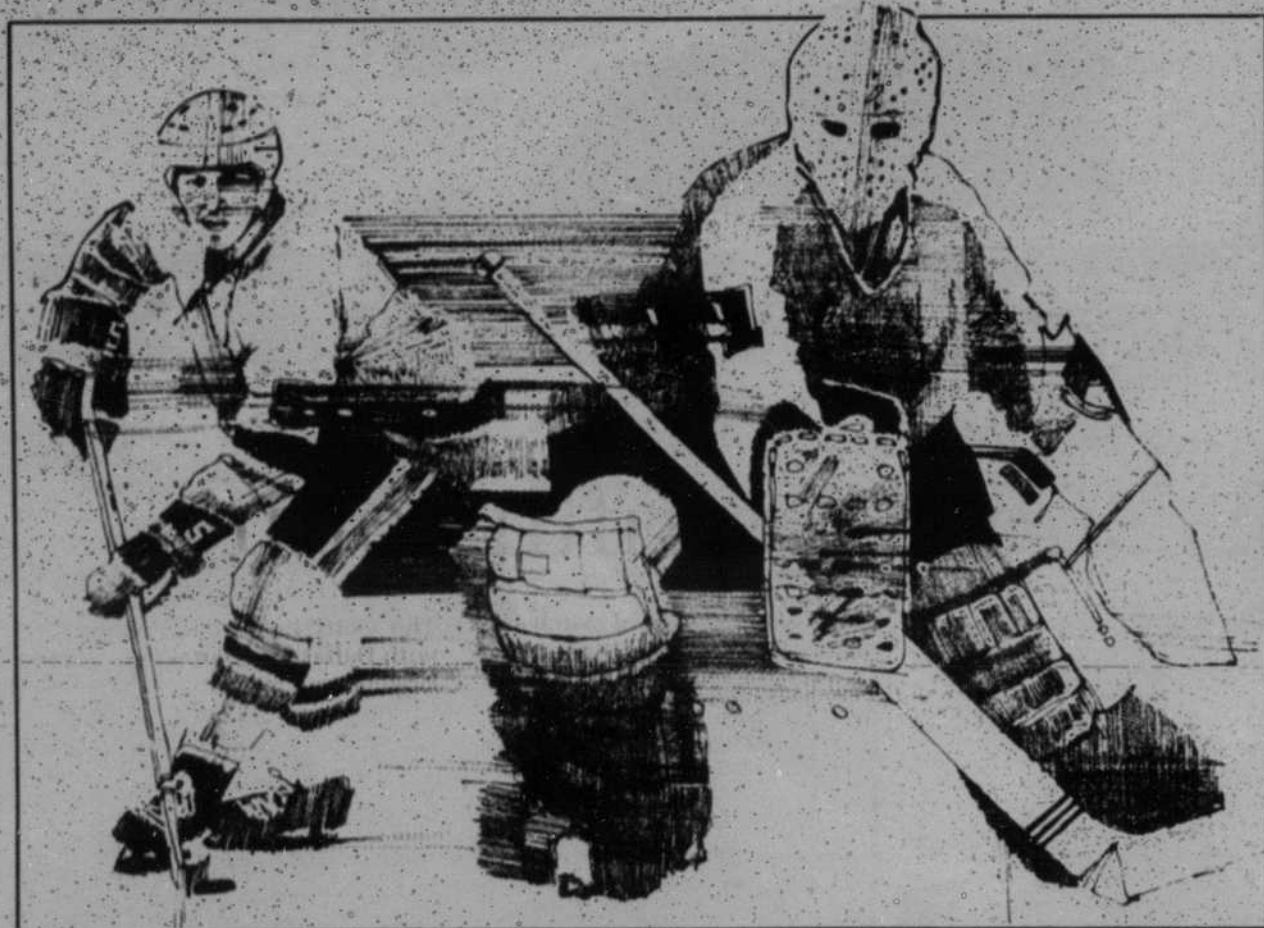
Reporter's Notebook

by Kevin Densmore

While listening to scalpers hollering "who needs tickets? I've got three in a row," I watched my friend, a hockey-crazed Vancouverite, approach a scalper to buy our tickets. My amazement at the legality of scalping was matched only by my embarrassment at not knowing what a Nordique was. I figured it was the National Hockey League's counterpart to the Hoya.

declared "hey Fred, I've got some American." As the scalper's eyes lit up like a scoreboard, the two had to meet the asking price of \$60.

Vancouver's Pacific Coliseum holds about 16,000 people. When we got inside, the ice was surrounded by a glass wall that is supposed to protect fans from misfired pucks, but the best part is that it also provides a great view of noses being flattened by



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