



JUNIOR HOCKEY

Drive for five tonight

Canadians will have to tighten up defence against Sweden to add to gold collection

The Canadian Press

OTTAWA — Canada's chances of winning a fifth gold medal at the world junior hockey championship tournament tonight are less if the team continues its trend of giving up four or five goals each game.

The country's last four championship teams gave up no more than two goals in each gold-medal game.

It's a measure of how talented offensively the 2009 edition is that they've reached the championship after allowing nine goals in their last two games. Canada has scored 40 times in five games.

"Championships aren't easy. They never are," Canadian head coach Pat Quinn said yesterday.

"We are where we wanted to be and while you can't say it was dominant in any way, we have been terrific scoring and not so terrific on the other side."

Canada and Sweden meet for gold for a second straight year tonight.

It's a rematch of last year's final, which Canada won 3-2 in overtime in Pardubice, Czech Republic. The final is expected to be a sellout at Scotiabank Place, which has a capacity of just over 22,200.

Quinn will stick with Dustin Tokarski in net, even though the Spokane Chiefs netminder has been inconsistent. He's allowed questionable goals and also made big-league saves in this tournament.

"We're in a spot where we think he's had the harder tests at this point," Quinn said. "The other young man (Chet Pickard) probably hasn't been in a week, so it might be unfair to throw him in."

"Defensively we need to be better and Tokarski is the key to the defence, no question. There's no argument I think about a couple of goals that have gone in, but we found a way to be a team. We're not finger-pointing anywhere."

Zach Boychuk did not practise yesterday and played sparingly in Saturday's semifinal because of a sprained ankle. Quinn says the Lethbridge Hurricanes forward will play in the final.

So far, the Canadians have defied the adage that defence wins championships, particularly after a 7-4 win over the U.S. to conclude the preliminary round and a 6-5 shootout win over Russia in the semifinal.

The semifinal felt like a runaway freight train that Canada managed to jump off of with the win. The Swedes have a speedy attack too, so can Canada really afford to get into a run-and-gun with them and still come out on top?

"You know, I really don't know what to expect from games anymore," Canadian captain Thomas Hickey said. "Our chances are going to be a lot better if we don't."

Canada also needs to revive a power play



ADRIAN WYLD, THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadian goalie Dustin Tokarski makes a save during practice yesterday at the world junior hockey championship tournament in Ottawa. Canada will play Sweden in tonight's gold-medal game.

that was once 60 per cent successful in this tournament, but scored once on nine chances against Russia

Sweden's lone title in this tournament came in 1981. The Swedes have five returning players from the squad that came from behind to beat Canada in the preliminary round last year, and also came back from a two-goal deficit in the final to force overtime.

A subplot to tonight's final will be the performances of Swedish defenceman Victor Hedman and Canadian forward John Tavares as they are both candidates to go first overall in the NHL draft in June.

Oscar Moller, a former Chilliwack Bruin, joined the Swedish juniors from the NHL's Los Angeles Kings. Michael Backlund, a first-round pick of the Calgary Flames, scored spectacular goals in this tournament and 17-year-old Magnus Svensson Paajarvi has been a reve-

lation with his speed and moxie.

"It would be good to beat Canada in Canada," Backlund said. "Last year, it was so close, but this year is going to be our year."

"I think they'll be extremely motivated. You hear them talk," Hickey said. "They want another shot at us and that's fair. We'd want the same thing if we fell short last year."

Fifth-place game

James van Riemsdyk scored the overtime winner as the United States beat the Czech Republic 3-2 in the fifth-place match last night at the world junior hockey championship tournament.

The win completes a disappointing tournament for the Americans, who went 3-1 in the preliminary round but were knocked out of medal contention by underdog Slovakia 5-3 in the quarter-finals Friday.

OHL

Storm sweeps weekend

Mercury staff

sports@guelphmercury.com

GUELPH — Somewhere on a sleepy bus ride between Saginaw and Guelph early yesterday evening, Guelph Storm coach Jason Brooks was singing the praises of goaltender Jake Fischer.

Fischer backstopped the Storm to three consecutive OHL victories on the weekend, including a 5-4 win in Plymouth Saturday and a 4-3 shootout win in Saginaw yesterday.

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Fischer has answered the critics who thought the Storm might struggle when Thomas McCollum left for the world junior tournament.

The Storm went 5-1-0-1 with McCollum in Ottawa and Fischer was in net for six of those games.

"I think part of the reason for that success — and let's give credit where credit is due — has been the play of Jake Fischer," Brooks said last night. "Jake has played very well in that time period."

Yesterday, Fischer made 36 saves in regulation, one in overtime and then stoned all three Saginaw players in the shootout.

Brandon Buck was the lone Guelph player to score in the shootout, but it was enough.

The Storm has now won five straight.

"I'm not going to lie to you, our guys were really tired (yesterday)," said Brooks, whose team was playing for the third time in less than three days. Saginaw did not play Saturday.

Brooks said yesterday's game took on the usual theme — Guelph played well to start each period, then the Spirit took over the frame.

Matt Kennedy put Guelph up 3-2 with 4:39 left in the third period, but Jack Combs tied it with 2:56 left in the period.

"We've been getting some timely goals lately, something we had a hard time doing earlier in the season," Brooks said.

J.P. Labardo and Peter Holland scored the other goals in regulation yesterday.

Combs had two and Kyle Bocek one for Saginaw.

The game featured just three minor penalties, two to Guelph.

"That was a bit of a bonus, not having to kill penalties, considering how tired the guys were," Brooks said.

Saturday in Plymouth, Nathan Martine's first goal of the season at 2:20 of the third period stood up as the winner.

Guelph scored four times on the power play, two of them during its three-goal outburst in the opening 4:17 of the second period that put the Storm up 4-3.

Holland, Kennedy, Tim Priamo and Luke Pither had the other Guelph goals.

Myles McCauley, Beau Schmitz, Ryan Hayes and Patrick Lee scored for the Whalers.

Spits double Battalion

The Canadian Press

BRAMPTON — Greg Nemisz led the way with two goals and an assist as the Windsor Spitfires doubled up on the Brampton Battalion 6-3 yesterday afternoon.

Windsor (33-5-0-1) held a 3-2 lead heading into the third period thanks to goals from Nemisz, Justin Shugg and Adam Henrique. Josh Halla scored for Brampton on an early third-period power play to knot the score at 3-3 before the Spitfires pulled away with three goals in the next eight minutes.

GIRLS' HOCKEY

Stingy Greenway Thunder grabs title

Mercury staff

sports@guelphmercury.com

GUELPH — Sometimes the best defence is a good offence.

The Guelph Greenway Home Products Thunder midget A team used a stifling forecheck to keep the London Devilettes pinned in their own end for the better part of two periods yesterday in the gold-medal game of their category of the Guelph ThunderStorm Tournament. The reward for that hard work was a 4-0 win and a gold medal around the neck.

All four goals came in the second period. "I think we wore them out, and that is exactly what the game plan was," Thunder coach Peter Ormond said.

"We've got a high-skilled team and if we're passionate every single shift, good things are going to happen. We couldn't find a single flaw in our game today. It was solid."

Goaltender Leah Black had a quiet first two periods but was stellar in the third period, making several tough saves. She and Michelle Grubb split the goaltending duties in the tournament.

"I think we have two of the better goaltenders in the league, and we need them sometimes," Ormond said.

Danielle Greenway, Dana DiReto, Erica Plante and Michelle Lyle scored for the Thunder in yesterday's final. Ashlean Richardson, Heather Black, Katie Ormond, Laura Pekkola and Jessica Stephenson had assists.

Guelph and London tied 1-1 in round-robin play, the only point the Thunder dropped all weekend.

They beat Hamilton 5-3 in the semifinals. The Thunder is 11-2-2 in league play this



TONY SAXON, GUELPH MERCURY

Danielle Greenway, right, of the Guelph Greenway Home Products Thunder midget A team skates in on goaltender Dana Carson of the London Devilettes in the gold-medal game at the Guelph ThunderStorm Tournament yesterday at the West End Community Centre.

year, three points back of third-place Hamilton.

Ormond said the Thunder are a team built on balance.

"I think the biggest thing is we have three solid lines. Every line does the same thing that the line out there before them does," he said.

The midget A Thunder was one of two local teams to win gold yesterday.

The Guelph Stone Store Thunder novice B team doubled Kitchener 4-2 in its final, also played at the West End Community Centre. The novice B Thunder, coached by Leslie McNabb, went undefeated in the tournament, winning three and tying one in round-robin action.

The Guelph Licks Homeburgers Thunder midget AA team won silver, falling 3-2 to St. Thomas in the final of their division.