

# U.S. meets Canada for gold

By Nicholas J. Cotsonika  
Knight Ridder Newspapers

WEST VALLEY CITY, Utah (KRT) — Maybe it's a sign.

As the U.S. women's hockey team beat Sweden in Tuesday's semifinals, 4-0, some people held up a piece of posterboard against the glass by the bench. In blue letters was the word "Michigan." Below that was a red heart. Below that more blue letters spelled out the name "Angela Ruggiero."

Friends, right? Family?  
"I don't know who that was," said Ruggiero, a defender who lives in Harper Woods. "Just someone from Michigan, I guess."

Pause.  
"That," Ruggiero said, "was cool." Ruggiero, Brownstown Township's Shelley Looney and the other Americans earned the right to face archrival Canada in Thursday night's final. The Canadians beat Finland, 7-3, earlier in the day.

Four years ago at Nagano, Looney scored the winning goal against Canada as the Americans won the sport's first Olympic gold medal. The Canadians won the next three world championships.

The Americans went 8-0 against Canada this season. Still, Looney said she expected the final "to proba-

bly be the best hockey you've ever seen." The United States and Canada are far ahead of the rest of the world in women's hockey.

How far? Although the Americans blew out Sweden in one of the biggest games of their lives, although they took 32 shots to Sweden's 10, no one thought they played their best.

"I'm not sure the USA was going all that they can," Sweden's Erika Holst said.

Said Looney: "Sweden came out strong, and I don't think we came out as hard as we could. It was good for us to be able to play both ends of hockey, getting ready for the next game, I guess you could say."

Cammi Granato led the Americans with two goals and an assist. Katie King and Natalie Darwitz also scored. Tara Mounsey and Krissy Wendell each had two assists.

"They came out physical on us," King said. "The first and second periods, we didn't play like we can play. Sweden's style was frustrating. We came back strong in the third period and took it to them."

The Americans promised a better effort against Canada.

"When the buzzer went off tonight, it hit me that we're in the gold-medal game," forward Julie Chu said. "It should be a great battle

out there. I expect nothing less."

## Canada 7, Finland 3

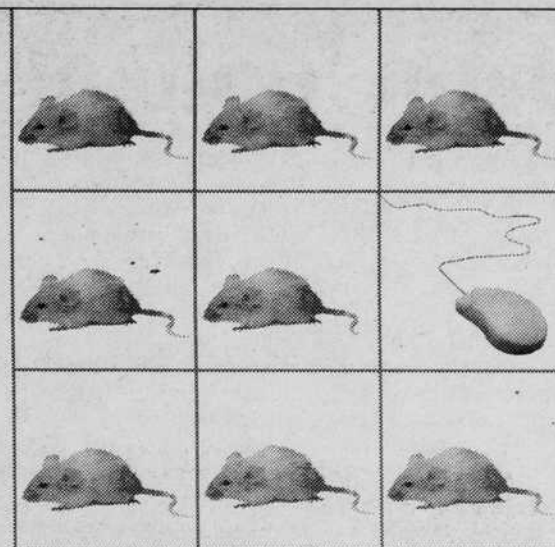
Trailing after two periods, 3-2, the Canadians scored five times in the third.

"I don't think a freight train could have stopped us," Canada's Tammy Lee Shewchuk said. "Obviously, we don't like having three goals scored against us. But we had to overcome them. I like that we've been tested. We could have collapsed, but we didn't. It shows the determination that the girls have."

Therese Brisson and Hayley Wick-enheiser each scored twice. Cassie Campbell, Jayna Hefford and Vicky Sunohara also scored. Tiia Reima scored twice and Katja Riipi once for Finland, which will face Sweden in the bronze medal game Thursday.

"We started off pretty well, but then I think we started to panic," Canada's Kelly Bechard said. "When you panic, everybody wants to be the leader and be the one to get the team going. ... I was quite surprised that Finland had played so well and that we were behind. But I think in the third period we showed what we can do."

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## Men's

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the Pac-10 and longer even than some national powers, including Duke, Cincinnati and Florida.

The Ducks' longest home-winning streak ever was 23 games, spanning three seasons from 1937 to 1939. The Ducks won 15 in a row in 1926 and 1927.

### Senior Sayonara

Oregon will say farewell to seven seniors this weekend. Six are players — Freddie Jones, Chris Christoffersen, Anthony Lever, Ben Lindquist, Mark Michaelis and Kristian Christensen — and one is a manager, Greg Lawrence. The players will be honored in a ceremony prior to Saturday's contest with Washington.

But as important as the formal ceremonies will be the on-court ceremonies, where some of the younger players say they will try to send off the seniors in style.

"The seniors have given up a lot of things for this program, so we want to win these last two to give something back to them," sophomore forward Luke Jackson said.

"To go 16-0 at home your senior year is really impressive," sophomore guard Luke Ridnour said.

"We want to send those seniors out of here like that."

The senior class is led by Jones, who is currently on eight different Oregon all-time top-10 statistical lists. No other Duck in history can make that claim.

Christoffersen has left his mark on the all-time Oregon blocks list. Despite not starting consistently until this season, "Big Chris" ranks seventh all-time in blocks and will move into sixth with two more.

Lever has been on fire from three-point land this season, and will leave his mark on the record books that way. Lever is on pace to break the single-season three-point efficiency mark at 49 percent.

### Poll-land

Oregon moved a little this week in the two nationally-respected polls, the Associated Press and ESPN/USA Today Coaches polls, after a blowout win over Oregon State on Saturday. The Ducks moved up two places to 15th in the AP poll and one spot to 17th in the coaches poll.

But that doesn't mean there hasn't been movement in other polls. ESPN.com runs a "Power 16" poll, ranking the top 16 teams in the country by seeds. Oregon was a fourth seed, after Stanford knocked them out of the pool of No. 3 seeds this week.

And in another official Poll That Doesn't Matter, the nation's fans continue to disrespect the Ducks. ESPN.com's fan poll has the Ducks ranked 18th nationally, behind Wake Forest, which is ranked 20th and 21st in the national polls.

Switching gears to local polls, television station KEZI is finally going to let you get that burning opinion off your chest. They know you've been thinking about it.

From the KEZI Web site: "Do you think Ernie Kent should force Luke (Ridnour) and Luke (Jackson) to get haircuts, or do you like the shaggy look?"

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E-mail sports reporter Peter Hockaday at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com.

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