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GAME ON



ALL-STARS:
LEARN ABOUT MANITOBA'S ELITE LEAGUE ALL-STARS FROM 2025-26

HOW SWEDE IT IS:
INTRODUCING VIGGO BJÖRCK

SETH JARVIS:
BRINGS HOME THE STANLEY CUP

MARK STONE:
GAME ON'S FORWARD OF THE YEAR

$5 | Year 14 Edition 5

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MANITOBA MOOSE SEASON SCHEDULE



October

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
				1	2	3 2:00PM CHI
4 2:00PM CHI	5	6	7	8	9 6:00PM GR	10 7:00PM CHI
11	12	13	14	15	16 7:00PM TEX	17
18 2:00PM TEX	19	20	21 6:00PM GR	22	23 7:00PM IA	24 6:00PM IA
25	26	27 11:00AM CHI	28 7:00PM MIL	29	30 7:00PM RFD	31

November

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
1	2	3	4	5	6 7:00PM TOR	7 6:00PM TOR
8	9	10 7:00PM TEX	11 7:00PM TEX	12	13	14 7:00PM RFD
15 3:00PM CHI	16	17	18 6:00PM GR	19	20 7:00PM RFD	21
22 2:00PM RFD	23	24 10:30AM GR	25 7:00PM GR	26	27	28 2:00PM BEL
29 2:00PM BEL	30					

December

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
		1	2 6:00PM GR	3	4 7:00PM RFD	5 6:00PM MIL
6	7	8 7:00PM RFD	9 7:00PM CHI	10	11	12 2:00PM IA
13 2:00PM IA	14	15	16 10:30AM RFD	17	18 7:00PM RFD	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 7:00PM ABB	30	31 4:00PM ABB		

January

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
					1 7:00PM CGY	2
3 2:00PM CGY	4	5	6	7	8 7:00PM TEX	9
10 2:00PM TEX	11	12	13 8:40PM BAK	14	15 9:10PM BAK	16
17	18 7:00PM CGY	19 7:00PM CGY	20	21	22 8:00PM ABB	23 6:00PM ABB
24	25	26	27	28	29 7:00PM MIL	30
31 2:00PM MIL						

February

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
	1	2	3	4	5 7:00PM TEX	6 7:00PM TEX
7	8	9	10	11	12	13 2:00PM LAV
14	15 2:00PM LAV	16	17	18 7:00PM MIL	19	20 2:00PM MIL
21	22	23	24	25	26 7:00PM MIL	27 6:00PM MIL
28						

March

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
	1	2	3	4 10:30AM CHI	5	6 2:00PM CHI
7	8	9	10	11	12 7:00PM IA	13 6:00PM IA
14	15	16 7:00PM BAK	17 7:00PM BAK	18	19 7:00PM IA	20
21 2:00PM IA	22	23	24 6:00PM TOR	25	26 6:00PM BEL	27 3:00PM BEL
28	29	30	31 9:45AM TOR			

April

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
				1	2 6:00PM LAV	3 2:00PM LAV
4	5	6	7	8	9	10 2:00PM GR
11 2:00PM GR	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

26 27

home

away

ALL TIMES CENTRAL

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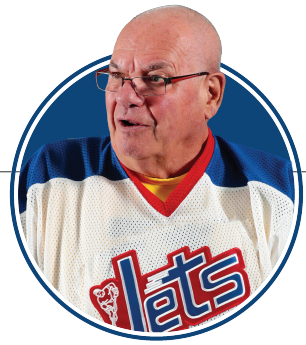

THE WHA LEGACY

The history of the Winnipeg Jets starts in the early 1970s when local businessman Ben Hatskin created the team as a founding member of the World Hockey Association. From 1971-79, the year the WHA merged with the NHL, the Jets won three AVCO Cup championships. The team's leaders were goalie Joe Daley and the Hot Line – Anders Hedberg, Ulf Nilsson and Bobby Hull. It was fast, fierce, firewagon hockey at its very best and we have all the memories at Joe Daley's Sports and Framing.

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Winnipeg's own Joe Daley met up with another legendary goaltender, the Hockey Hall of Famer Vladislav Tretiak on Jan. 5, 1978, at Winnipeg Arena. Daley's WHA Winnipeg Jets defeated Tretiak's Soviet National Team 5-3, making the Jets the first club team to ever defeat the Soviet powerhouse.

During that 1978 Soviet tour, the Big Red Machine played a series of games against WHA clubs. On that fateful January night, Daley outplayed Tretiak to secure an incredible victory for the Jets in front of a full house at the old barn. This is that famous, lasting image that shows two great goaltenders shaking hands at centre ice following the game.

This unforgettable photograph is yours, autographed and unframed for just **$109.99**.

THE HOT LINE

One might successfully argue there was never a better line in hockey history than the Winnipeg Jets' Hot Line. Made up of right winger Anders Hedberg, centre Ulf Nilsson and left winger Bobby Hull, it was a dynamic trio that seemed to score at will – and made every goal memorable along the way.

During the 1975-76 season, as the Jets roared toward their first AVCO Cup championship, Hull had 53 goals and 123 points in 80 games, Nilsson had 38 goals and 114 points in 78 games and Hedberg had 50 goals and 105 points in 76 games. They were glorious.

This piece, recognizing three of the game's greatest players, is beautifully custom framed with three 8 X 10 photos of each of the legendary Hall of Fame Jets. The photos are all hand signed and come with a tamper proof hologram for authenticity. **$429.00**.





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For nearly a century, the Winnipeg Winter Club has been a place that brings people together.

For Matt Bell, who joined the Club in 2021, hockey is about more than the score.

"My favourite aspect of playing Club Hockey is that it's not just your team of 10-15 players, it's a whole community of players who all know each other, who meet, build friendships and professional connections," says Matt. "It's great that everyone knows each other. You know who you are playing with and who you are playing against, so we play with professionalism, it's fast and it's good hockey."

Matt played junior hockey and has since taken up hockey at the Winter Club. With a young family, and a busy career as a CEO, he recognizes that playing hockey has to be convenient. "The times are fantastic, and the flexibility allows me to miss when I have work or family commitments. I know that I don't have to play every game, and don't worry about letting my team down when life gets in the way."

That flexibility has made the Winter Club a natural fit for the Bell family. His son first stepped onto the ice at just two-and-a-half years old through the Club's Learn to Skate program and now enjoys swimming and other activities as well. During hockey games, the child-minding service makes it easy for Matt to get on the ice, knowing his son is just down the hall.

The family atmosphere is one of the Club's defining characteristics. For Mark and Ben Tisdale, hockey has become more than a game. It's something they enjoy together. The father and son also spend time training side-by-side in the Fitness Centre, making an active lifestyle part of their routine. At the Winnipeg Winter Club, those connections have been bringing families together for almost 100 years and will continue to do so for generations to come.





Photos courtesy of Madison Bell and the Winnipeg Winter Club





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THE LINEUP

SEPTEMBER 2026
TRAINING CAMP ISSUE



118
CARSON CARELS

COMMUNITY

MWJHL 76
MJHL 80
MFHL 82
CRJHL 86
KJHL 90
MMJHL 94
U18 AAA 122

SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS

WINNIPEG WINTER CLUB 6
PILOT MOUND 18, 134
BALMORAL HALL 26, 138
HOCKEYBALL 64
HOCKEY MANITOBA 68
MANITOBA HOCKEY HALL OF FAME 72
STOP CONCUSSIONS 102
CHURCHILL 118
MANITOBA ABORIGINAL SPORTS & RECREATION COUNCIL 126
THE RINK 130

COLUMNS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF 11
THE INSIDE EDGE WITH GLENN BRUCE 28
SPORTS SCIENCE WITH DR. JEFF LEITER 30
CONDITIONING WITH AJ ZEGLEN 54
THE FINAL WORD WITH CARTER BROOKS 146



80
HAYDEN WHEDDON

MANITOBA'S BEST

CELEBRATING OUR PLAYERS OF THE MONTH



14
KYLE BEILMAN



16
MACKENZIE McPHERSON



18
TYNAN EWART



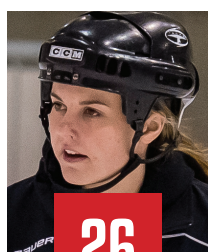
20
IVY PERKIN



22
ATTICA SOBERING

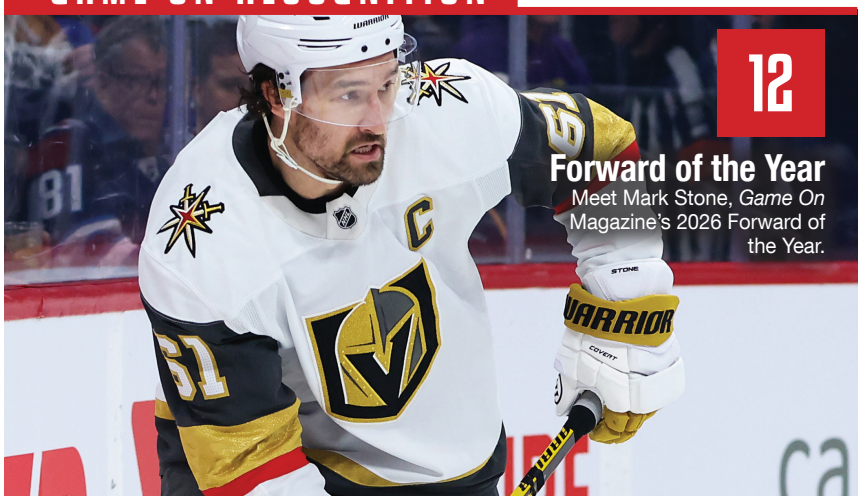


24
ATHENS SHINGOOSE



26
SARAH ZACHARIAS

GAME ON RECOGNITION



12

Forward of the Year
Meet Mark Stone, *Game On* Magazine's 2026 Forward of the Year.

VIGGO'S TIME..... 32
Get to know Winnipeg's 2026 first round draft pick, Viggo Bjorck, as he attempts to crack the Jets' roster for 2026-27.

A NEW FLIGHT PATH..... 36
A realistic outlook on the Winnipeg Jets' upcoming 2026-27 season.

THE JAMBOREE..... 42
Building a home for Filipino hockey.

MORE THAN A GAME..... 46
Filipino hockey pioneer Jonathan De Castro sees a movement growing hockey in Winnipeg that goes far beyond the rink.

MORE THAN A HOCKEY PLAYER..... 48
International hockey opened the door, but Larissa Pagdato's next challenge may take her all the way to parliament.

SEASON SNAP SHOT..... 50
The puck drops on Jets promo games for the 2026-27 season.

A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS..... 56
Jets' multicultural summer summit makes hockey welcoming and accessible for all.

TWISTERS LOOKING TO TURN THE CORNER..... 98
New coach Chris Unger believes Pembina Valley is ready to move from rebuilding to contending.

PHOTOGRAPHERS' NOTEBOOK..... 142
A look at summer vacations through the lens of our *Game On* photographers.

MAN OF THE YEAR



60

Manitoba's Tyrel Bauer takes home the Yanick Dupre Memorial Award.

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GAME ON is Manitoba's hockey community. This is where hockey fans will meet the stars of the game here in Manitoba and where our goal is to pay tribute to those who make hockey this province's most beloved sport.
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Magazines Canada

SLOW DOWN, SUMMER

If you're anything like me, you probably feel a little ripped off. We wait all year for summer in Manitoba. We endure what feels like six full months of winter, a few weeks of whatever you want to call spring and then, finally, those glorious days where the lake is warm, the evenings are long and nobody has to scrape a windshield before heading to work.

This year, it felt like we barely got started. A few ridiculously hot days had us thinking we were in for a scorcher, but then came the rain. By the time July finally delivered some consistently beautiful summer weather, August was already lurking around the corner - bringing mornings that felt suspiciously like September.

Normally, I wouldn't mind. September has always been one of my favourite times of year. Kids head back to school, hockey bags emerge from garages and basements and arenas across Manitoba come alive again. For those of us who work in the game, it's back to reality. I make a point of getting away from hockey during the summer. The lake is my escape after spending the better part of nine months watching, writing and talking about the game every day.

Apparently, Cole Perfetti can relate. The newly-minted $30-million man received the call that his five-year contract with the Jets was coming together while riding with his parents to the family cottage. Why were they heading there? His Sea-Doo lift had broken. There's something wonderfully Canadian about securing your NHL future while on the way to deal with broken lake equipment.

Perfetti was back in Winnipeg shortly thereafter for another major event: the wedding of Jets captain Adam Lowry and Laura Quinton. That one caught my attention for a more personal reason. In planning a Winnipeg wedding of my own this fall, I've learned many of the thousands of decisions that go into getting married: Venue. Food. Flowers. Guest list. Music. Seating charts.

One of the biggest decisions was also one of the easiest for us: Winnipeg is home. That's why I think Lowry's decision to get married here is so admirable and says so much about his character. Lowry wasn't born here nor did he grow up here. He came because the Jets drafted him. But after spending his entire NHL career in Winnipeg, becoming captain and marrying a local Winnipegger, this city has clearly become much more than a place where he plays hockey: it's home.

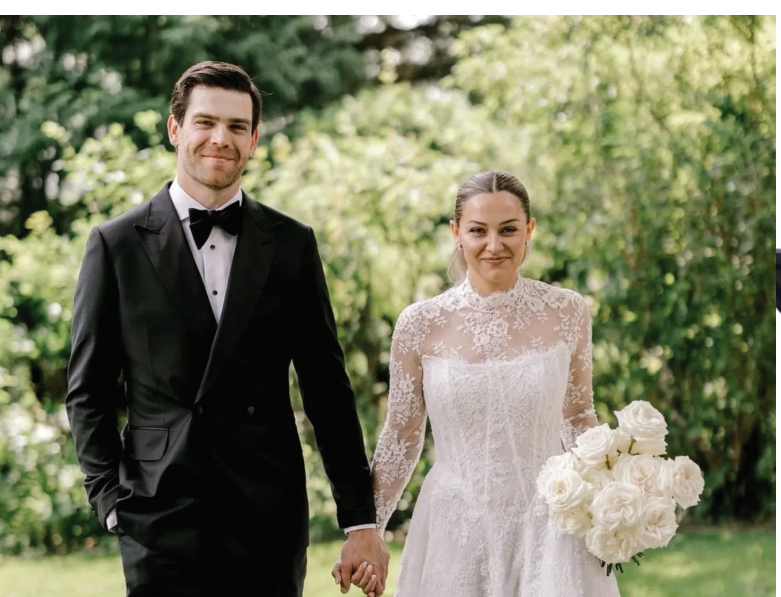
Maybe that's what September is all about, too. For the kids, it's back to school. For players and families, it's back to the rink. For Perfetti and Lowry, it's back to work. And for Jonathan Toews, this September marks something entirely different after officially hanging up his skates following one final season at home.

For me, it's back to the familiar chaos of another hockey season, late nights at the rink and pressing deadlines... with one fairly significant personal event squeezed into the middle of it.

I'm getting married this fall. Outdoors. In Winnipeg. In mid-October – should the weather cooperate. So, perhaps for the first time in my life, I'm entering September actively cheering against fall.

Welcome back to school, welcome back to the rink and welcome back to another hockey season. But if Mother Nature is taking requests, here's hoping summer sticks around for just one more month. At least until after the wedding.

CARTER BROOKS,
Editor-in-Chief





Photos by James Carey Lauder and Brittany Mahood

GAME ON MAGAZINE'S 2026
FORWARD OF THE YEAR

GAME ON
MANITOBA'S HOCKEY COMMUNITY

MARK STONE

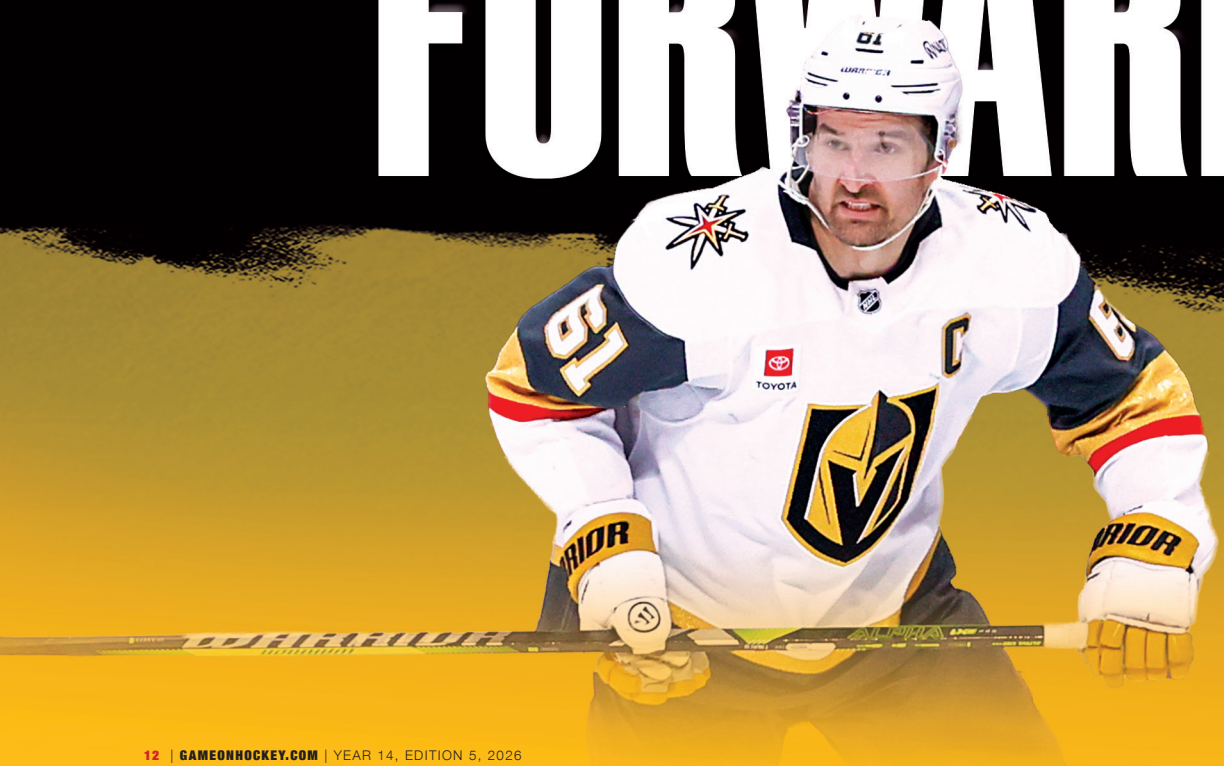
Photos by Rusty Barton and James Carey Lauder

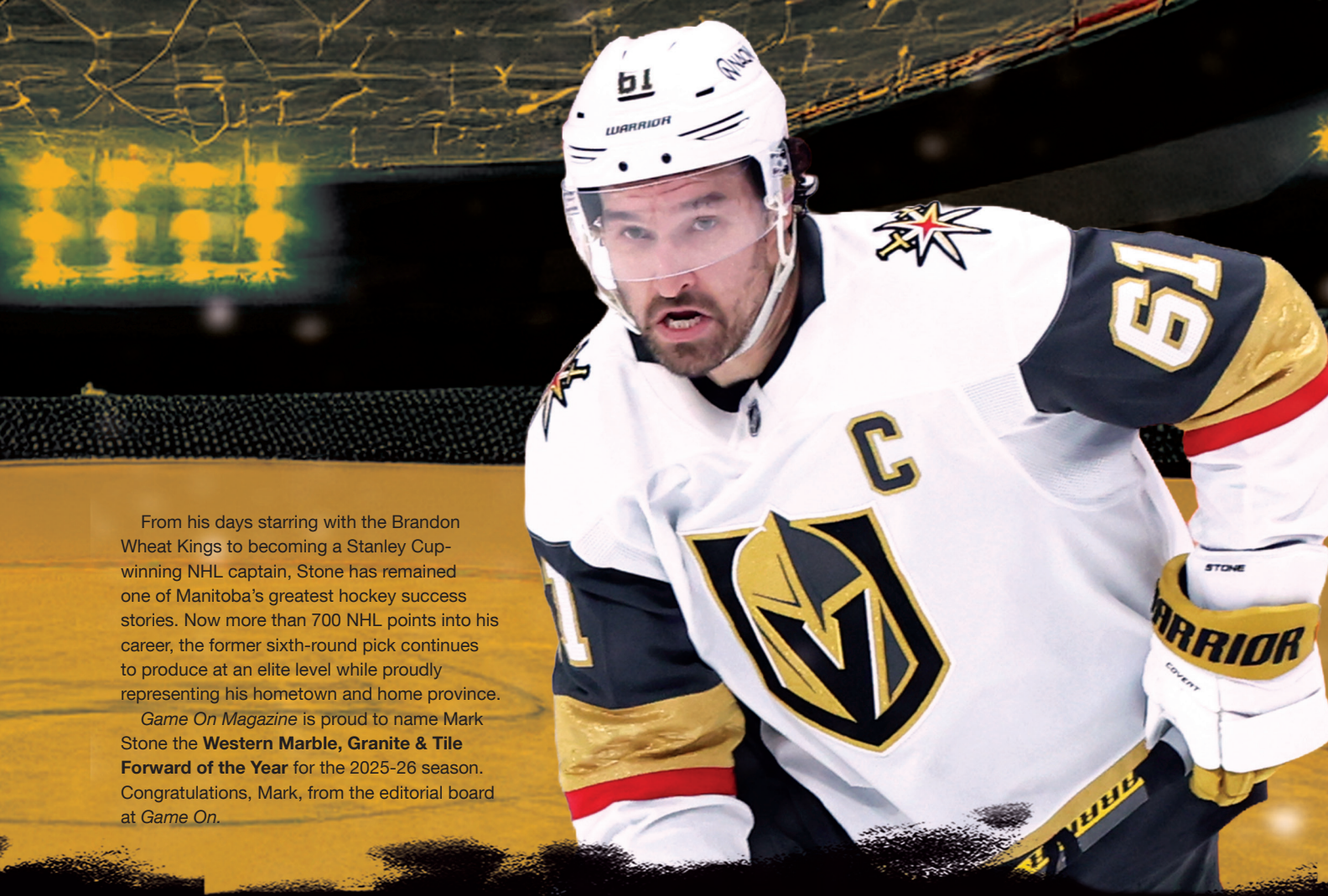
At 34, Winnipeg's Mark Stone continues to prove that when healthy, few players in the NHL can impact a game quite like the Vegas Golden Knights captain. Stone turned in one of the finest offensive seasons of his 14-year NHL career in 2025-26, recording 28 goals and 45 assists for 73 points in just 60 games. His 73 points matched a career high, despite playing 17 fewer games than he did when originally establishing the mark in 2024-25. Stone finished third in Golden Knights scoring and led the club with a +26 rating, while his 1.22 points per game represented the best offensive pace of his NHL career.

Of course, Stone's value has never been measured solely by offence. One of hockey's premier two-way forwards, the proud Manitoban remains a disruptive defensive presence, an elite puck thief and one of the NHL's most respected leaders. Now in his eighth season with Vegas and seventh as captain, Stone continues to serve as the heartbeat of a Golden Knights club that reached the Western Conference Final in 2026. He added three goals and seven points through his first nine playoff games before a lower-body injury interrupted his postseason.

The season also brought Stone to the Olympic stage for the first time. Representing Canada at the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milano Cortina, Stone recorded two goals and four points in six games, adding another chapter to an international resume that already includes a World Championship gold medal and a 4 Nations Face-Off title.

FORWARD

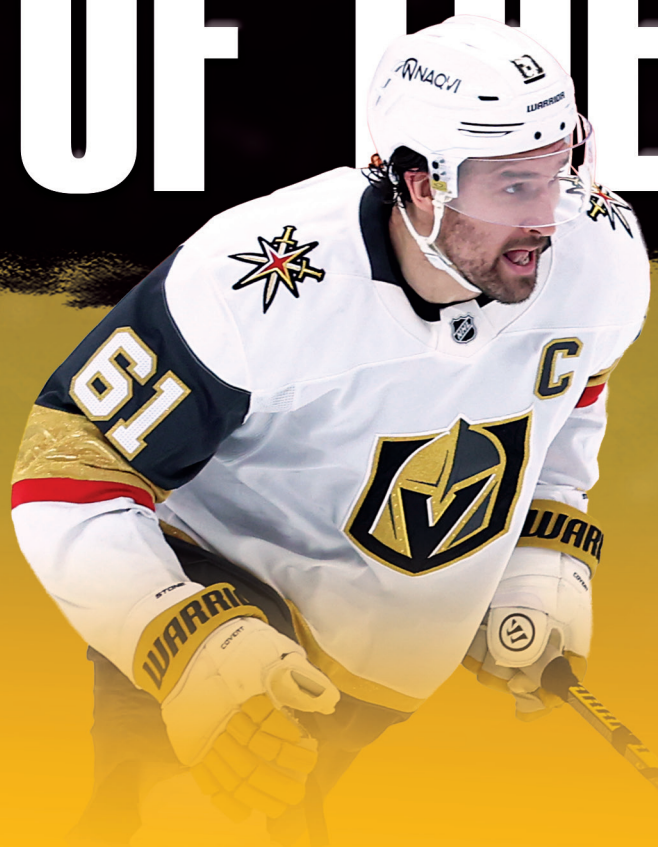




From his days starring with the Brandon Wheat Kings to becoming a Stanley Cup-winning NHL captain, Stone has remained one of Manitoba's greatest hockey success stories. Now more than 700 NHL points into his career, the former sixth-round pick continues to produce at an elite level while proudly representing his hometown and home province.

Game On Magazine is proud to name Mark Stone the **Western Marble, Granite & Tile Forward of the Year** for the 2025-26 season. Congratulations, Mark, from the editorial board at *Game On.*

OF THE YEAR



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KYLE BEILMAN

35

GOALTENDER // CATCHES LEFT // 6'0" // 185 POUNDS

BORN MARCH 30, 2007 // WINNIPEG, MAN

2025-26 TEAM: RIVER EAST ROYAL KNIGHTS (MMJHL)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

GOALTENDER

33
GAMES PLAYED

16-12-0
RECORD

.906
SAVE PERCENTAGE

The 2026-27 MMJHL season should mark a breakout for Royal Knights' No. 1 backstop Kyle Beilman. He took over the starter's gig last season following one year with the MJHL's Winnipeg Blues. And his numbers were terrific for a team that fully turned itself around while operating under a new coaching staff and regime.

"I'm excited to see what he can do now with two years of junior hockey experience under his belt," said River East head coach Manny Minuk. "He's only 19, so I have to believe his best is yet to come."

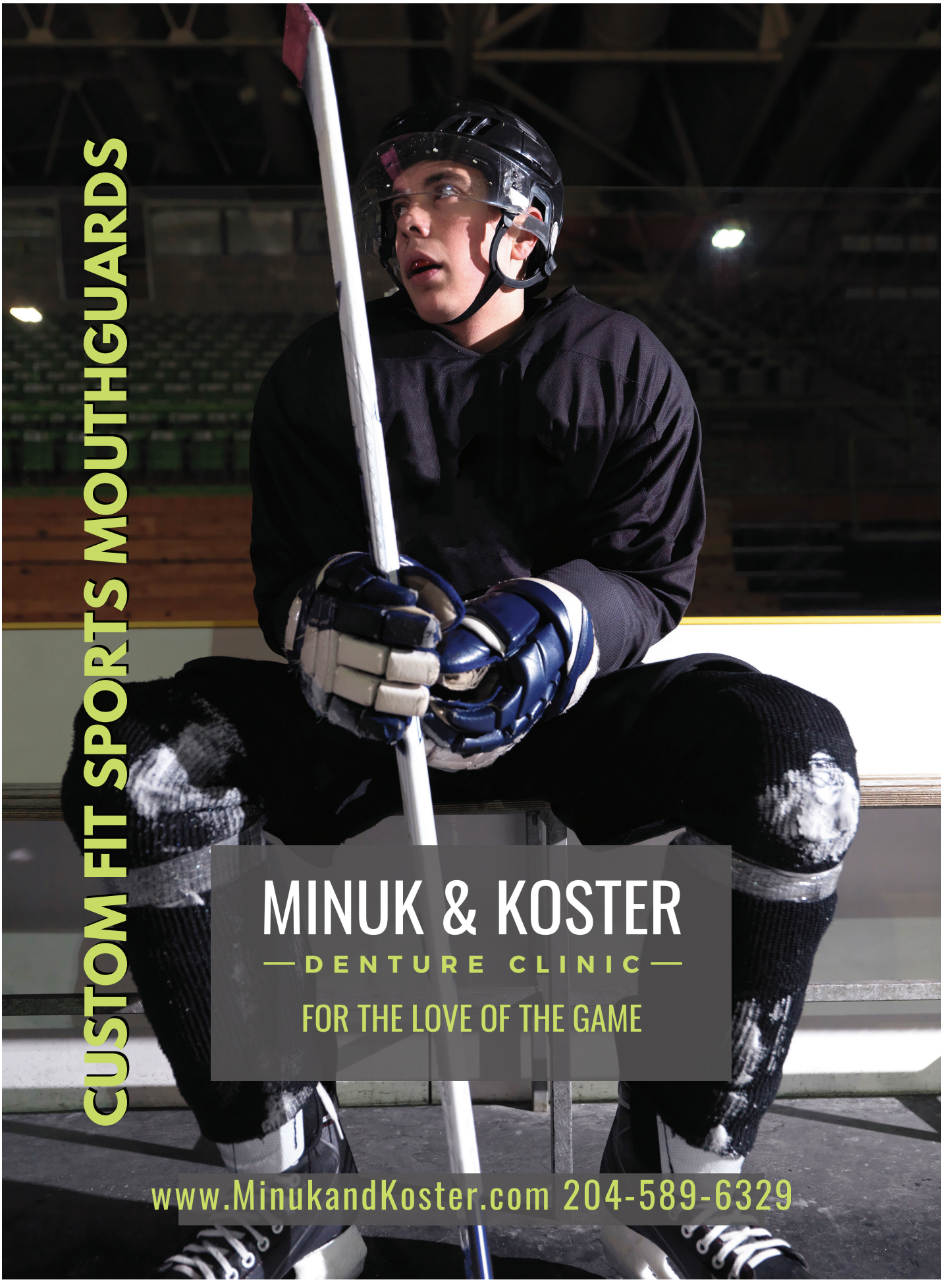
The first-year Royal Knight strung together five wins, a 2.30 goals against average and a sparkling .926 save percentage during the month of January, which earned him the MMJHL's Goaltender of the Month recognition.

"He definitely had more fun playing hockey this season than the past, and it's really nice to see him rewarded for his hard work," Minuk added.

"I noticed that he was very engaged in what was being discussed by the coaching staff – more than any goalie I've seen. He would always want to join in on special teams meetings just to hear what's being reviewed. I appreciated that, and it shows his dedication and leadership qualities."

You heard it here first: 2026-27 should be dubbed as Beilman's breakout.

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MACKENZIE McPHERSON

71

FORWARD // SHOOTS LEFT // 5'8"

BORN JULY 20, 2008 // PEGUIS FIRST NATION, MANITOBA

2026-27 TEAM: PEGUIS JUNIORS (KJHL)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

PEGUIS JUNIORS (KJHL)

27 GAMES

9 GOALS

27 POINTS

McPherson, the Keystone Junior B Hockey League's 2025-26 Rookie of the Year will return for his second season in Peguis. The 5-foot-8, 160-pound forward played U18 AAA hockey for the Interlake Lightning before joining Peguis for two games at the end of the 2024-25 season. He had a goal and three points in those two games and now has 30 points in 29 games in the KJHL. "The kid is all about hockey," said Peguis coach Marty Favel. "His brother is Keenan McPherson (won three KJHL championships with the Juniors) who was drafted by the Waywayseecappo Wolverines in the MJHL Draft a few years back. Mackenzie is only 17, but back in the fall, he didn't make the city U18 AAA team, so we were glad to take him on this year and he had a damn good year. In the playoffs, he really stood out. He's so small, but he's fast and he's shifty."



Photos by Kelly Jacobson

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KJHL

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TYNAN EWART

6

DEFENDER // SHOOTS LEFT // 6'2"

BORN FEBRUARY 26, 2002 // DUNCAN, B.C.

2026-27 TEAM: MAINE MARINERS (ECHL)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY (NCAA D1)

35 GAMES

1 GOALS

10 POINTS

As young men and women begin their careers at PMHA this fall, all of them should look closely at the career of Tynan Ewart for inspiration. Ewart came to Pilot Mound as a 15-year-old in 2017 and played excellent hockey from Day 1. He helped the Buffaloes win a CSSHL championship and then jumped to the Battlefords North Stars of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League. From Battlefords, he accepted an NCAA D1 scholarship to St. Cloud State University and after a year, transferred to Northern Michigan where he was the team's captain last year. He then played 14 games in the ECHL with Maine and then re-signed to start this season with the Mariners. Now a full-time professional, Ewart is a prime example of the all-around student-athlete that the Buffaloes send out into the hockey world.



Photos courtesy of Pilot Mound Hockey Academy

PILOT MOUND BUFFALOES

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TYNAN EWART
From PMHA to the ECHL's Maine Mariners

CARRIGAN UMPHERVILLE
PMHA to the Russian Professional Women's League

CARSON CARELS
From PMHA to the sixth overall selection by the Calgary Flames in the 2026 NHL entry draft

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IVY PERKIN

15

FORWARD // SHOOTS LEFT // 5'4"

BORN OCTOBER 31, 2008 // ELGIN, MANITOBA

2026-27 TEAM: UNIVERSITY OF REGINA COUGARS (U SPORTS)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

WESTMAN WILDCATS (MFHL U18 AAA)

28 GAMES

26 GOALS

60 POINTS

It would be close to impossible to have a better year than Perkin had in 2025-26. In fact, she won nearly all the MFHL U18 AAA awards. Not only was she the league's leading scorer, Perkin was also named Top Forward and Most Valuable Player. "We just had a great team this year," she said. "Considering that last year we finished seventh, it was great to get back up to third. I just seemed to work well with my linemates and we just had a great season together." The diminutive 17-year-old from tiny Elgin, Man., grew up on the family farm and still shows her cattle at 4-H events. She does all this while playing hockey (winter and spring) and going to school in Souris. Of course, her success isn't a surprise to anyone in the MFHL U18 AAA loop. After all, she was Rookie of the Year in 2024-25 and made Hockey Manitoba's Team Manitoba U18 squad this past season. Called "the best all-around player in the MFHL," Perkin has committed to play for the University of Regina Cougars this season, where she plans to study to be a pharmacist.



Photos by Darryl Gershman



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ATTICA SOBERING

79

DEFENDER // SHOOTS LEFT // 5'7"

BORN OCTOBER 31, 2008 // THOMPSON, MANITOBA

2026-27 TEAM: RHA WINNIPEG (CSSHL)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

RHA WINNIPEG (CSSHL)

28 GAMES

13 GOALS

29 POINTS

Called "a highly-skilled player" by Ed Mauro, her coach at RHA Winnipeg, Sobering has had a pretty remarkable 2024-25. She finished her first season on the U18 Prep team at the RINK Hockey Academy in Winnipeg, won gold at the NAHC, and played on Hockey Manitoba's Provincial U18 team that finished fifth at the National U18 Championships in Newfoundland in early November. Amazingly, her 2025-26 season might be even better. She had 29 points in just 28 CSSHL games, scored two goals and five points in four playoff games and won her second gold medal at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships. In fact, Indigenous Team Manitoba head coach Dale Bear added: "She's a remarkable player. Her play at the NAHC was right off the charts." She has committed to playing NCAA D-1 hockey at Cornell University.

Photos by Darryl Gershman

DID YOU KNOW?

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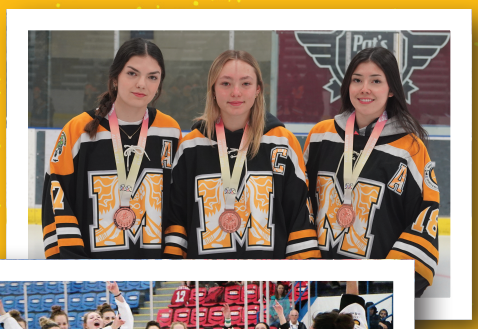

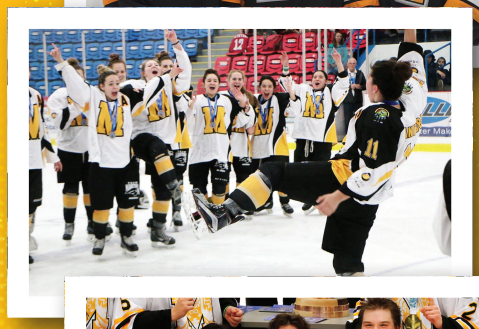

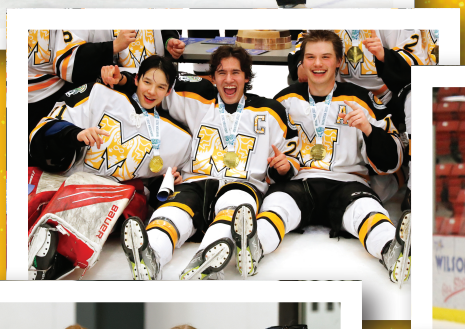



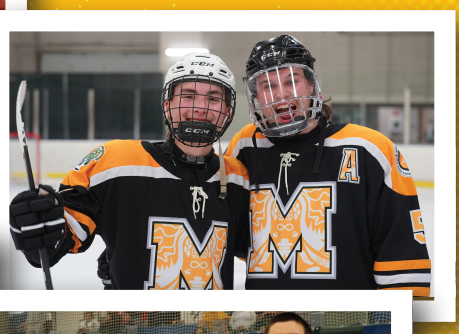





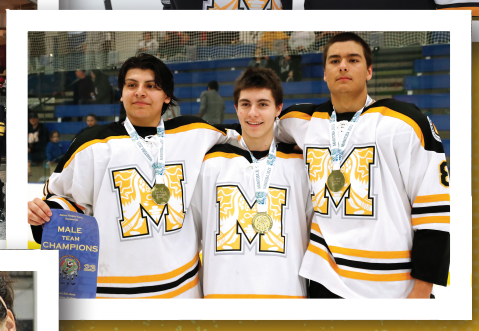

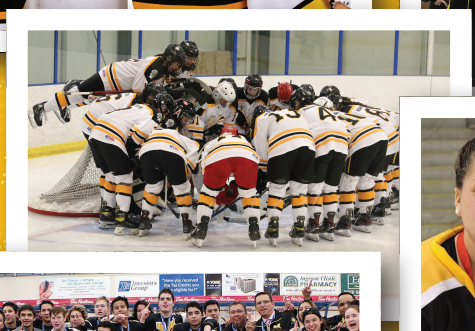







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ATHENS SHINGOOSE

21

FORWARD // SHOOTS LEFT // 5'8"

BORN MARCH 13, 2010 // WAYWAYSEECAPPO FIRST NATION, MANITOBA

2026-27 TEAM: PRINCE ALBERT RAIDERS (WHL)

2025-26 SEASON STATS

RINK HOCKEY ACADEMY (CSSHL)

30 GAMES

15 GOALS

31 POINTS

Athens Shingoose just might be the most exciting young player in Manitoba today. The Most Valuable Player at the 2025 WHL Cup, where he led Team Manitoba to the gold medal, he was also one of Indigenous Team Manitoba's top players at the 2026 National Aboriginal Hockey Championships, where he also led Manitoba to gold – his second straight gold medal. In 2024-25, Shingoose was a CSSHL All-Star at the RINK Hockey Academy Winnipeg and in April of 2026, he was named the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council's Male Athlete of the Year. After another outstanding season in the CSSHL last year, Shingoose played a game in the MJHL for his hometown Waywayseecappo Wolverines. This year, he is expected to start the season with the Prince Albert Raiders in the Western Hockey League.



Photos by Hockey Manitoba and the MASRC

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HEAD COACH // DIRECTOR OF HOCKEY // 2014-2026

BALMORAL HALL BLAZERS // WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

2011-12 TEAM: NIAGARA UNIVERSITY PURPLE EAGLES (NCAA D-1)

CAREER COACHING STATS

BALMORAL HALL BLAZERS (2014-2026)

652
GAMES

466
WINS

.715
WINNING PCT.

Dear Blazers,

As the longest-standing head coach in program history, and an alumna of Balmoral Hall School, I have dedicated well over a decade to the continued growth and success of our hockey program. However, today, I am announcing my resignation as Director of Hockey for the Balmoral Hall Blazers. After nearly 20 years with this team, as a player, alumna, and coach, it is time for me to hang up my whistle and follow the first line of our team's Code of Honour: To always remember family comes first.

It has been an honour to hold the title of Head Coach during a time of such success - most wins, most championships, and most scholarships earned. We captured our first JWHL Championship in 2019, followed by back-to-back Mandi Schwartz Championships in 2021 and 2022. We earned bronze at FWSSC in 2018 and 2021, and in our inaugural CSSHL season, we brought home the Division II Championship in 2025 - my final game behind the bench.

What stands out to me, though, is what happened off the scoresheet. Prior to my maternity leave, we had nearly one hundred percent player retention, an unheard-of number in this sport. That speaks to something deeper. Players and families believed in what we were building: a program rooted in growth, confidence, and opportunity, where hard work was matched with care and purpose. Girls, wherever life takes you next - another rink, another city, another dream - know this: I'll be watching. I'll be cheering. And I'll always be proud of you.

For the last time, "Girls! Buckets on. Ice is ready. Let's go."



Photos by James Carey Lauder and courtesy of Balmoral Hall School

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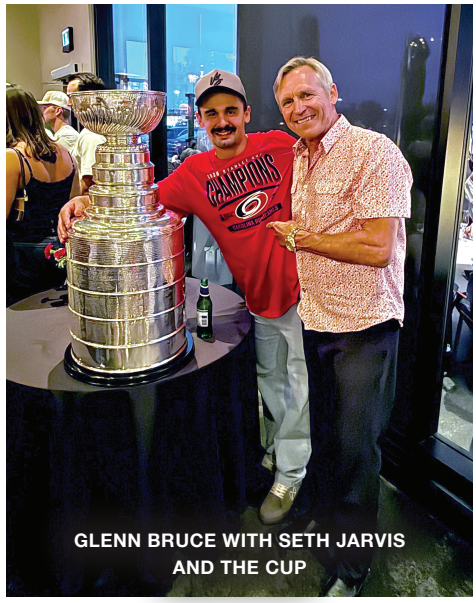
THE TALE OF TWO STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONS

Keegan Kolesar raised Lord Stanley on June 13, 2023. Almost three years to the day, fellow Manitoban Seth Jarvis hoisted the now 133-year-old silver cup on June 14, 2026. Both of these Stanley Cup champions have trained speed with me during their off-seasons. Keegan Kolesar started when he was 13 years old and Seth Jarvis when he was 17 years old. Did speed training lead to a championship ring?



GLENN BRUCE WITH KEEGAN KOLESAR



GLENN BRUCE WITH SETH JARVIS AND THE CUP

TEAM SPEED

First let's establish what team speed is. Individual speed is part of team speed and is only effective when it contributes to team speed. Team speed can include puck possession and movement, forechecking, backchecking, entering and exiting the transition, offensive and defensive zones.

THE ELITE 8

What does team speed have to do with individual speed? At the 2024 NHL Coaches Association Conference in Las Vegas, it was explained by many coaches that the "Elite 8" or top 8 players dictate the speed and style of the entire league. A fast player will dictate how fast their linemates play. The speed of one line will dictate to the other lines a collective speed style of play for the entire team. Team speed will then dictate to the conference and the conference will dictate to the rest of the league! Which means, speed is life.

METRICS MATTER

This past season Seth Jarvis (Carolina Hurricanes) ranked at the 93rd percentile for Maximum Skating Speed, clocking in at 23.38 mph. Seth's linemates would match this via speed of puck distribution, foot speed and more importantly the speed they can anticipate the next play!

NHL RANKINGS

How often do you hear that someone has to get faster on the first three steps? Coaches, athletes and trainers must be on the same page during athlete development. In his second year in the NHL, Keegan Kolesar said to me "I need to make this team based on my identity." Part of that identity was speed. The year the Vegas Golden Knights won the Stanley Cup, Keegan ranked a strong 74th percentile for maximum speed at 22.63 mph, and ranked 82nd for the number of speed bursts over 20 mph. Solid numbers indeed!

Seth Jarvis was once told during an off-season with the Canes to "Be faster coming off of the wall." In the 2024-25 season Seth was at the 99th percentile for maximum speed.

THE NEW GAME

With the new and common phrases "Quick up!" "Toe caps north," "Transition zone is for skating," it is obvious the game has changed from a "bump and grind," "clutch and grab," to "read and react," and "anticipate and go!"

MOVING FORWARD WITH SPEED

As a player, coach, trainer or parent it is critical that everyone is on the same page for speed development. As a trainer you must bridge the gap between practice and performance. As a player you must find your identity within the measurable metrics of speed and determine how it will contribute to team speed. There are many contributors to team speed and individual speed development. Once the movement signature is identified for the athlete then a proper systemic developmental program must be installed and executed. When all of this is completed, perhaps one day your fast athlete will hoist the Stanley Cup in the air for all to see!

Photos courtesy of Glenn Bruce



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TRAINING CAMP/TRYOUTS PART II

In last year's September edition, I wrote about the trials and tribulations of training camp/tryouts. The uncertainty, the physical, mental and emotional stress for parents and players alike, and how to prepare effectively in each domain. Building on physical, mental, and emotional preparation is perspective. Perspective on sports, hockey, tryouts and more specifically, development.

Mark Scheifele, Josh Morrissey, Connor Hellebuyck, Connor McDavid, Cale Makar, Frederik Andersen, to name just a few, are all stars in the NHL and are easy to spot on the ice because of their talent and minutes played. However, they are also easy to spot because of their uniqueness. They are all very successful players with different sizes, shapes, skill-sets and overall style. No two are alike.

So why are you focusing so much on what other players are doing at training camp? In short, that's the coaches and managers' jobs. Your job is to perform the best you can with your skill-set and your style and also, to showcase your strengths.

PERSPECTIVE

Perspective can be defined as a point of view, a way of thinking about things. It's how you see the world (in this case hockey) based on your own life and experiences. Here's a simple but powerful perspective for players, parents and coaches: Development. Every single time you step on the ice, whether it's the outdoor rink, a game, or practice, you can develop and get better. Every single time. Just like the NHL players mentioned above, you will develop a size, shape, and skill-set that is unique to you and that should be celebrated and enjoyed.

Developing and improving is fun and rewarding. It takes time, and it takes direct intention. Enjoy the process and be the best player you can be.

Of course, development doesn't stop if you don't make a team or level, development is stunted when you stop putting in the effort and intention. That's up to you, no one else.

Did you know that you are already only 0.02 percent of the population that have the opportunity to play hockey? In 2025, it was estimated that two million hockey players are registered worldwide. The world population was 8.23 billion people that year. So yes, you are already unique in what you do. You have an opportunity that 99.9 per cent of the population will never experience. So, embrace it, regardless of the circumstance, and please cherish that feeling of your skate blade gliding across the ice every single time you step through the gate. It really is a freedom that's difficult or impossible to replicate in other aspects of life.

After you read this article, whether you are a player, parent, coach or manager, take a few minutes to reflect on your perspective. It's not hard for it to get lost in the training camp/tryout phase of a season but don't let it go for too long.

Hockey is one of the greatest games on earth. It's a sport for fun, entertainment and freedom, regardless of level, age or environment.

Best of luck at tryouts and don't forget. Perspective.



MARK SCHEIFELE NOT ONLY HAS A DEEP LOVE FOR THE GAME, BUT ALSO A CLEAR PERSPECTIVE OF WHAT HE DOES

Photo by Scott Stroh



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VIGGO'S TIME



BY CARTER BROOKS
Photos by James Carey Lauder, Rusty Barton and Jonathan Kozub

There is something about Viggo Björck that just makes you want to see what happens next. Kevin Cheveldayoff discovered it long before the Winnipeg Jets called the Swedish centre's name at the 2026 NHL Draft. Winnipeg's general manager had met Björck during the pre-draft process and, moments after selecting him, referenced a conversation the two had shared behind closed doors.

"Don't you remember what I said?" Björck shot back with a smile.

"Oh, I remember what you said," Cheveldayoff replied. "It's been something I've been waiting for since that day."

Neither was willing to divulge the secret. But three months after Winnipeg landed Björck, the Jets are getting their first real opportunity to see what their newest first-rounder can do against NHL competition. And if Cheveldayoff's reaction following development camp was any indication, the organization can't wait.

"When he's got the puck on his stick, you want to watch and see what happens next," Cheveldayoff said. "It's an exciting start to a really good relationship here."

Björck arrives at his first NHL training camp as one of the most intriguing young players in Winnipeg's system. He isn't the biggest player on the ice, but ask the 18-year-old for his own scouting report and size isn't something he spends much time worrying about.

"I think I'm a competitive player," Björck said. "I play big, even though I'm not the tallest. I try and be smart out there too, use my brain a lot."

That competitiveness developed early. Björck grew up chasing his older brother, Wilson, through seemingly every form of competition the two could find. For a few winters, that included battles on a backyard rink where losing meant surrendering something almost as valuable as the two points: bragging rights.


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"No one wants to lose," Björck laughed. "If you lose, you don't get the bragging rights in front of your parents... We had ice in the backyard and went head-to-head there. It's been some tough battles, but I think that shaped you as well as a player and as a person."

Years later, the brothers got to share something considerably more meaningful when they helped Sweden capture World Junior gold together in January.

Wilson also played a role in another of Viggo's favourite hockey memories. A longtime Sidney Crosby fan, Björck found himself playing against his childhood idol at the World Championship. He had promised his brother that if the opportunity arose, he would ask Crosby for a stick. So he did. Crosby later left one outside the Swedish dressing room.

"It's Crosby," Björck said. "It's just cool to get a stick."

Now, Björck finds himself surrounded by plenty of familiar faces as he begins his own NHL journey. Winnipeg's prospect pool has taken on a distinctly Swedish flavour. Fellow countrymen Sascha Boumedienne, Alfons Freij, Fabian Wagner, Viktor Klingsell and Lukas Gustafsson are all in the system, while Isak Rosén and Elias Salomonsson are pushing closer to the NHL.



For Björck, many are hardly strangers. He has played with Boumedienne and Freij internationally and knows Stockholm product Klingsell from back home. Even Winnipeg itself provided a little familiarity during his first visit.

"Kind of like spring in Sweden," Björck joked of the Manitoba weather. What wasn't quite as familiar was seeing Jets fans turn out simply to watch prospects go through fitness testing. "Really passionate fans," he said. "A lot of people coming to see us doing the beep test. That just shows how much they love to be around the rink."

Those fans will have considerably more to watch this September. The Jets have been clear about where they see Björck's future. While smaller centres are sometimes shifted to the wing as they adjust to professional hockey, Cheveldayoff left little ambiguity when asked about Winnipeg's plans.

"Viggo is a centre. Period."

Whether that future begins in Winnipeg immediately remains to be seen. Björck has never pretended otherwise. His approach throughout the summer was considerably simpler: listen, learn and keep getting better.

"If you get better all the time, eventually your chance will come," he said. "Then you just gotta take it."

His first NHL training camp represents the next one. After a summer of waiting, Winnipeg finally gets to see what happens next.

HOW SWEDE IT IS

Björck joins a growing collection of Swedish talent in Winnipeg

Viggo Björck may be the newest Swedish name generating buzz in Winnipeg, but he is hardly alone.

The Jets have quietly assembled an impressive collection of Swedish talent, with Björck joining a group that includes Sascha Boumedienne, Alfons Freij, Fabian Wagner, Viktor Klingsell, Lukas Gustafsson, Isak Rosén and Elias Salomonsson.

For Björck, some of those names already come with considerable familiarity. "Alfons and Sascha were both on the World Juniors team, so I've played with them there," Björck said. "Klingsell is from Stockholm and I have played with him before as well. I know them very well."

Boumedienne is an especially familiar face. The two have known each other for years and spend time together during the summer on Gotland, an island off Sweden's southeastern coast where a collection of the country's young talent gathers to train. "It's super fun," Björck said. "I've known him for many years. A good buddy of mine. We hang out during the summer as well on Gotland."

For an 18-year-old making the jump across the Atlantic, having a few familiar faces certainly doesn't hurt. And if Winnipeg's Swedish collection eventually makes its way to the NHL together, there could be plenty more blue and yellow mixed in with the Jets' blue and white.

THE SWEDISH CONNECTION

VIGGO BJÖRCK	C	Winnipeg's newest Swedish first-rounder and the face of a rapidly growing prospect group.
SASCHA BOUMEDIENNE	D	A longtime friend of Björck's and former Swedish World Junior teammate.
ALFONS FREIJ	D	Another familiar face from Sweden's World Junior program.
FABIAN WAGNER	C	A Swedish centre developing within Winnipeg's system.
VIKTOR KLINGSELL	F	A fellow Stockholm product who has previously shared the ice with Björck.
LUKAS GUSTAFSSON	D	Another piece of Winnipeg's growing Swedish pipeline.
ISAK ROSÉN	RW	A young Swedish forward already earning regular NHL duty.
ELIAS SALOMONSSON	D	One of Winnipeg's more advanced young Swedish players.



GETTING TO KNOW VIGGO

ISLAND TIME
Following development camp, Björck headed home before making his annual summer trip to Gotland. There, he skates alongside a group that includes Boumedienne and fellow Swedish standout Anton Frondell, with Björck's father occasionally joining them on the ice.

DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION
Björck brought his family with him on draft night - literally. The lining of his draft jacket featured photos of Viggo and his brother, Wilson, family pictures and the logos of Djurgården and his hometown club.

ALMOST PICKLEBALL CHAMPS
Hockey wasn't Björck's only competition during his first development camp. He and Brayden Yager made it all the way to the pickleball final before falling to Jacob Julien.

"It's super fun to have people here that you know from the past."
— Viggo Björck



A NEW FLIGHT PLAN

BY CARTER BROOKS
Photos by James Carey Lauder, Rusty Barton, Danny Truong, Scott Stroh and Jonathan Kozub


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What a difference a year can make.

Two seasons ago, the Winnipeg Jets were on top of the hockey world - at least during the regular season. A franchise-record 56 wins and 116 points earned Winnipeg its first Presidents' Trophy.

One year later, the Jets finished 35-35-12, missed the playoffs and entered an offseason with considerably more questions than answers.

Now, following a summer of change, perhaps the biggest question entering training camp is also the simplest: which version of the Winnipeg Jets is the real one?

"One down year, I don't think, defines who we are as a group," Cole Perfetti said after signing a five-year extension this summer. "I think we're all really excited and looking forward to being a part of this."



> **"ONE DOWN YEAR, I DON'T THINK, DEFINES WHO WE ARE AS A GROUP."**
>
> **– COLE PERFETTI**

CHANGING COURSE

They will do so with a considerably different-looking roster. Jonathan Toews retired following his one-year homecoming, while veterans Gustav Nyquist, Tanner Pearson and Luke Schenn are also gone. In their place comes a younger, quicker collection of players and perhaps Winnipeg's most intriguing crop of prospects in years.

It represents a noticeable change in direction. For years, Winnipeg has supplemented its established core with experience. This time around, there are legitimate opportunities for young players to grab meaningful jobs rather than simply provide organizational depth.

None will garner more attention than eighth-overall pick Viggo Björck. The 18-year-old signed his entry-level contract in July and will arrive at camp with a legitimate opportunity to make the Jets immediately - potentially as their second-line centre.

That is a significant ask for a teenager, but it is also an indication of just how different Winnipeg could look. Brad Lambert, Brayden Yager and Nikita Chibrikov are among the other young players looking to force their way into the conversation, while a collection of offseason depth additions will arrive at camp knowing jobs are available.

For a team that occasionally looked a step behind during a miserable 2025-26 campaign, competition from younger, faster legs certainly isn't a bad thing. Björck's potential emergence could also have a direct impact on Cole Perfetti.

At just 24, Perfetti suddenly finds himself transitioning from promising youngster to a player Winnipeg needs to help drive its next wave.

After an injury-plagued season failed to build on the progress he had made the year prior, his new long-term contract brings both security and expectation.

"I expect a lot from myself on the ice this year to take a major step from last year," Perfetti said. "The management has, obviously, put that faith in me. So, now it's my job to go out there and play and live up to those expectations."

Perfetti believes the certainty of knowing he'll be in Winnipeg for the next five years will help. Two of his previous three seasons had been played with another contract looming. This time, he arrives at camp healthy, settled and able to concentrate entirely on hockey.

If Björck does wind up alongside him, Perfetti could also find himself taking on a mentorship role considerably earlier than expected.

"It wasn't too long ago that I was in his shoes playing as a young guy," Perfetti said of the possibility. "It's not easy, the NHL. It's a hard league."



VIGGO BJÖRCK

MARK SCHEIFELE

THE CONSTANTS

Winnipeg's youth movement doesn't mean the old guard is going anywhere. In fact, if the Jets are going to return to the postseason, their established stars will almost certainly have to lead them there.

Mark Scheifele is coming off a franchise-record 103-point campaign and Winnipeg will once again lean heavily on his chemistry with Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi. Even amid everything that went wrong last season, Winnipeg's offensive stars demonstrated that they can still produce. The challenge now is building enough underneath them that one line isn't being asked to carry an outsized portion of the load. That makes the battle for the second-line centre job particularly important. Whether it is Björck, another youngster or a different solution entirely, Winnipeg needs another unit capable of creating offence consistently.

Josh Morrissey remains the engine of the blueline and enters the season with a slightly different offseason routine after becoming a first-time father.



KYLE CONNOR

Captain Adam Lowry got married over the summer, while Connor and his wife prepare to welcome another child. Life has changed for several members of Winnipeg's core. But the expectations have not.

NEW FACES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

There are newcomers being asked to help bridge the gap. Mario Ferraro, 27, arrives after signing a three-year deal and playing all 82 games last season. The hard-nosed defenceman brings durability, shot-blocking and penalty-killing experience, but believes there is more offence to be found in his game as well. Ferraro spent the first seven years of his NHL career in San Jose. When free agency provided his first opportunity to choose where he played next, winning topped his list. "I want to win," Ferraro said. "I want to be on a team that's in a position to do so, and I see that here in Winnipeg."

That an outsider still views Winnipeg that way is notable.

Ferraro remembers the team that won the Presidents' Trophy much more than the one that stumbled through last season. He has spent years playing against many of the players still occupying Winnipeg's dressing room and believes the talent remains. His arrival also gives the Jets another player in his prime rather than another veteran nearing the end of his career - another subtle indication of where the roster is heading.

Ferraro won't be the only newcomer trying to carve out a role either. Between the offseason depth additions and Winnipeg's collection of prospects, there should be legitimate competition throughout the lineup. For some, simply cracking the roster will represent a successful camp. For others, the opportunity could be considerably larger.

Björck may be fighting for a spot in the top-six. Lambert, Yager and Chibrikov will be trying to demonstrate that their time has arrived. Others will be battling for jobs lower in the lineup, where speed, energy and versatility could help reshape a group that looked considerably older one year ago. There may not be room for everyone, but that is a big part of the point this season. After a year in which too many roles felt predetermined, Winnipeg should enter camp with genuine competition for ice time.



JOSH MORRISSEY

GABRIEL VILARDI

ADAM LOWRY



> **"I WANT TO WIN. I WANT TO BE ON A TEAM THAT'S IN A POSITION TO DO SO, AND I SEE THAT HERE IN WINNIPEG."**
>
> **– MARIO FERRARO**

QUESTIONS IN THE CREASE

Then there is the crease. After months of uncertainty, Connor Hellebuyck confirmed in late August that he had requested a trade from Winnipeg earlier in the offseason. With training camp fast approaching, the three-time Vezina Trophy winner has made his desire for a change publicly known.

The Jets are under no obligation to move Hellebuyck, who remains under contract for five more seasons, meaning Kevin Cheveldayoff can afford to wait for a return befitting one of hockey's premier goaltenders. But with Hellebuyck not expected to report to camp, Winnipeg appears prepared to move forward with Stuart Skinner.

The 27-year-old signed a two-year deal this summer and now stands to inherit the crease. Interestingly, Skinner, Hellebuyck and Eric Comrie all share the same player agent, Ray Petkau, adding another wrinkle to a most unusual summer.

Before Hellebuyck's request became public, Skinner wasn't interested in predicting what would come next.

"As of right now, me and Helle are teammates," he said. "He's the best goalie in the world, so it's a great opportunity for me."

That equation has since changed, but Winnipeg's objective hasn't. This is a team trying to win again, and Skinner believes it can. Looking at the Jets' track record, lineup, coaching and depth, he said he believes Winnipeg remains capable of doing "amazing and special things."



> **"I TRULY BELIEVE THIS TEAM CAN DO AMAZING AND SPECIAL THINGS."**
>
> **– STUART SKINNER**

THE LONG HAUL

Whatever roster emerges from camp will face another new wrinkle. For the first time, the NHL's regular season will stretch to 84 games. Winnipeg will play nine back-to-backs and a grueling 15 games in November alone, with only a nine-day All-Star break providing a significant interruption to the schedule. There is no extended midseason tournament break awaiting tired legs this time.

Those two additional games may not seem significant on their own, but added to the travel, back-to-backs and inevitable injuries of an NHL season, depth will matter. So will the infusion of youth Winnipeg spent the summer assembling. It will make Skinner's presence valuable regardless of who else occupies the crease, and should provide opportunities throughout the year for young players who may not crack the opening-night lineup.

There will be plenty to celebrate along the way, too. The Montreal Canadiens arrive on October 25 for the Heritage Classic at Princess Auto Stadium, giving Winnipeg one of the marquee events on the NHL calendar and an early-season date that should generate considerably more buzz than the average October matchup.

The nostalgia will begin one day earlier. Dustin Byfuglien, Blake Wheeler, Bryan Little, Andrew Ladd and other familiar faces will return for an alumni showdown with Montreal - bringing together some of the names responsible for the most memorable moments of the Jets' second life in Winnipeg. For one weekend, anyway, the focus won't be on what went wrong last season or what might happen next.

But those questions won't disappear. Two years removed from the best regular season in franchise history and only months removed from one of its most disappointing, Winnipeg enters 2026-27 somewhere between the two extremes.

For the most part, the Jets' stars remain. A younger generation is quickly working its way up the ranks and knocking on the door. Perfetti has been entrusted with a larger role. Ferraro and Skinner chose Winnipeg believing they can win in Manitoba. And a training camp featuring more legitimate competition than the organization has seen in years will begin determining just how different these Jets really are.

The flight plan has changed. Now comes head coach Scott Arniel's most difficult task: finding out where it leads. And when Winnipeg spends an October weekend celebrating its hockey past, this year's Jets should have already begun providing some answers about their future.



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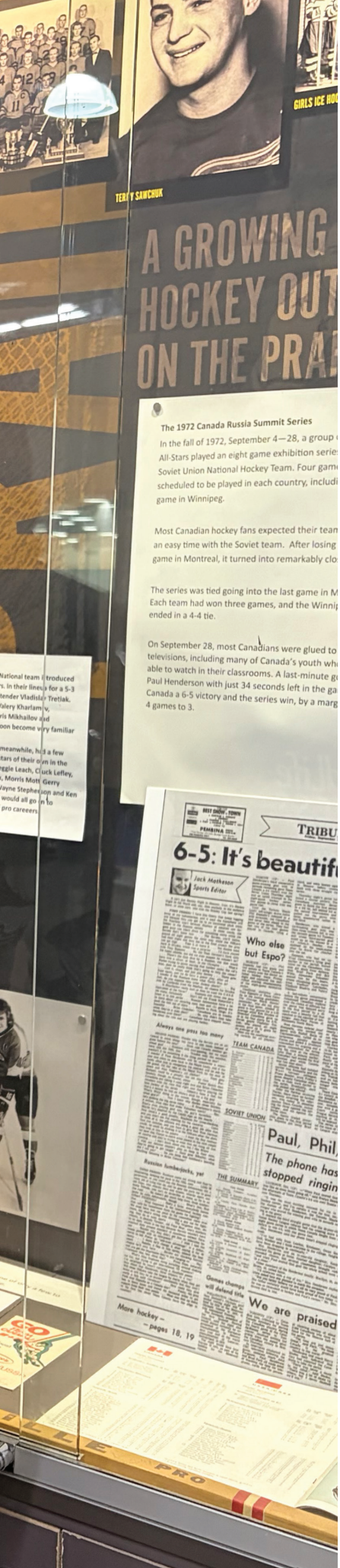
DR. ANTHONY BATTAD (RIGHT) AND RON CANTIVEROS



THE JAMBOREE: BUILDING A HOME FOR FILIPINO HOCKEY

BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Photos by James Carey Lauder, Ron Cantiveros and Scott Taylor

FOUR YEARS AFTER AN IDEA WAS BORN, A NEW GENERATION IS PROVING THAT HOCKEY BELONGS TO EVERYONE.

On a warm June weekend at hockey for all centre, more than 100 young hockey players pulled on their jerseys, laced up their skates and took to the ice. For many, it was just another summer workout.

For Manitoba's Filipino community, however, it felt like history.

The Second Annual Filipino Heritage Hockey Jamboree wasn't simply about games, goals and medals. It was the visible result of four years of determined work to introduce one of Canada's defining sports to a community that has long excelled in basketball, volleyball and football but has often viewed hockey from a distance.

As parents filled the stands and children from Winnipeg, rural Manitoba and beyond shared the ice, organizers weren't celebrating an event. They were celebrating the birth of a hockey community.

"This has exceeded every expectation I ever had," said Ron Cantiveros, whose vision has helped transform a simple idea into a province-wide movement. "When I look around and see over 100 players, parents, volunteers and supporters, this is what growing the game looks like."



PLAYERS AND COACHES AT THE 2026 FILIPINO HERITAGE HOCKEY JAMBOREE

Cantiveros' journey began in 2022.

That was the year the Winnipeg Jets introduced Filipino Heritage Night as part of the NHL's Grow the Game initiative. Around the same time, Cantiveros' oldest son, Lorenzo, was taking his first strides in Timbits hockey.

Those two events collided at exactly the right moment.

"I was at the rink and saw a few other Filipino families," Cantiveros recalled. "I started asking, 'Do you know any other Filipinos?' That's really how it started."

Back then, Filipino hockey families were scattered across the city, often unaware of each other. Today, that landscape looks dramatically different.

The 2026 Jamboree attracted 108 young players, a number that organizers believe represents only a fraction of the Filipino children now playing organized hockey across Manitoba. Families travelled from communities including Morden, Altona and even Dryden to take part, illustrating how rapidly interest has spread beyond Winnipeg.

"It's tough because we haven't really tracked it," Cantiveros admitted. "That's one of the reasons we started the Filipino Sports Heritage Council."

The newly created council represents the next phase of the movement.

When the Jets first asked Cantiveros whether there was a Filipino sports organization dedicated to hockey, his answer was simple.

"No."

On Saturday, June 27, that answer officially changed.

The Filipino Sports Heritage Council has grown out of four years of community-building that included Filipino Heritage Nights, Learn-to-Skate programs, First Shift and Second Shift hockey initiatives, spring camps and now two successful Heritage Hockey Jamborees. Its mission stretches well beyond hosting events. It aims to remove barriers, collect data, connect families and ensure Filipino children see hockey as a sport where they belong.

For many immigrant families, the challenge isn't simply paying for hockey. It's understanding how to begin. Equipment, registration, associations, skating instruction and hockey terminology can feel overwhelming to newcomers and Cantiveros has seen it repeatedly.

"When you come here as a new immigrant, you know basketball," he explained. "Hockey isn't familiar."

First Shift has become one of the biggest answers.

The introductory program dramatically lowers financial barriers by providing equipment and affordable instruction, giving families the opportunity to try hockey without making a major financial commitment.



RON CANTIVEROS AND THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS ANNOUNCE THE CREATION OF THE FILIPINO SPORTS HERITAGE COUNCIL



TRUE NORTH PROVIDES THE NEW FILIPINO SPORTS HERITAGE COUNCIL WITH $10,000

Word spread quickly and what started with a handful of participants soon became entire classrooms joining together.

"Lorenzo has 12 classmates in Grade 3 who all play hockey now," Cantiveros said. "It becomes word of mouth."

The effect extends well beyond individual players. Parents who once knew nothing about hockey now spend weekends driving to arenas across Manitoba, learning the game alongside their children.

For Dr. Anthony Battad, that transformation is deeply personal.

Growing up in Gilbert Plains in the 1970s, Battad was one of very few Filipino children playing hockey in rural Manitoba. His parents, unfamiliar with the sport, were simply grateful someone helped him get started.

"I had to play goal because my parents didn't know what equipment to buy," Battad laughed. "The rink manager said, 'Just buy goalie skates because we've got donated equipment.' I never left the position."

He eventually played for the Dauphin Midget AAA Kings before his father insisted that his education take priority.

"He said, 'We didn't come all the way to this country for you to play hockey.'"

So, Battad gave up the game and became a physician.

Today, as he prepares for retirement, he sees something he never imagined: "I never would have dreamed in my lifetime that I'd see this many Filipinos playing hockey, let alone playing in one place."

That growth reflects changing demographics across Manitoba.

Communities such as Neepawa, where a rapidly expanding Filipino population has transformed the town, are producing new generations of young hockey players. Southern Manitoba communities are experiencing similar growth, creating opportunities far beyond Winnipeg.

The council hopes to help those communities build their own hockey programs while connecting them to a larger provincial network.

"We want to leave a legacy," Cantiveros said. "Something that's still here 10, 20 or 30 years from now."

Partnerships have made that vision possible.

Jets Hockey Development, True North Sports + Entertainment, hockey for all centre and corporate supporters have provided funding, programming and organizational support that have allowed grassroots ideas to flourish.

The creation of the Filipino Sports Heritage Council received a significant boost through matching $10,000 contributions from True North Sports + Entertainment.

For David Sattler, General Manager of hockey for all centre, the results speak for themselves.

"I'm slightly blown away," Sattler said. "This project is very young, and to have 108 kids out for a grassroots hockey jamboree is incredible."

He believes the event offers something much deeper than hockey instruction.

"In many cases these kids wouldn't have played with other Filipinos," he said. "That builds community and character."

The weekend also featured Fil-Nation players from across North America, giving young Manitoba participants an opportunity to see elite Filipino hockey talent wearing something other than Canada's traditional red and white.

"For them, it looks different," Sattler said. "They're playing for their parents' or grandparents' heritage, and that's a unique opportunity."

Perhaps the greatest measure of success wasn't found on the scoreboard, but rather the stands.

Parents who first learned to skate through adult Learn-to-Skate programs were now cheering on children who had discovered hockey through First Shift. Volunteers who once knew only a handful of Filipino hockey families were welcoming hundreds of participants. Young players who had rarely seen teammates sharing their cultural background suddenly found themselves surrounded by peers who looked like them.

The community had become visible.

As Cantiveros thanked volunteers, coaches, photographers, scorekeepers, board members and his own family during the opening ceremonies, one message stood above all the others.

"This isn't about one person," he said. "We're building something much bigger than a hockey tournament."

Standing inside Hockey for All Centre, surrounded by more than 100 young Filipino players, he could finally see the dream taking shape.

"My hope is that years from now," he told the crowd, "we'll look back on this weekend and realize we weren't just hosting another hockey event. We were building a home for Filipino hockey."

MORE THAN A GAME

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Scott Taylor

FILIPINO HOCKEY PIONEER JONATHAN DE CASTRO SEES A MOVEMENT GROWING IN WINNIPEG THAT GOES FAR BEYOND THE RINK

By the time Jonathan de Castro walked into Winnipeg's hockey for all centre for the Fil-Nation Hockey Showcase Weekend, he had already experienced some of hockey's proudest moments. He had coached internationally, led the Philippine national team and heard the Philippine national anthem played before competition.

Yet nothing quite prepared him for what he saw in Winnipeg. Everywhere he looked, the arena was filled with Filipino hockey players, coaches, families and volunteers. For someone who grew up believing Filipino hockey players were few and far between, the sight was almost overwhelming.

"It was surreal," de Castro said. "I've never been in an NHL-calibre facility



JONATHAN DE CASTRO FROM FIL-NATION AT THE HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE IN WINNIPEG.



FIL-NATION STARS AT HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE, FROM LEFT JONAH SANTOS, BOSTON HIGH SCHOOL PLAYER, LUTHER EPP, FROM WINNIPEG'S ST. BONIFACE SEALS AND EZRA HERMOSURA, CUPERTINO, CAL.

where everybody in the building was Filipino."

For de Castro, the showcase represented far more than another hockey tournament. It was proof that a dream many believed impossible has become a thriving reality.

Growing up in New York City, de Castro often felt like one of only a handful of Filipino players in the sport. Whenever he spotted another player with a similar heritage, an instant connection formed. Those friendships lasted because they shared an experience few others understood. Seeing hundreds of Filipino players together under one roof brought those childhood memories flooding back.

"It makes you wonder what life would have been like if there had always been a community like this," he reflected.

That sense of belonging has become one of the driving forces behind Filipino hockey's remarkable growth across North America. While de Castro has enjoyed numerous accomplishments during his coaching career, one moment remains above every championship and every accolade.

"You can take away all the accolades from my career," he said. "The one thing I'll always remember is hearing the Philippine national anthem before a game."

Representing the Philippines carried special significance because de Castro became the country's first official Filipino-born head coach.

"It's something you don't fully appreciate until you're standing there," he explained. "All those parts of your identity suddenly come to the surface."

Those emotions resurfaced in Winnipeg.

The Fil-Nation Hockey Showcase demonstrated just how quickly the Filipino hockey community has expanded. Young children filled the ice alongside elite players, while participants travelled from across Canada and the United States to take part. Several players made the journey from hockey hotbeds such as California and Massachusetts.

Considering the event took place during the summer, de Castro believes that commitment speaks volumes.

"They're crossing the border in the middle of summer just to play hockey," he said. "That tells you how passionate these families are."

He credits much of that growth to Ron Cantiveros, whose vision and commitment have helped build opportunities for Filipino players throughout Manitoba and beyond.

"I give Ron a tremendous amount of credit," de Castro said. "He's grown the game, developed players and now everyone gets to see what he's built. I hope he can take a step back and enjoy it because it's something special."

The New Yorker also praised the support of the Winnipeg Jets organization and hockey for all centre, saying the involvement of an NHL franchise gives the movement added credibility while inspiring the next generation.

"It's overwhelming to have an NHL brand attached to something like this," he said. "You almost have to pinch yourself."

More importantly, de Castro believes events like the Fil-Nation Showcase create experiences young players deserve.

Throughout his coaching career, he has been fortunate to work within successful organizations that emphasized both winning and culture. His goal now is to pass those lessons on to Filipino athletes.

"I want these kids to experience the same kind of hockey environment I was lucky enough to have growing up," he said. "They deserve that."

MORE THAN A HOCKEY PLAYER

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of Larissa Pagdato

INTERNATIONAL HOCKEY OPENED THE DOOR, BUT LARISSA PAGDATO'S NEXT CHALLENGE MAY TAKE HER ALL THE WAY TO PARLIAMENT.

When Larissa Pagdato returned to Winnipeg from Estonia this spring, she unpacked more than hockey equipment.

She brought home memories of Team Philippines' first appearance on the IIHF Women's World Championship stage, the satisfaction of helping a young hockey nation earn two victories against international competition and, perhaps most importantly, a clearer picture of where life is taking her next.

For the 25-year-old Winnipeg product, hockey remains an important part of her identity. But these days, it no longer defines her entire future.

After spending the past year building an international hockey career while living in the Philippines, Pagdato



LARISSA IN OTTAWA WITH SENATOR GIGI OSLER.



LARISSA'S INTERNSHIP IN PARLIAMENT IN OTTAWA

has set her sights on another dream — one that could eventually lead her from the rink to the courtroom.

"I think my path is a lot clearer now," she said. "I'm really interested in public service and law."

That realization came during a unique opportunity few athletes ever experience.

Shortly after returning from Estonia, Pagdato was selected as one of just 10 participants in the National Philippine Parliamentary Internship Program, an experience that placed her inside Canada's Senate in Ottawa.

Working alongside Winnipeg Senator Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler, Canada's first Filipina Senator, Pagdato discovered a new passion.

Despite graduating from the University of Winnipeg with a degree in athletic therapy and kinesiology, politics had never been part of Larissa's plan.

Now, law school is.

"It was a pivotal experience," she said. "It really helped me understand that public service is something I'd like to pursue."

It's another unexpected chapter in a journey that has already taken her farther than she ever imagined.

Earlier this year, Pagdato helped Team Philippines make history by competing in its first IIHF Women's World Championship tournament in Division IIIB. The results weren't perfect, but they were significant.

The Filipinas defeated Singapore 8-0 and South Africa 2-1 while gaining valuable experience in losses against Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel and host and eventual tournament champion Estonia.

For a program still establishing itself internationally, every game represented another step forward.

Larissa's dad, Larry, who attended the event, said that he cried when he heard the Philippines national anthem, Lupang Hinirang, played after his daughter's first victory.

"It was a really good debut for us on the world stage," Larissa said.

For Larissa, the tournament was another milestone in an incredible hockey adventure that began with a difficult decision nearly two years ago.

To become eligible for Team Philippines under IIHF regulations, Pagdato moved overseas, lived in the Philippines for almost a year, competed in domestic leagues and immersed herself in the culture her parents had left behind when they immigrated to Canada.



LARISSA'S DAD, LARRY PAGDATO AT THE FILIPINO HOCKEY SHOWCASE JAMBOREE AT HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE



LARISSA WITH TEAM PHILIPPINES AT THE 2026 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN ESTONIA

The sacrifice paid off.

She helped Team Ube capture the inaugural Women's Philippine Hockey League championship, earned her national team opportunity and has now represented the Philippines in both the Southeast Asian Games and IIHF world competition.

The international travel has taken her from Bangkok to Dubai, Manila to Estonia. Now, however, hockey enters a holding pattern.

Team Philippines isn't expected to play again until either the 2027 Southeast Asian Games — if hockey is included — or the next IIHF World Championship in Bulgaria later that year.

"It's a long break," she admitted with a smile.

That doesn't mean the skates are going into storage.

Pagdato plans to continue playing senior women's hockey in Winnipeg while preparing for the LSAT and searching for work in public service that will complement her long-term career goals.

It's another balancing act for someone who has never been afraid to juggle multiple ambitions.

Throughout her hockey career, Pagdato has also found time to coach young players, promote diversity in the game and serve as a role model for Filipino athletes who may never have imagined representing their heritage through hockey.

That mission hasn't changed. Neither has the pride she feels every time she wears the Philippines crest. For her family, those moments carry special meaning.

Her parents left the Philippines decades ago to build a life in Canada. Today, their daughter is helping write a new chapter in Philippine hockey history while preparing to build a career serving Canadians. Not many people get to bridge those two worlds. Pagdato has embraced both.

International hockey gave her unforgettable experiences, lifelong friendships and a chance to honour her family's heritage. But it also helped reveal something even bigger.

The confidence gained from competing on the world stage has convinced her she can make a difference away from the rink as well.



BY CHRISTINA KLYSH
Photos by Jonathan Kozub and Darcy Finley

SEASON



THE JETS THANK FANS AT THE FAN APPRECIATION GAME

SNAP SHOT

THE PUCK DROPS ON JETS PROMO GAMES FOR THE 2026-27 SEASON



SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE NIGHT



UKRAINIAN HERITAGE NIGHT

The countdown is on for the start of the Winnipeg Jets' 2026-27 season, and fans have a lot to be excited about with new theme games, a record number of giveaways and ways to give back and celebrate our community.

The Jets will host their first **Lunar New Year Night** on Wednesday, Feb. 17 when they face off against the Los Angeles Kings. A widely recognized holiday around the world, the Jets will celebrate Lunar New Year with cultural cuisine, music and dance. Lunar New Year will join the Jets' lineup of cultural heritage games, including **Filipino Heritage Night** (Nov. 8), **Ukrainian Heritage Night** (Jan. 9), **South Asian Heritage Game** (Jan. 24), **WASAC Night** (Feb. 21) and **Black History Night** (Mar. 1).



CANADIAN ARMED FORCES APPRECIATION NIGHT



HALLOWEEN GAME

The season's giveaways will start off hot at the **Home Opener** (Oct. 2) where the first 7,000 fans will get a Jets Retro Goalie Mask. Take a trip down memory lane and be one of 5,000 fans to get a funky fresh Jets 90s Denim Dad Hat at **90s Night** (Nov. 10) or look stylish on the slopes with a fuzzy bucket hat giveaway for the first 5,000 fans at **Après Ski Night** (Jan. 2) when the Aperol Spritz drink special returns for one night only.

Fan-favourite theme nights return with the **Hoser Game** (Mar. 13) and **Country Night** (Mar. 20), where lucky fans can accessorize with a Jets hoser hat and cowboy hat respectively. At the **Halloween Game** (Oct. 27) fans are encouraged to dress up in their most creative costumes and the **Fan Appreciation Game** (Apr. 9) will wrap up the regular season with exciting giveaways and discounts. Bonus giveaway games will be sprinkled throughout the season featuring limited-edition Jets merch and collectibles.

New this season, fans can include exclusive Jets merchandise with their game experience thanks to Jets Specialty Tickets. Unlike traditional giveaway nights or promo games, Jets Specialty Tickets will only be available to fans who have purchased the Specialty Ticket add-on. Specialty Tickets will be available in limited quantities for select games throughout the season, with the associated Jets souvenirs only available for pick-up at the selected game. The first Specialty Ticket night on Oct. 7 will offer fans an exclusive Jets baseball jersey, with more exciting limited-edition items offered throughout the season, including a Jets Run Club hat, a Mark Scheifele Bobblehead and a Jets Halloween Trick-or-Treat Pillowcase.

As part of the Jets' commitment to giving back to the community, several games this season will be tied to raising awareness or supporting an important cause. **Child Advocacy Game** (Oct. 17), championed by initiative ambassador Adam Lowry, will raise funds and awareness for children and families affected by child abuse, while **Pride Night** (Nov. 19) will highlight organizations making a



90S NIGHT



APRÈS SKI NIGHT

difference in Winnipeg's 2SLGBTQ+ community.

The rink will go purple for the 14th annual **Hockey Fights Cancer game** (Nov. 30), which raises funds for CancerCare Manitoba Foundation, and the Jets will host military members and their families at **Canadian Armed Forces Night** (Dec. 8). The True North Youth Foundation's Project 11, along with other mental health-centred organizations, will share resources throughout January and at **Hockey Talks Night** (Jan. 16) and women making a difference in sport will be recognized at the **Celebrating Women in Sport game** (Mar. 7).

Recognizing Parkinson's Awareness Month, the Jets along with initiative ambassador Kyle Connor, will raise funds for U-Turn Parkinson's and the Movement Disorder Clinic at **Parkinson's Awareness Night** (Apr. 7). Fans are invited to extend their support of this initiative at U-Turn Parkinson's third annual Team 81 Ride Aug. 29. The event offers three legs for avid cyclers, capped off by an all-ages, all-abilities victory lap at Assiniboine Park. More info at team81.ca.

The 2026 Tim Hortons NHL Heritage Classic returns to Winnipeg in a couple short months, with the Jets hosting the Montreal Canadiens at Princess Auto Stadium Sunday, Oct. 25. Jets and Canadiens alumni will also face off the day before at Canada Life Centre for the **2026 Alumni Game.** Don't miss these iconic events – get your tickets for the Heritage Classic at www.nhl.com/heritageclassic and become a Member now to get early access to Alumni Game tickets at www.nhl.com/jets/tickets/season-ticket-memberships.

With a wide variety of ticket and membership options, there are many ways to cheer on the Jets at Canada Life Centre this season. Single game tickets and build-your-own four or six-game packs are on sale now, giving Jets fans the first pick of their favourite matchups and promo games. Get extra perks by becoming a full-season, half-season or quarter-season Member or choose a pass within your preferred price range and seat location and enjoy more flexibility with the Jets Passport. The quarter-season membership and Jets Passport have expanded seating options, giving fans even more viewing choices in the arena. Grab some buds and save some bucks or host your team, business or club while cheering on your home team with group ticket offers.



HOSER GAME



FILIPINO HERITAGE NIGHT



For tickets and the 2026-27 promo schedule, visit **winnipegjets.com/promos.**



THE RESPONSIBILITY IS YOURS

There is no such thing as a self-made athlete. Just like how it takes a village to raise an individual, it takes a village to help create a successful athlete.

There are countless people who support athletes through their journey. Parents, coaches, family, friends, teammates, scouts, skills coaches, strength coaches, nutritionists, sports psychologists and many more all play a supportive role in the successful development of an athlete. While it is extremely helpful to be supported, it is important for athletes to realize that ultimately, at the end of the day, the responsibility to excel at the things under their control lies with them.

There are too many times when athletes pass the responsibility of their choices to other people. The following things are what you as an athlete can control, and if you want to play hockey at the next level or the highest level, these are the things you must take responsibility over.



TYREL BAUER OF THE MOOSE IS A PLAYER WHO EXEMPLIFIES THE QUALITIES OF A RESPONSIBLE ATHLETE.

1) NUTRITION

Take initiative to make sure that you have nutrient dense food to fuel your body. One easy way to do this is to make sure your food is prepped and packed for the next day. "I didn't have time to grab anything" or "no one was home to make me anything" are not valid reasons for not getting proper nutrition. Spend a little bit of time learning to cook and organize your schedule so you know when you are going to have time to eat and what you are going to eat at that time. It is not anyone else's responsibility to make sure you have your water bottle - fill it up and bring it to every practice, training session and game.

2) SLEEP

High level athletes prioritize sleep. It is your responsibility to maintain a healthy sleep schedule. Aim for eight hours, be in bed before midnight, keep your room dark, quiet and cool. You can shape the environment you sleep in to help increase sleep quality. It might seem hard sometimes to pull the chute and go to bed early but remember that every physical and mental training modality works tremendously better on a rested body.

3) ATTITUDE AND EFFORT

Your attitude and effort are always the two most important things under your control. You could even make the argument that every other controllable factor in your life as an athlete falls under the umbrella of attitude and effort. Too often I see athletes let outside factors influence and control their attitude and effort. Someone says something and they stop trying as hard, something does not go their way, and you see their body language turn negative. It does not matter what someone else says or does. You control how you respond, you control how you show up.

Athletes that realize and acknowledge that it is their responsibility to make sure they are consistently great at the things that require no talent put themselves in a better position to be successful. The choice is yours, accept the responsibility.

Until next time, Strength, Courage, Hustle, Commitment

Photos by Jonathan Kozub



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THE 2026 WINNIPEG JETS MULTICULTURAL HOCKEY SUMMIT

A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS

BY CHRISTINA KLYSH
Photos by Hunter Hiebert

WINNIPEG JETS MULTICULTURAL SUMMER SUMMIT POWERED BY OG HOCKEY MAKES HOCKEY ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING FOR ALL

The first ever Winnipeg Jets Multicultural Hockey Summit Powered By OG Hockey brought over 1,000 players, spectators and community members to hockey for all centre for a weekend of hockey development, educational sessions and cultural celebration. With many participants and their families new to the hockey community, the event was designed to provide comprehensive resources and support, helping them navigate and take advantage of all the opportunities the sport has to offer.

"Over the past few years through OG Hockey and the Winnipeg Jets First Shift program, we've seen hundreds of new families discover hockey for the first time," said Ganni Maan, co-founder of OG Hockey, which helps connect players and families to First Shift, a hockey development program that makes hockey accessible, culturally relevant and fun for beginners.

"We realized that learning to skate is only the first step. Many families still have questions about equipment, registration, costs, player development and what opportunities exist as their children grow in the game," said Maan. "The Multicultural Hockey Summit was created to bridge that gap. We wanted to create one place where families could receive the information, resources and support they need while building relationships within the hockey community."

The summit offered hockey development sessions for youth from four to 18 years old, with graduates of the First Shift program, recreational and house league players, and athletes competing at AA and AAA levels all growing their skills. Coaches from South Asian Hockey Association, an organization devoted to advancing diversity in hockey in British Columbia, ran on-ice sessions, ensuring representation was reflected in the coaching staff and giving young players role models to look up to.

"Rather than focusing on competition, the summit emphasizes development," said Maan. "Programming was organized by age and skill level, so every participant received an experience that's appropriate for where they are in their hockey journey."



PLAYERS AND COACHES AT THE 2026 WINNIPEG JETS MULTICULTURAL HOCKEY SUMMIT





HAVING FUN AT HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE



IT STARTS WITH GREAT COACHING

The summit also provided attendees resources on registration, financial assistance, volunteering, officiating, coaching, and other ways to become involved in hockey, along with a community welcome reception and business networking mixer, where local business owners were invited to learn about how they can contribute to growing the game in their communities, and a career panel highlighting different jobs on and off the ice.

"We understand that school and choosing a career is very important to the communities we work with, and while some kids grow up and want to become hockey players, they may not know about the many other career opportunities hockey can offer," said David Sattler, general manager of hockey for all centre.

There were also activities for the whole family, like ball hockey and a try hockey zone, and cultural cuisine to celebrate the different cultural groups represented at the event, including the Filipino, South Asian, Ukrainian, Black and Indigenous communities.

"One of our goals is to celebrate the many cultures represented throughout our city while showing that hockey can be a place where everyone belongs," said Maan. "The cultural elements were woven throughout the weekend to create an atmosphere that reflects the diversity of our participants."

To wrap up the festivities, True North Sports + Entertainment and hockey for all centre donated $10,000 to OG Hockey to continue to make hockey more welcoming and accessible by ensuring more underrepresented youth have a chance to learn the sport.

"For me, success isn't measured only by how many players attended the summit," said Maan. "It's measured by how many families now feel confident enough to register for the upcoming season, volunteer with their local association, become coaches or officials and stay involved in hockey for years to come. That's how we build a stronger, more inclusive game for the next generation."

To learn more about the First Shift program, visit firstshift.ca



FALL & WINTER PROGRAMS

JETS HOCKEY DEVELOPMENT

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MAN OF THE YEAR

BY FRANKIE BENVENUTI
Photos by Jonathan Kozub and Darcy Finley

THE AMERICAN HOCKEY LEAGUE HAS HONOURED MOOSE DEFENCEMAN TYREL BAUER WITH THE YANICK DUPRÉ MEMORIAL AWARD EMBLEMATIC OF THE LEAGUE'S MAN OF THE YEAR.

Tyrel Bauer has been a staple in the Winnipeg community since joining the Manitoba Moose in 2022-23. His work away from the rink was recognized by the American Hockey League this season when Bauer was honoured with the 2026 Yanick Dupré Memorial Award as the AHL's Man of the Year.

The 2020 Winnipeg Jets sixth round draft pick was nominated for the award in 2025 as well, before receiving the recognition this season. Bauer's work with the Kinship and Foster Family Network of Manitoba brought several foster families to Moose games over the course of the season. Families received gift bags from the team and met with the Moose defenceman after the game. Bauer remains especially close with a young fan named Noah, whom Bauer met through the program. Bauer and the Moose gifted Noah with a pair of custom-modified gloves that would allow Noah to play his favourite sport.

Bauer served as a coach and mentor for a U11 boys team at the Winnipeg Jets Hockey Academy – a play-based program designed to increase attendance as well as high-school graduation rates in socially and economically challenged schools in Winnipeg. He also made a series of appearances at events for Project 11 – the True North Youth Foundation's initiative in honour of former Jets and Moose player Rick Rypien – to help educate youth on the importance of mental health, including speaking at the foundation's annual gala.

Bauer's additional community work this season included a classroom visit to St. Amant, a non-profit organization which supports more than 5,000 Manitobans with developmental disabilities, autism and acquired brain injuries. He also participated in several full-team volunteering efforts, including holiday gift drives, school reading appearances, autograph sessions and more. In January, Bauer and his teammates played pick-up hockey with the winners of the Moose Backyard Rink Contest.


TYREL BAUER
MANITOBA
MOOSE
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TYREL BAUER LOADING HAMPERS AT THE CHRISTMAS CHEER BOARD.



"This is a really, really special award for a lot of reasons," Bauer said. "When I got the call, I did some research on Yanick, and I'm very honoured to be recognized with that. I learned a lot, and it's really about bringing the community together, and I'm just really grateful to have that opportunity."

Bauer follows in the footsteps of defenceman Jimmy Oligny, the previous Manitoba player to receive the Yanick Dupré Memorial Award, earning the honour in 2022-23. When Oligny left the Moose, Bauer helped carry forward the community work his former captain had championed, including the foster family program that had become especially meaningful to both players.

"Jimmy is an amazing mentor, an amazing man," Bauer said. "When Jimmy left, I took over the foster family program. I asked him, 'Hey, what are you planning to do with this? Could I take it over in your name?' He was on board, and you could see the excitement just to see the program keep going because of what it meant to the community. I'm really thankful for Jimmy.



He helped me a lot, maybe more than he knows, early on in my career."

Bauer has long viewed himself as more than 'just' a hockey player. The Cochrane, Alta. product sees his platform as a responsibility to do more. That mindset dates to Bauer's time in junior hockey as captain of the WHL's Seattle Thunderbirds but took on a new life as he continued to root himself in Winnipeg.

"As a hockey player, you are in a really unique position to give back to the community," he detailed. "Our job is to play hockey, but we wouldn't have that if it wasn't for the fans in the community. We're able to give back to them and just show our genuine appreciation for what they do for us. Everybody is going through something in their life; they have their own challenges unique to them. People just want to feel connected. They want to feel heard; they want to feel seen, and that's a universal experience for everybody."

Bauer says he often gains as much from his interactions with members of the community as they do. He grounds himself with those moments, able to remove himself from the heat of the moment of a game.

"Being able to go there and just interact and have fun, just have some laughs or smile, can really go a long way. Sometimes you're not looking for advice or to fix something at the time; you're just looking to know that people are around you and they care."

Many times, his visits with youth come following a game, and sometimes, it's after a hard-fought loss. That doesn't stop Bauer from putting a smile on his face and going to make memories.

"Maybe you didn't play a good game. That's frustrating, but you go out and you interact with these wonderful people, because win or lose, they're extremely excited to be able to meet you and to see you and interact with you," he said. "It adds a whole new layer of gratitude and joy. You realize that it is our job to perform, and we do have to play on the ice and win hockey games, but there's more going on in the community. There is more to life than just hockey. I am a hockey player, but life comes first."



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HOCKEYBALL AT HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE



HOCKEYBALL WITH MICK E. MOOSE



DAVE, NADINE, NORM AND JOY BEAUDIN





NORM BEAUDIN AND HOCKEYBALL

HOCKEYBALL

hockey for all centre

JHD

BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Photos courtesy of hockey for all centre and the Winnipeg Jets

PLAYING IT FORWARD

ORIGINAL JET NORM BEAUDIN IS HELPING A NEW GENERATION DISCOVER HOCKEY—ONE HOCKEYBALL GAME AT A TIME.

Long before he became the first player ever signed by the Winnipeg Jets, long before he skated on the legendary "Luxury Line" with Bobby Hull and Christian Bordeleau, Norm Beaudin learned hockey the old-fashioned way.

On frozen streets. In school gyms. Anywhere kids could find a stick, a ball or puck and enough room to dream.

Now, more than half a century after helping launch professional hockey in Winnipeg, the 84-year-old Original Jet is once again helping grow the game - only this time his greatest contribution isn't measured in goals or assists: It's measured in smiles.

Together with sons Greg and Dave, Beaudin has spent the past two decades championing Hockeyball, a modern version of floor hockey that is introducing thousands of children to Canada's game in schools, community centres and recreation programs across North America.

"It's finally taken off," Beaudin said with the excitement of someone who still loves every minute spent around hockey. "It's been a lot of work for Greg, but it's doing well."

The timing couldn't be better.

With organizations such as the Vancouver Canucks helping deliver Hockeyball equipment to schools throughout British Columbia and the Winnipeg Jets now joining the movement in Manitoba, Hockeyball has evolved from a grassroots idea into one of the fastest-growing entry points to hockey.

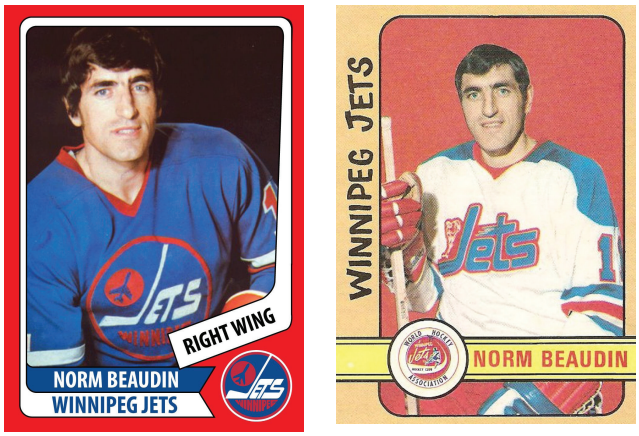
"When you're supplying all the schools in British Columbia, that's like 2,000 schools," Beaudin said. "They're supplying all the schools with a kit, and that's where we come in and train them and show them what to do."



THE LUXURY LINE: NORM BEAUDIN (LEFT) WITH CHRISTIAN BORDELEAU AND BOBBY HULL



WINNIPEG JETS STAR NORM BEAUDIN WITH THE YOUNG BEAUDIN FAMILY IN THE 1970S



NORM BEAUDIN, WINNIPEG JETS

For Beaudin, Hockeyball is more than another game. It's a return to hockey's roots.

The lightweight sticks and soft ball make it safe to play almost anywhere while teaching the same passing, puck control, awareness and creativity that have long been hallmarks of elite players. The concept has been inspired by European off-ice development while remaining simple enough for every child to enjoy.

"You know that all the Europeans play Hockeyball or floorball," Beaudin explained. "The off-ice training is second to none for the kids. They improve their skills tremendously. Watching all the Europeans play, they're pretty skillful. That's where they get their training."

His sons saw that firsthand.

Growing up in Winnipeg before following their father to Europe after his AVCO Cup championship with the Jets in 1976, Greg and Dave witnessed how Sweden and Finland developed players through gym classes and recreational floor games. Those experiences eventually became the blueprint for Hockeyball.

Greg describes the sport as a blend of floor hockey, street hockey, floorball and several other team sports designed to maximize touches, creativity and participation while removing many of the barriers associated with traditional hockey.

All that's required is a lightweight stick and a ball. No expensive equipment. No ice time. No intimidating first experience. Instead, kids simply play.

"The game is ideal for schools, community programs and club play," Greg said. "It's safe, affordable and it's the ultimate gateway activity to learning everything there is to know about ice hockey."

Perhaps Hockeyball's greatest strength is its inclusiveness.

Girls are joining in record numbers. Para-athletes have embraced adapted versions of the game, eventually forming a national wheelchair floorball team. Schools serving low-income neighbourhoods have found an affordable way to introduce hockey skills to students who may never have laced up a pair of skates.

Even newcomers to Canada are discovering hockey through Hockeyball before ever stepping onto the ice.

"We've got so many immigrant Canadians and families who have never played hockey before," Beaudin said. "This is a good first step into the game."

He also believes the crossover benefits are enormous.

"We've seen that most soccer players also play Hockeyball," he said. "It's great training both ways."

That philosophy has helped Hockeyball spread into Indigenous communities, where participation continues to grow alongside partnerships with NHL clubs.

"I think the Indigenous communities are getting really involved in it too," Beaudin said. "They love to play it, and that's good."

For a player who helped launch one professional hockey franchise, helping launch thousands of hockey dreams may prove to be an even greater legacy.

Today, Beaudin still skates a couple of times each week, still works alongside Greg and Dave, and still appears at benefit games. At nearly 85, retirement isn't part of his vocabulary.

"Yeah," he laughed, "hockey doesn't leave me."

Neither has his passion for passing the game on to the next generation.

The Original Jet has always believed hockey belongs to everyone. Through Hockeyball, he's helping make sure every child—regardless of age, gender, ability or background—gets the chance to pick up a stick, discover the joy of the game and perhaps begin a lifelong love affair with hockey.

For Norm Beaudin, that's a victory every bit as meaningful as any championship.



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COACH KARA PARADIS AND THE U15 BOISSEVAIN BORDER KINGS



BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of Kara Paradis

COACH OF THE YEAR

ONE COACH. ONE TEAM. ONE BOLD IDEA: HOW KARA PARADIS HELPED CHANGE GIRLS' HOCKEY IN TINY BOISSEVAIN, MANITOBA



KARA PARADIS



KARA PARADIS (FAR RIGHT) AND THE U13 CHAMPION BOISSEVAIN BORDER KINGS

When Kara Paradis looks around a Boissevain arena today, she sees something that once seemed almost impossible. She sees girls everywhere.

They lace up skates in nearly every age division. They fill dressing rooms. They cheer from the stands before dreaming of taking the ice themselves. They have role models to follow, opportunities to chase and a place in the game that simply didn't exist when Paradis was growing up.

For the president of Boissevain Minor Hockey, president of the Rural Manitoba Female Hockey League and an award-winning community coach, it all traces back to one deceptively simple decision.

Why wait until U11 to create girls' teams? That question changed everything.

Today, Paradis is Manitoba's recipient of the 2026 BFL CANADA Women in Coaching Award in the Community category, an honour recognizing grassroots coaches who put player development, sportsmanship, safety and inclusion ahead of wins and losses. Winnipeg's Ashley van Aggelen, head coach of the MFHL U18 AAA Winnipeg Avros, was recognized as Manitoba's Competitive Coach of the Year.

For Paradis, however, the award isn't really about coaching systems or championship banners. It's about creating opportunities that she wished had existed when she was a little girl growing up in southwestern Manitoba.

"My hockey story starts just as a kid playing in a small town and falling in love with it," she said. "I don't have the fancy college story or the elite hockey story. I just loved everything about the game. I loved the arenas, the sounds, the smells. Hockey has given me some of my best friends, and that's what has always made it special."

Like many girls growing up in rural Manitoba 30 years ago, opportunities weren't plentiful.

She first played recreational hockey in nearby Ninga before eventually joining girls' teams that often combined players from several communities and multiple age groups simply to have enough skaters.

"There weren't a lot of girls playing hockey back then," she said. "Sometimes you'd have three or four age groups together just to make one team."

Years later, after stepping away from the game as a young adult, Paradis found herself back at the rink when a local girls' team needed another volunteer coach.

She quickly discovered coaching could be just as rewarding as playing.

"I loved it," she said. "The people I coached with made me feel welcome. We worked together, talked through decisions and created a really inclusive environment. It was just fun."

When her own children eventually began playing hockey, Paradis returned to coaching with an even greater purpose.

Her daughter Briar was quiet and reserved when she first entered hockey, and Paradis noticed something that many parents and coaches had accepted for years. Girls often waited their turn.

Playing alongside energetic young boys, many hesitated before chasing loose pucks or taking charge of a shift. Paradis believed that wasn't a lack of ability. It was simply a question of confidence.

Together with another male coach, her friend Connor, they proposed something few associations were doing at the time. They would create an all-girls U7 team.

"We asked ourselves, 'Why can't we do this sooner?'" Paradis recalled. "If all the girls are on one team, then every single time our team has the puck, a girl is touching it."

That simple philosophy became the foundation for a remarkable grassroots movement.

The first season wasn't glamorous. The scores weren't always close. The team was often overmatched. But the players were learning, growing and competing.

Most importantly, they weren't standing on the perimeter waiting for someone else to make the play.

"Sometimes the score wasn't pretty," Paradis admitted. "But every time our team had the puck, a female athlete was touching it. That was a really big deal to me."

Then something unexpected happened. More girls registered. Parents heard about the all-girls team and wanted their daughters to be part of it.

The following year brought a few more players. Then another group.

Soon younger girls were watching older girls and imagining themselves wearing the same jersey. The ripple effect was undeniable.

Today, Boissevain has girls' teams in virtually every age division, and Paradis says the association now has almost as many girls registered in minor hockey as boys - an extraordinary accomplishment for a community of only 1,500 people.

"I almost get emotional talking about it," she admitted.

"I think by moving them into all-girls hockey right from the beginning, it became more appealing. Some girls just need to feel comfortable before they really step outside their comfort zone. Once they do, they become incredible hockey players."

The success spread beyond Boissevain. Other communities noticed. Conversations started. Programs expanded.

Even the Rural Manitoba Female Hockey League eventually added a U9 division as participation numbers continued climbing across western Manitoba.

"What started as one little decision just snowballed," Paradis said. "Other towns started saying, 'Well, if Boissevain has a girls' U7 team, why don't we?' That's something I'm incredibly proud of."

That vision extends far beyond practices and games. Paradis believes girls need opportunities to see where hockey can take them. Whenever possible, she organizes trips to watch elite women's hockey, introducing young players to athletes they can identify with.

Whether it was meeting Olympic gold medalist Ashton Bell after she returned home or watching the MFHL U18 AAA's Westman Wildcats compete, every experience carried the same message: dream bigger.

"We wanted our girls to have experiences we never had," Paradis said. "We wanted them to watch female athletes, ask questions and see what's possible."

The impact stretches well beyond Boissevain's arena walls.

As president of both Boissevain Minor Hockey and the Rural Manitoba Female Hockey League, Paradis helps shape hockey for countless families across southwestern Manitoba, balancing governance, volunteer recruitment, league coordination and community development while continuing to coach on the ice.

It's precisely the type of leadership Hockey Manitoba CEO Trevor Buhnai believes deserves recognition.

"Kara Paradis' recognition as Manitoba's Community Coach recipient of the BFL CANADA Women in Coaching Award is a tremendous honour and a reflection of the kind of leadership that strengthens hockey at its foundation," Buhnai said.

"So much of our game is built by volunteers who give their time, energy and care to ensure young players have a positive experience in their local communities."

He believes grassroots coaches shape far more than hockey players.

"At the grassroots level, coaches do far, far more than teach the game," Buhnai added. "They build confidence, foster belonging, model teamwork and respect, and help young people develop a love for the sport that can stay with them for life."

"The Community Coach category recognizes that impact. Kara is such a deserving recipient of this recognition, and Hockey Manitoba is proud to celebrate her contribution as a coach, volunteer and leader in our hockey community."

That praise reflects exactly what Hockey Canada intended when creating the award.

Community coaches are recognized not for championships, but for placing player well-being first, promoting equitable participation, developing every athlete and creating safe, positive environments where young players can thrive. Paradis embodies every one of those qualities.

Away from the rink, she works for the Municipality of Boissevain-Morton. Her husband, Martin, works at Glulam Manufacturing and also serves as the community's fire chief. Together they have three children — Ashton, Briar and Lennon — making hockey very much a family affair.

Like countless small-town volunteers, coaching isn't something she does.

It's simply part of who she is.

But she isn't chasing championships or personal accolades. She's chasing smiles. Confidence. A sense of belonging. She wants every little girl who walks into an arena to feel the game belongs to her.

That may ultimately become Kara Paradis' greatest legacy.

Not the award. Not the titles. Not even the championship won by one of her beloved Border Kings teams.

Her greatest accomplishment may be the next six-year-old girl who nervously walks into a dressing room in Boissevain, pulls on her jersey and discovers she isn't alone anymore.

Because years ago, one coach asked one simple question: why wait?

The answer transformed girls' hockey in one rural Manitoba community. And the effects are still spreading, one young player at a time.



FEMALE HOCKEY DAY IN BOISSEVAIN

For more on Hockey Manitoba check out **hockeymanitoba.ca**

HONOURING THE HEART OF MANITOBA HOCKEY

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Images on Ice/ The Hockey Hall of Fame and courtesy of the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame

FROM TRAILBLAZING WOMEN TO NHL VETERANS, COMMUNITY BUILDERS AND CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS, THE MANITOBA HOCKEY HALL OF FAME'S CLASS OF 2026 CELEBRATES EVERY LEVEL OF THE GAME.

The game has changed dramatically over the past half century. The arenas are brighter, the equipment lighter, the opportunities greater and the paths to greatness more diverse than ever before.

That evolution is reflected beautifully in the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame's Class of 2026.

This year's induction class isn't simply a collection of outstanding players, coaches, builders and teams. It's a snapshot of Manitoba hockey itself — a province where community rinks have produced Stanley Cup champions, NHL captains, international stars and the volunteers who quietly made it all possible.

Leading the class are three pioneers whose contributions helped reshape the game for women in Manitoba. Veteran journalist Patti Dawn Swansson spent decades telling hockey's stories while breaking barriers in sports media. Delaney Collins grew from the outdoor rinks of Pilot Mound to Olympic and world championship success with Team Canada before giving back to the game as an international coach. The Canadian Polish Athletic Club (CPAC) Women's Hockey Team proved long before women's hockey reached the mainstream that Manitoba's athletes could compete with anyone in the country.

They headline a class that also features NHL veterans, legendary community builders, championship teams, broadcasters and officials whose influence stretches from frozen ponds to the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Long before women became a common sight in NHL press boxes, Patti Dawn Swansson was earning respect with her notebook, her knowledge and her determination. From the Winnipeg Tribune to the Winnipeg Sun and major newspapers across North America, she chronicled generations of Manitoba hockey while becoming one of the province's most respected sports journalists. She covered the Winnipeg Jets in both the WHA and NHL and remained a tireless advocate for amateur hockey throughout her career.

"So, what does my induction to the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame Media Wing mean to me?" she asked rhetorically. "Well, I assume you're familiar with the Which One Doesn't Belong? game on Sesame Street. That's how I feel when I look at the roll call for the Media Wing and I see the names Jack Matheson, Trent Frayne, Jim Coleman, Scott Young and Patti Dawn Swansson. I



CPAC Women's team

believe we can all agree which one doesn't belong in that group. Those first four guys are the Mount Rushmore of Manitoba-born sports scribes. I'm a grassy knoll at best.

"It also means that Matty might have been right when he took a chance on a freshly scrubbed, inexperienced kid straight out of Miles Macdonell Collegiate to write sports for the Winnipeg Tribune.

"But, seriously, here's what I hope it means: There's an LGBT kid out there who'll read or hear about my induction and realize that sexual orientation and/or gender identity doesn't have to be a dream-killer, and that they don't have to hide in the closet."

Few Manitoba players have represented their province with greater distinction than Delaney Collins. The dependable defenceman captured three IIHF world championships with Canada, starred at the university level, claimed multiple national club titles and has continued to influence the sport as an international coach. Yet despite a career that carried her around the world, Collins still credits a small Manitoba community for everything that followed.

"Just growing up in Pilot Mound and playing in that small community, gave me some of the best memories I have as a child and as a hockey player," she said. "So, I was pretty thrilled when I got the call, and it means a lot to me because it's really where I got my start.

"I definitely need to thank my mom and dad and thank the entire community of Pilot Mound. Everybody there has always been a huge supporter of mine, and it's that pride that we feel from being in that community, and I've always carried that with me."

Before women's hockey gained Olympic status or national attention, the Canadian Polish Athletic Club Women's Hockey Team established a standard of excellence in Manitoba. Built around players who simply loved the game, CPAC dominated the Winnipeg Women's Hockey League, won eight consecutive city championships, represented Manitoba across Western Canada and became one of the country's premier women's programs. Their remarkable success helped lay the foundation upon which future generations of Manitoba female players, including athletes like Collins, would build.

Together, the 14 inductees remind us that hockey's greatest legacy isn't measured only in goals, championships or games played. It's measured in the generations inspired, the communities strengthened and the lifelong passion created every time someone laces up a pair of skates in Manitoba.

Let's meet the other inductees...

DON BOUCHARD

In Fisher Branch, Don Bouchard wasn't simply the captain of the hometown senior team — he was the heartbeat of hockey in the community. He starred on the ice, organized practices, led fundraisers, served as president and helped keep the local game thriving for generations. His induction is a fitting tribute to the thousands of volunteers whose contributions rarely make headlines but make hockey possible across rural Manitoba.



Delaney Collins



Don Bouchard



Patti Dawn Swansson

LARRY BROWN

Larry Brown never chased headlines, but coaches loved having him on the blue line. The Brandon product fashioned a 10-year NHL career built on dependable defensive play, discipline and consistency. Whether with the Rangers, Flyers or Los Angeles Kings, Brown earned his reputation as a reliable stay-at-home defenceman whose value often went beyond the scoresheet.

ARRON ASHAM

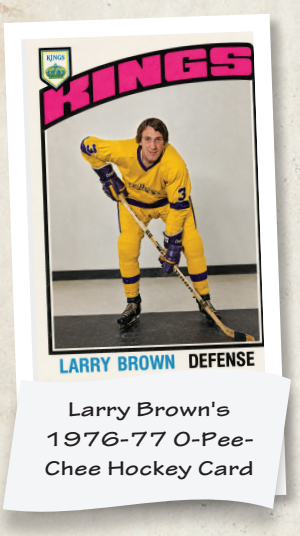
Portage la Prairie's Arron Asham embodied hard-nosed prairie hockey. After developing through the MJHL and WHL, he carved out a 12-season NHL career built on toughness, determination and reliability, appearing in 789 games. Today, Asham continues to give back by helping Indigenous youth throughout central Manitoba discover opportunities through hockey.

MIKE LECLERC

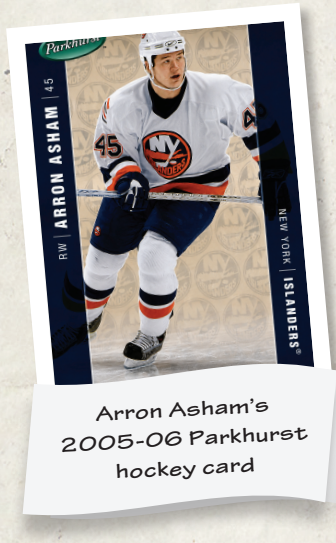
Winnipeg's Mike Leclerc never dazzled with flashy moves, but he possessed an instinct every coach covets — arriving at the right place when the puck did. After starring with Brandon's Memorial Cup teams, he enjoyed a productive NHL career with Anaheim, Phoenix and Calgary, scoring 64 goals in 341 games. His success reflected the work ethic and hockey sense that made him one of the most dependable forwards of his generation.

KEN BAUMGARTNER

Ken Baumgartner became known throughout the NHL as one of hockey's toughest competitors, but there was far more to the Flin Flon native than fists. Over 696 NHL games, he earned respect as a fearless teammate while balancing professional hockey with higher education, eventually completing an MBA at Harvard. His remarkable journey from Memorial Cup champion to NHLPA executive demonstrated that intelligence and toughness often skate side by side.



Larry Brown's 1976-77 O-Pee-Chee Hockey Card



Arron Asham's 2005-06 Parkhurst hockey card



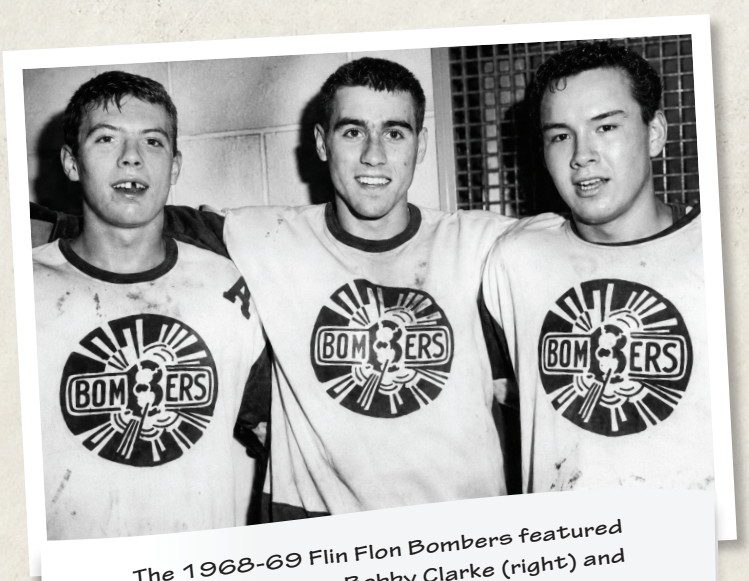
Mike Leclerc's 2005-06 Parkhurst Hockey Card



Ken Baumgartner's 1991 Upper Deck Hockey Card

1968-69 FLIN FLON BOMBERS

Great teams are remembered for championships. Legendary teams change history. Powered by future NHL stars Bobby Clarke and Reggie Leach, the 1968-69 Flin Flon Bombers dominated Western junior hockey before claiming the national championship in unforgettable fashion. Their remarkable run cemented Flin Flon as one of Canada's great hockey towns and produced a legacy that continues to inspire young players across Manitoba.



The 1968-69 Flin Flon Bombers featured future NHL stars Bobby Clarke (right) and Reggie Leach (left)

IVAN STRAIN

For decades, Ivan Strain ensured that local hockey mattered. His familiar voice carried the excitement of countless games into homes across southwestern Manitoba, preserving memories that otherwise would have disappeared with the final buzzer. More than a broadcaster, Strain became part of the fabric of the communities he served, reminding everyone that grassroots hockey deserves to be celebrated as passionately as the NHL.



Dale Hawerchuk with Ivan Strain



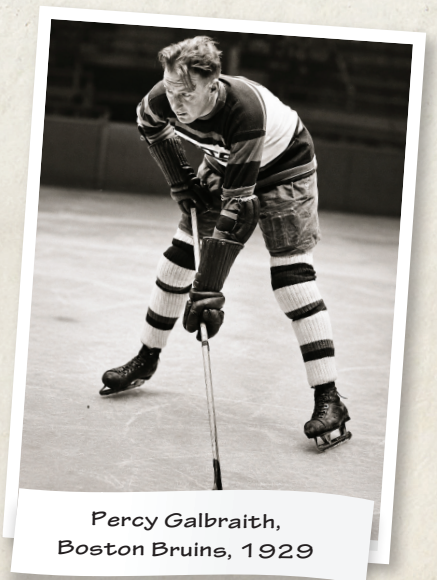
Ryan Galloway at work

RYAN GALLOWAY

Officials rarely receive the spotlight, yet Ryan Galloway spent more than two decades performing under hockey's brightest lights. From St. James minor hockey to 1,409 NHL games, Stanley Cup playoffs and the emotional return of the Winnipeg Jets in 2011, Galloway represented Manitoba with professionalism and consistency. Today, he continues to shape the next generation by mentoring NCAA Division I officials.

PERCY GALBRAITH

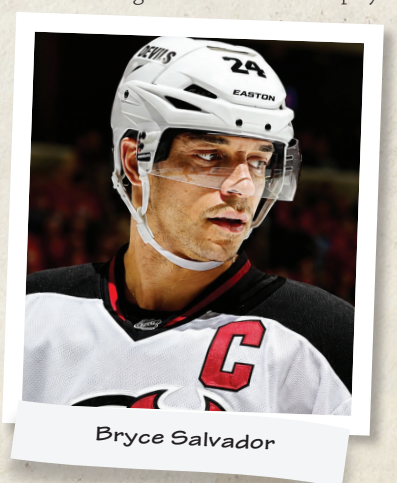
Long before television broadcasts and million-dollar contracts, Percy "Perk" Galbraith helped establish Manitoba's reputation in professional hockey. A Stanley Cup champion with the Boston Bruins in 1929, Galbraith's career bridged hockey's formative years and the NHL's emergence as the world's premier league. Nearly a century later, his place in Manitoba hockey history remains richly deserved.



Percy Galbraith, Boston Bruins, 1929

BRYCE SALVADOR

Brandon's Bryce Salvador refused to let adversity define his career. Passed over after being drafted by Tampa Bay, he earned a second opportunity with St. Louis before developing into one of the NHL's premier shutdown defencemen. His leadership ultimately led to him becoming captain of the New Jersey Devils, just the third Black captain in league history. Today, Salvador remains one of hockey's most respected television analysts, continuing to educate fans with the same intelligence that defined his play.



Bryce Salvador

BOB CALDWELL

Bob Caldwell's greatest victories weren't measured on scoreboards but in the countless players and coaches he helped develop. His career spans more than four decades and reflects a consistent focus on player development, mentorship, and community involvement. A retired high school teacher from Deloraine, Caldwell has coached at nearly every level of the game, from U7 to the NCAA, including Midget AAA and as an assistant coach with Western Michigan University.



Bob Caldwell at Western Michigan

DUFFIN WINS MWJHL MVP

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Darryl Gershman

DURING A SEASON DOMINATED BY THE WESTERN PREDATORS AND A POST-SEASON WON BY PRAIRIE BLAZE, IT WAS STILL A PRETTY GREAT TIME TO BE **MAISIE DUFFIN**.

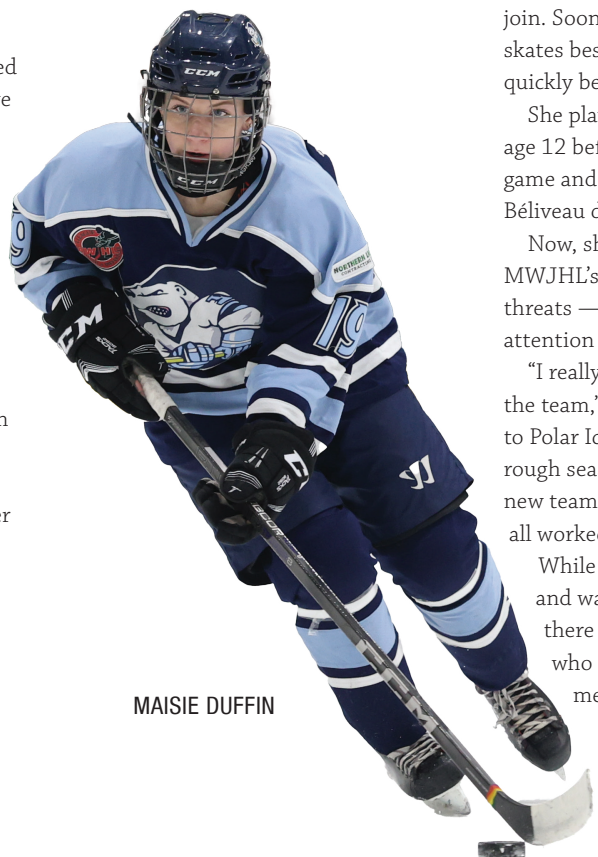
This past season, the quiet, determined forward has emerged as the top offensive player in the Manitoba Women's Junior Hockey League, helping turn her Polar Ice team from an expansion club that struggled through growing pains into a legitimate contender with swagger, chemistry and belief.

This year, in large part because Duffin led the league in scoring with 26 goals and 36 points in just 26 games, the Polar Ice finished second overall with a record of 19-6-3, tied with eventual playoff champion Prairie Blaze and just two points back of regular season winner Western Predators.

And as *Game On* told you at the start of the season, the truly remarkable part is the fact she comes from a family that once knew absolutely nothing about hockey.

"I was born in England," Duffin said with a laugh. "My family had no idea about hockey whatsoever."

Now, years later, she's turned an MWJHL team from expansion team to contender and not only won herself a scoring title, but also the league's Most Valuable Player Award. Not bad for a kid who simply wanted to follow her older brother onto the ice.



MAISIE DUFFIN

"I wanted to be exactly like my brother and play," said Duffin, who also had eight goals and 10 points in just six playoff games and finished second in playoff scoring.

Duffin began skating at three and started hockey at four after her family moved from Hampton, England, to Canada when she was about a year-and-a-half old. Her older brother, Will, had friends playing hockey and wanted to join. Soon enough, Maisie was lacing up skates beside him. From there, the game quickly became part of her identity.

She played boys hockey until about age 12 before transitioning into the girls' game and eventually starring at College Béliveau during her high school years.

Now, she's become one of the MWJHL's most dangerous offensive threats — though she's quick to shift attention away from herself.

"I really couldn't have done it without the team," said Duffin, who will return to Polar Ice in 2026-27. "We had some rough seasons the past two years as a new team, and this year we just kind of all worked really well together."

While Duffin won the scoring title and was named the league's MVP, there were a number of other players who shone brightly this season. Let's meet six other award winners...



MOST VALUABLE PLAYER: **SCORING CHAMPION**, MAISIE DUFFIN, POLAR ICE

FORWARD OF THE YEAR: **MELAYNA DROZD**, WESTERN PREDATORS

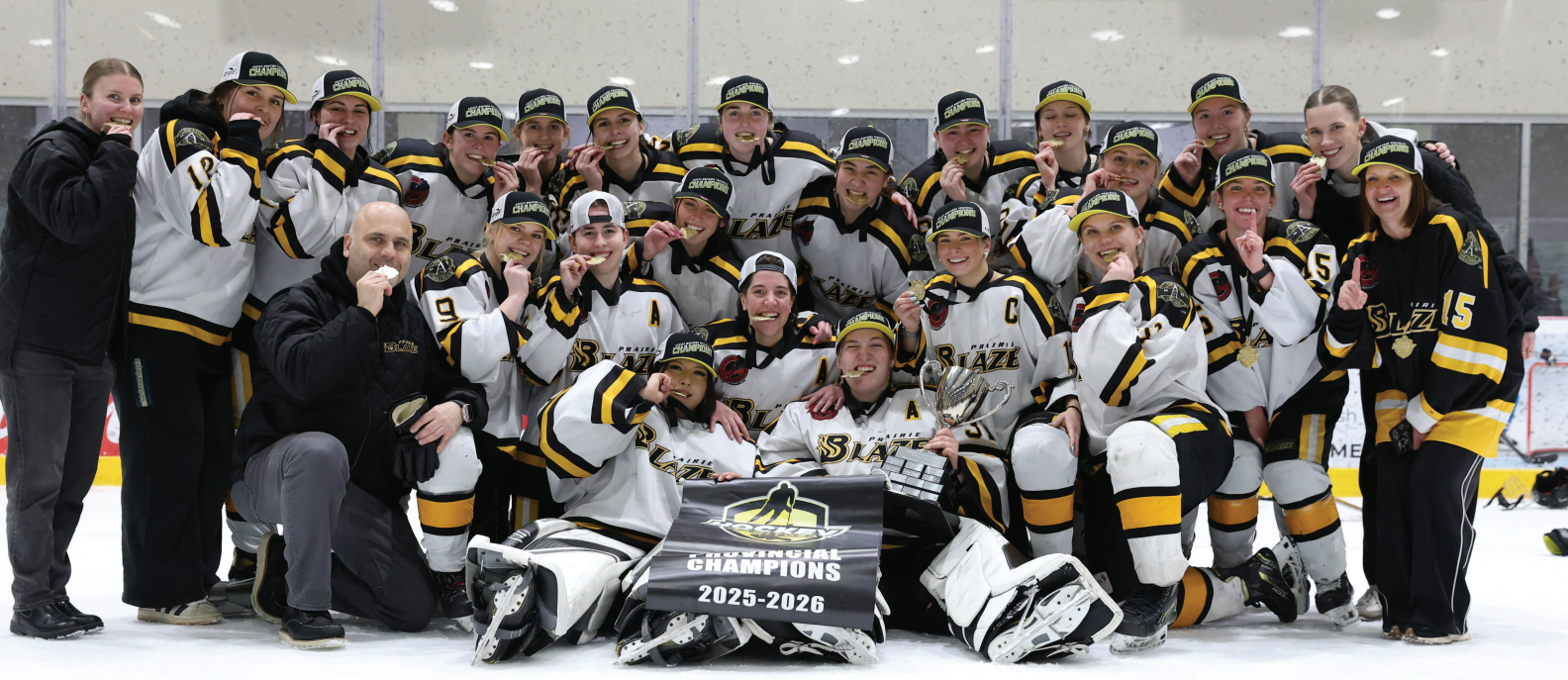
GOALTENDER OF THE YEAR/ROOKIE OF THE YEAR: **LAUREN CHERKAS**, WESTERN PREDATORS

DEFENDER OF THE YEAR: **BROOKLYN BALAZOVIC**, WESTERN PREDATORS

MOST SPORTSMANLIKE PLAYER: **MADELYN ROGALSKY**, POLAR ICE

PLAYOFF MVP: **JAIDA SILVAGGIO**, PRAIRIE BLAZE

MEDIA AWARD: **TAYLOR AUDETTE**, SILVERTIPS



PLAYOFF CHAMPIONS: PRAIRIE BLAZE

PLAYOFFS MOST VALUABLE PLAYER / JAIDA SILVAGGIO / PRAIRIE BLAZE

Once a Winnipeg Women's High School Hockey League star with the Collège Pierre-Elliott Trudeau Canadiennes, Silvaggio just completed her fifth season in the MWJHL, and she went out with a bang.

She had six goals and eight points in 13 post-season games and led Prairie Blaze to the MWJHL championship and Hockey Manitoba's provincial junior women's crown.

FORWARD OF THE YEAR / MELAYNA DROZD / WESTERN PREDATORS

A 23-year-old left winger from Fannystelle, Drozd was a star with the MFHL U18 AAA Central Plains Capitals before joining the Western Predators at the start of the 2022-23 season.

The Sanford Collegiate grad finished the 2025-26 campaign, her fourth in the MWJHL, with 27 goals and 44 points in 39 total games this season – third in regular season league scoring with 21 goals and 33 points in 27 games and tied for the league lead in playoff scoring with six goals and 11 points. She was also a clutch player with three game-winning goals and five game-tying goals.

"It was a very, very strong fourth and final season for Melayna," said Preds head coach Taylor Wuirch-Coombs.

"She has spent the last four years in this league and during her time has had an immense impact on her team. She has shown incredible growth as a player throughout her time and was steady in points for her first three years and exploded in her final year recording 44 of her 105 career points.

"She was certainly worthy as forward of the year. I was very happy that it stayed in the Preds family (Wuirch-Coombs won the award in 2024-25), and especially that it was Melayna."

GOALTENDER OF THE YEAR / ROOKIE OF THE YEAR / LAUREN CHERKAS / WESTERN PREDATORS

The remarkable rookie from Portage la Prairie, out of the CSSHL's Balmoral Hall Blazers Prep team, used her one season in the MWJHL to put up eye-popping numbers.

"Her numbers were almost unbelievable," said head coach Taylor Wuirch-Coombs. "She had a 0.84 goals against average and a .969 save percentage. Just amazing. This past week she signed the papers and committed to play at Lakeland College (ACAC) in Alberta next season. We knew she was planning on going to college or university this year, but when we drafted her, the coaches said, as a group, that she was good enough to help a team win a championship and she was a big reason we finished first overall during the regular season.

"She was easily the best goalie and rookie of the year. In fact, it would have been a bigger surprise if she hadn't won both Rookie of the Year and Top Goaltender Awards."

DEFENDER OF THE YEAR / BROOKLYN BALAZOVIC / WESTERN PREDATORS

Brooklyn Balazovic finished the 2025-26 regular season with three goals and 20 points on a team that breezed to the MWJHL's regular season title.

According to Preds head coach Jamie Johnson, their team would have been no place without her.

"Brooklyn played high school hockey for Garden City," Johnson explained. "And then she played for the AAA Ice for, I want to say one season, but it was during COVID, so she didn't get very much of a season with them.

"Then she committed to Jamestown University in the States but didn't finish her freshman season and came back midway through that season to play for the Preds. She came in and tried out, and we had her halfway through that one



REGULAR SEASON CHAMPIONS: WESTERN PREDATORS

2025-26 MWJHL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS AND SPIRIT OF THE GAME AWARDS

ANTHONY MCLAUGHLIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS
(Sponsored by PAL Distributors)

Hailey Hojnocki	Manitoba Grey Owls
Isabel Osterman	Manitoba Golden Eagles
Avery Fyfe	Polar Ice
Hayden Arkle	Manitoba Blizzard
Ashley Hudon	Northern Stars
Jaycie May	Prairie Blaze
Sophia Dowsett	Northern Stars
Samantha Carvalho	Polar Ice

DARCI INSTANCE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
(Sponsored by the Darci Instance Foundation)

Jadyn Baldwin	Western Predators

MCKENNA RILEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
(Sponsored by Lisa, Kevin and Brooke Riley)

Kaitie Dorsch	Polar Ice

KIRK KUPPERS SCHOLARSHIP
(Sponsored by the MWJHL)

Emily Foster	Prairie Blaze

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR SCHOLARSHIP
(Sponsored by the MWJHL)

Ireland Tymchak	Polar Ice

SPIRIT OF THE GAME AWARDS

Dessaya Mosienko	Manitoba Blizzard
Cami Bonni	Manitoba Golden Eagles
Kaitlyn Blackburn	Manitoba Grey Owls
Maxine Normandeau	Northern Stars
Samantha Carvalho	Polar Ice
Haley Ichiwa	Prairie Blaze
Katrina Johnson	Silvertips
Sarah Rach	Western Predators

season there. And she was an amazing pickup, obviously. On the ice, she has a very strong presence. We're so very happy to have her and happy that she decided to stay and play for our team. In any situation on our backend, we're going to send out Brooklyn."

MOST SPORTSMANLIKE PLAYER / MADELYN ROGALSKY / POLAR ICE

Polar Ice head coach Dave Benediktson calls Madelyn Rogalsky, "one of the nicest people in the world."

"Of course," added Benediktson, "her best friend is Sammy Carvalho, who is the other nicest person in the whole world. Those two just bring a smile to every practice and every game. They keep things light. Madelyn is a fantastic person."

An outstanding all-around athlete who excelled in basketball and volleyball at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute, Rogalsky finished the 2025-26 MWJHL season with two goals and six points to go with only eight penalty minutes.

She was the perfect choice for Most Sportsmanlike Player.

MEDIA AWARD / TAYLOR AUDETTE / SILVERTIPS

It's been quite a couple of years for Audette. She finished the 2025-26 Manitoba Women's Junior Hockey League season as the second leading scorer overall with 24 goals and 33 points in 26 games.

However, she's also a dirt track racer who is now driving in the Super Truck Class and she's a terrific softball player who competed for Team

Manitoba at the 2023 North American Indigenous Games.

In April of 2026, she was named the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council's 2025 Female Athlete of the Year. Winning Mike Gerl's MWJHL Media Award was just the icing on the cake.



THE CENTENNIAL CUP CHAMPION, NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of the Centennial Cup Committee

Four years ago, the Niverville Nighthawks were an expansion franchise trying to find their footing in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League. Today, they sit on top of Canadian Junior A hockey.

In a season that will be remembered for decades in southern Manitoba, the Nighthawks completed one of the most dominant campaigns in recent CJHL history, capping a near-perfect year with a 4-1 victory over the hometown Summerside Western Capitals to capture the Centennial Cup national championship in Prince Edward Island.

For a young franchise that only entered the MJHL in 2022, the accomplishment felt almost surreal. But by the time the final horn sounded at a sold-out Credit Union Place in Summerside, there was little debate left about who deserved the crown. Out of 116 teams across nine CJHL leagues, only one remained standing at season's end. Improbably, magnificently, that team was the MJHL's Niverville Nighthawks - the team that simply seemed inevitable.

From October through May, Niverville piled up victories at a staggering pace, finishing the regular season with a 51-6-1 record before storming

through the MJHL playoffs at 12-1. They then marched undefeated through the Centennial Cup tournament to cement themselves as the best Junior A team in Canada.

"You don't hear of too many teams as dominant as us in a while," forward Marlen Edwards said after the club captured the Turnbull Cup championship. "We all had the mindset that we're going to win every single game that we can."

Turns out, they almost did.

The championship game itself mirrored the identity the Nighthawks built all season long - calm, disciplined and relentless under pressure. Hayden Wheddon opened the scoring in the first period after finding open ice and wiring home a shot past the Summerside goaltender. The hometown Capitals briefly tied the game while shorthanded, but the Nighthawks never lost their composure.

Behind them stood Austin Dubinsky, the backbone of the entire playoff run. The CJHL's Top Goaltender delivered his finest performance when it mattered most, turning aside 34 shots while withstanding wave after wave of pressure from the hometown crowd and a desperate Summerside attack. Wheddon added his second goal of the night in the middle frame before Edwards struck in the third period. Tyler Bernier sealed the championship with an empty-net goal that finally unleashed the celebration.

Then came the moment every hockey player dreams about. The horn sounded and the Nighthawks bench exploded onto the ice as Dubinsky disappeared beneath a pile of jubilant teammates celebrating the first national championship in franchise history.

Of course, what made the accomplishment even more remarkable is how quickly the organization has risen. Head coach Dwight Hirst helped bring the franchise to Niverville as part of the ownership group before stepping behind the bench midway through the club's second season following a coaching change. The turnaround was dramatic.

"We got into the playoffs and the franchise turned around right there," Hirst told *Game On Magazine*.

This year's roster simply had no obvious weakness. The Nighthawks rolled four dangerous forward lines led by Wheddon, captain Adam Vigfusson, Johnny Scott, Edwards and Bernier. Their blueline, anchored by Aaron Krestanovich, Parker Carrier and Jase Konecsni, combined toughness with poise. And behind it all stood Dubinsky, whose playoff numbers bordered on absurd: a 1.31 goals-against average, three shutouts and a .956 save percentage.

Still, Hirst believed the biggest difference was something harder to measure.

"The keys to our victory is just our total team buy-in," he said. "These guys are probably the most unselfish kids I've coached in hockey in years."

That culture showed throughout the dressing room. Veterans accepted roles, newcomers fit seamlessly and championship experience flowed through the lineup. Edwards, Bernier and Krestanovich had all won a title the previous season with the Northern Manitoba Blizzard, while



MJHL COMMISSIONER KEVIN SAURETTE PRESENTS THE PLAYOFF MVP AWARD TO NIVERVILLE GOALTENDER AUSTIN DUBINSKY

Bernier, Edwards and Luke Wagner also captured a National Aboriginal Hockey Championship with Team Manitoba.

At the centre of it all stood Vigfusson, the emotional heartbeat of the franchise since Day 1. Before the final, the longtime captain was named the tournament MVP after starring throughout the Centennial Cup.

"I'm so proud of this team," Vigfusson said. "Everyone knows what we had was special and ultimately, we got the job done."



MARLEN EDWARDS WITH THE CUP.

A STAR-STUDDED SEASON

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Darryl Gershman and Scott Stroh

MAKE NO MISTAKE, IVY PERKIN OF THE WESTMAN WILDCATS HAD A SEASON TO REMEMBER IN 2025-26. SHE WAS THE MFHL U18 AAA'S MOST VALUABLE PLAYER, TOP FORWARD AND SCORING CHAMPION THIS PAST YEAR.

However, the outstanding play of Eastman's Vayda Rigaux – and her twin sister Delainey -- cannot be overlooked.

Whether it's starring on the provincial AAA stage with the Eastman Selects or winning a Manitoba high school championship with Winnipeg's Glenlawn Collegiate, Vayda and Delainey have built a reputation as one of Manitoba's most dynamic hockey duos. And now, after another standout season, the sisters are preparing to take the next step together at MacEwan University this fall.

Vayda capped her final U18 AAA campaign by earning MFHL Top Defender honours and a First-Team All-Star selection after helping guide the Selects to the league final. While the championship series didn't end the way she hoped, the season still finished with plenty to celebrate.

"It was tough, but that's okay," Rigaux said of the league final loss to the Winnipeg Ice. "A championship's a championship and winning the high school championship was fun. It's all fun."

The disappointment of the AAA final was softened by that memorable victory at Glenlawn. After finishing runner-up twice in previous years, Rigaux and her Lions' teammates finally captured the Manitoba women's high school championship in their senior season.

In a twist of symmetry, the Rigaux sisters had experienced the opposite result a year earlier — winning the AAA title while falling short at the high school level.

"The Rigaux sisters are at least winning a championship a year," she joked.

The next chapter will once again keep the twins side-by-side. The pair committed to play at MacEwan earlier this year and never seriously considered separating for university hockey.

"It would be too hard to split up," she said. "We've always been together our whole lives."

While hockey remains a major part of her future, Vayda already has one eye on life beyond the rink. She plans to continue studying commerce and is considering a future in supply chain management.

"Hockey is getting me to college," she said. "But everybody says pick a school you want first — hockey is just a benefit."

Let's meet the 2025-26 MFHL U18 AAA All-Stars and Award winners...



VAYDA RIGAUX



MFHL U18 AAA

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER, SCORING CHAMPION AND TOP FORWARD

IVY PERKIN, WESTMAN WILDCATS

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

EMILIE CARRIERE, EASTMAN SELECTS

TOP DEFENDER

VAYDA RIGAUX, EASTMAN SELECTS

MOST SPORTSMANLIKE PLAYER

ADDILYN NOHLGREN, WINNIPEG AVROS

TOP GOALIE

ADDISON TOMES, EASTMAN SELECTS



MFHL U18 AAA

FIRST TEAM ALL-STARS



SECOND TEAM ALL-STARS

MFHL U18 AAA

BURAK'S YEAR



TOP GOALTENDER JAXON LOEWEN OF THE LABROQUERIE HABS

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Duncan Hasker and Rayme Thomson

THE NUMBERS JUMP OFF THE PAGE. THE IMPACT JUMPED OFF THE ICE. FOR BRANDON BURAK OF THE ARBORG ICE DAWGS, THE 2025-26 SEASON WASN'T JUST A BREAKOUT CAMPAIGN - IT WAS A STATEMENT YEAR THAT TURNED THE 19-YEAR-OLD SNIPER INTO ONE OF THE MOST ELECTRIFYING PLAYERS IN THE CAPITAL REGION JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE.

One season after being named the CRJHL's Rookie of the Year, Burak, 19, elevated his game to another level, capturing league MVP honours after piling up 32 goals and 54 points in only 30 games. The six-foot-two forward from Arborg became the league's leading scorer and the offensive heartbeat of an Ice Dawgs club that battled hard all season.

"Brandon is an exceptional hockey player," said former Ice Dawgs coach Derric Gulay. "In his rookie year, as the season progressed, it was quite evident that Brandon was going to be a core leader."

Burak's hockey résumé already includes a taste of higher-level hockey after brief stints with the MJHL's Winnipeg Freeze, and Gulay believes there's still more upside ahead.

"From my perspective, he has the ability to play at a higher level," Gulay added. "I'm excited to see where his skills take him."

Burak wasn't the only Ice Dawg making noise this season. Rookie defenceman Tytan Johnson, 19, earned both Rookie of the Year and Top Defenceman honours after recording nine goals and 43 points in just 26 games - remarkable production for a blueliner.

Meanwhile, CRJHL championship-winning LaBroquerie Habs netminder Jaxon Loewen captured Top Goaltender honours after posting a sparkling .916 save percentage and a 2.71 goals-against average. Teammate Mario Gagnon added the league's Most Sportsmanlike Player Award after notching 17 goals and 43 points in just 26 games -- while taking only two penalty minutes all season.

But in a season filled with standout performances, Burak's dominance stood tallest.

The goals, the leadership and the excitement he brought every night made one thing crystal clear across the CRJHL: This was Brandon Burak's year.

Those four stars are your 2025-26 CRJHL Individual Award Winners, now let's meet the league's 16 All-Stars ...



MVP BRANDON BURAK, ARBORG ICE DAWGS



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AND BEST DEFENCEMAN TYTAN JOHNSON, ARBORG ICE DAWGS



MOST SPORTSMANLIKE PLAYER MARIO GAGNON, LABROQUERIE HABS



ALL-STARS

CRJHL
CAPITAL REGION JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE
EST. 2018



CRJHL
CAPITAL REGION JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE
EST. 2018

ALL-STARS



ALL-STARS

CRJHL
CAPITAL REGION JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE
EST. 2018

PEGUIS DOMINATES KJHL AWARDS

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Kelly Jacobson and Ava Cameron

DESPITE A THIRD-PLACE FINISH DURING THE REGULAR SEASON, THE PEGUIS JUNIORS BOASTED LEAGUE MVP DARIAN SINCLAIR, COACH OF THE YEAR MARTY FAVEL AND ROOKIE OF THE YEAR MACKENZIE MCPHERSON. IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE SEASON FOR A TEAM THAT NO ONE EXPECTED TO HAVE A BANNER YEAR.

Darian Sinclair spent the 2024-25 season trying his hand at hockey in California.

The 20-year-old forward from Peguis First Nation, played 30 games in the United States Premier Hockey League with the Ontario Jr. Reign and the Bakersfield Roughnecks and notched 13 goals and 28 points in 30 games. That's a success by any measure.

However, to the delight of Peguis Junior head coach Marty Favel, Sinclair decided to return home to play the 2025-26 season in the Keystone Junior Hockey League. It was just about the best thing that could have happened to Favel and the Juniors.

Sinclair, returned home last fall and finished the past season with 41 goals and 66 points, finished third in the KJHL scoring race and helped the Juniors complete the regular season in third place with a record of 15-17-0-2. It was an unexpected finish for a Juniors team that was rebuilding in 2025-26 and it helped Peguis head coach Marty Favel win Coach of the Year honours.

Of course, no one believes in Sinclair the way Favel does.

"Darian was with us a couple of years ago (2023-24), but decided to go down to California and pursue the game down there," Favel explained. "I guess he was getting bumped around a little bit down there, involved in some trades, and he didn't really care for it. So, he came back late last year, joined us this past year and he was outstanding. He's so fast and so shifty, one second, he's here, and the next he's gone."

Favel is still not certain about Sinclair's plans for this season.



DARIAN SINCLAIR, PEGUIS JUNIORS. 2025-26 KJHL MOST VALUABLE PLAYER



2025-26 KJHL AND PROVINCIAL JR. B CHAMPIONS, THE OCN STORM



KJHL PRESIDENT MARCEL FONTAINE PRESENTS THE 2025-26 COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD TO MARTY FAVEL OF THE PEGUIS JUNIORS.

"He's a 21-year-old and I have six 21-year-olds this year, so I kind of leave it in their hands what they want to do," Favel explained. "I know he was possibly looking at moving over to OCN because he has family there. If he wants to do that, we'll let him move. As I said, I have six 21-year-olds, and I have to choose four."

While the OCN Storm dominated the regular season and finished with a record of 25-5-1-3 -- and then cruised to the KJHL championship, winning the Baldy Northcott Trophy, provincial Jr. B honours and a trip to the Central Canada Cup -- Peguis surprised people with its young stars and the confident guidance of Coach Favel.

The best of those young stars is KJHL Rookie of the Year MacKenzie McPherson, our Western Nations Gas Bars KJHL Player of the Month for September. McPherson had nine goals and 27 points in 27 games this past season.

This still isn't the same Peguis Juniors team that won seven straight KJHL championships, but it is back on track after a couple of rebuilding seasons and is expected to challenge for the top spot once again this coming season.

Meanwhile, two members of the NCN Flames won league awards. Veteran rearguard Sandy Tattuinee (featured in the 2026 February/March edition of *Game On Magazine*) was named the KJHL's Top Defenceman while young Malcolm Snooks was named the league's Most Sportsmanlike Player. Snooks is a diminutive 19-year-old from Thompson, who had seven goals and 20 points in 18 games and only four minutes in penalties all season.

As *Game On Magazine* reported in its 2026 April/May Edition, Lucien Tait-Reaume of the Norway House North Stars won the league scoring title with 42 goals and 83 points in 32 games while Louis-Laurent Legros of the Cross Lake Islanders was named the league's top goaltender. Legros, who hails from Quebec City, finished with an .882 save percentage in one of the highest-scoring Jr. B leagues in Canada.



KEYSTONE JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE
KJHL

MVP: **DARIAN SINCLAIR**, PEGUIS JUNIORS
SCORING CHAMPION: **LUCIEN TAIT-REAUME**, NORWAY HOUSE
TOP GOALTENDER: **LOUIS-LAURENT LEGROS**, CROSS LAKE
ROOKIE OF THE YEAR: **MACKENZIE MCPHERSON**, PEGUIS
TOP DEFENCEMAN: **SANDY TATTUINEE**, NCN FLAMES
MOST SPORTSMANLIKE PLAYER: **MALCOLM SNOOKS**, NCN FLAMES

STARS SHINING

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos by Dave Willson

DURING THE 2025-26 HOCKEY SEASON, THE MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE HAD A BANNER YEAR. THE QUALITY OF PLAY WAS OUTSTANDING, CROWDS GREW AT EVERY ARENA, THE TOP 2 TEAMS BATTLED IT OUT FOR THE JACK MCKENZIE TROPHY AND THE INCREASING NUMBER OF STAR PLAYERS MADE IT A SEASON TO REMEMBER.

THE PLAYERS WHO CHOOSE TO COMPETE IN THE MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE JUST SEEM TO GET BETTER EVERY YEAR. AND THIS PAST YEAR MIGHT BE THOUGHT OF AS A BANNER YEAR.

From the days when the MMJHL was considered an "outlaw league," back in the 1970s and 1980s, to its status today as a full member of Hockey Manitoba, and the perfect place for young players to play a competitive schedule while pursuing a career or post-secondary education or both, "the MM," just gets more competitive with every season.

The 2025-26 season was no different. The top two teams in the league during the regular season – the Transcona Railer-Express and the St. Boniface Riels – met in the league championship series and played a sold-right-out-rock-'em-sock-'em final that featured superb playmaking and truly outstanding goaltending.

For MMJHL President, Kerry Lines, it would be nearly impossible to have a more competitive season and post-season.

In fact, the roar inside East End Arena for Game 7 of the league's championship sounded like a championship from another era — packed stands, pounding glass, playoff nerves hanging in the air as the two MMJHL heavyweights refused to give an inch. For Lines, it was more than just another Game 7. It was validation.

"It absolutely doesn't get better than that," Lines said as the MMJHL championship series reached its dramatic conclusion. "The two best teams in the league in the final this year, in a sold out building. To me, it didn't matter who won, I just knew it was great for the league."

For a league built on opportunity, balance and community hockey, the 2026 playoffs may have been the strongest statement yet that the MMJHL continues to thrive in Manitoba's crowded junior hockey landscape.



JAYDEN WARD



MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

CO-WINNER OF THE MYRON PRYMAK MEMORIAL TROPHY AS MMJHL MVP
JAYDEN WARD, ST. JAMES JR. CANUCKS

CO-WINNER OF THE MYRON PRYMAK MEMORIAL TROPHY AS MMJHL MVP
PEYTON BATEMAN, STONEWALL JETS

CHRIS FLINTOFT MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNER AS PLAYOFF MVP
NOLAN VAN DEN BUSSCHE, TRANSCONA RAILER-EXPRESS

DAVE ANDERSON MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNER AS MMJHL ROOKIE OF THE YEAR
KARSTEN WOLOSHEN, RIVER EAST ROYAL KNIGHTS

THE RON SMITH MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNER AS TOP GOALTENDER
OWEN LAROCQUE, ST. BONIFACE RIELS



THE 2025-26 ART MOUG TROPHY (REGULAR SEASON CHAMPIONS) AND JACK MCKENZIE TROPHY (PLAYOFF CHAMPIONS) WINNERS, THE TRANSCONA RAILER EXPRESS

According to Lines, the parity across the league has never been tighter.

"It was the best playoffs I've probably seen in my tenure as president of the league," he said. "The atmosphere was phenomenal. In fact, once again, it felt like playoff hockey from Christmas to that final game."

The championship final showcased everything the league prides itself on: high-end goaltending, disciplined systems, physical play and community support. One night featured a dazzling performance from the league's top goaltender Owen LaRocque, who stole a game with what Lines called "one of the great goaltending performances I've ever watched." Another spotlight fell on Transcona netminder Sage Delaronde, whose stellar playoff numbers helped push his club to the 2026 championship. But for Lines, the success of the MMJHL stretches far beyond the scoreboard.

The league was founded on a simple but powerful concept: give players an opportunity to continue competing at a high level while still building a life away from the rink.

"This league is the league of balance," Lines explained. "Other leagues, you're a hockey player first. Here, players can go to school, start a career and still play highly competitive hockey."

That philosophy has been the backbone of the MMJHL since its inception, dating back to league founder Jack McKenzie. Players aren't consumed by constant travel or demanding schedules. Instead, they can remain rooted in their communities while pursuing education, employment and competitive hockey simultaneously. For many Manitobans aged 18 to 21, it has become the perfect bridge between minor hockey and adulthood.

And this year's MMJHL award winners were a testament to the fact that "a league of balance," can turn out its share of talented players. From co-MVPs Jayden Ward of the St. James Jr. Canucks and Peyton Bateman of the Stonewall Jets to Playoff MVP Nolan Van Den Bussche, veteran players with speed, skill and experience dominated the upper echelons of the scoring race.

After all, Ward won the scoring title with 43 goals and 80 points in 43 games while Bateman was second with 31 goals and 74 points in just 37 games. However, playoff MVP Van Den Bussche won the post-season scoring title with 14 goals and 27 points in 15 games after finishing fourth in scoring during the regular season.

The guys in this league can really play. Take Bateman as an example. After two seasons with the RINK Hockey Academy Winnipeg, Bateman just finished his fourth and final season in the MMJHL and has put up 105 goals and 252 points in 142 games.

Ward, who played 107 games in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League with the Winnipeg Freeze and Northern Manitoba Blizzard, came back to play brilliantly in St. James this past season while Van Den Bussche, the captain of the champion Railer-Express, played more than 40 games with the Selkirk Steelers before coming back to play his pals in Transcona. The MMJHL is the perfect place to play for many of the top young players in the Capital Region. The 2025-26 season proved it.



MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

THE STEVE CLAUS MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNER AS
REGULAR SEASON SCORING CHAMPION
JAYDEN WARD, ST. JAMES JR. CANUCKS

THE GEORGE CADZOW TROPHY AS OUTSTANDING DEFENCEMAN
KADEN BRUCHANSKI, TRANSCONA RAILER-EXPRESS

THE KIP KELLY MEMORIAL TROPHY AS MMJHL'S HARDEST WORKING PLAYER
LAYNE RICHARDSON, RIVER EAST ROYAL KNIGHTS

THE KEN PRODONICK MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNER FOR ABILITY & SPORTSMANSHIP
DAVID BALSHAW, FORT GARRY/FORT ROUGE TWINS

NICK HILL MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNER AS MMJHL COACH OF THE YEAR
MANNY MINUK, RIVER EAST ROYAL KNIGHTS



AGRONOMIST AND PEMBINA VALLEY TWISTERS HEAD COACH CHRIS UNGER.

TWISTERS LOOKING TO TURN THE CORNER

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of the Pembina Valley Twisters and Merlin Heppner

NEW COACH CHRIS UNGER BELIEVES PEMBINA VALLEY IS READY TO MOVE FROM REBUILDING TO CONTENDING



The losses piled up, the standings weren't kind, and for two-straight seasons the Pembina Valley Twisters found themselves looking up at the rest of the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League.

But if you ask head coach Chris Unger, the story of the Twisters isn't about where they've been. It's about where they're headed.

After taking over behind the bench late last season, Unger saw signs that the foundation was already beginning to shift. The wins didn't come often enough to satisfy anyone in the organization, but the competitiveness returned. The belief returned. And perhaps most importantly, players started enjoying coming to the rink again.

Now, heading into the 2026-27 MMJHL season, the Twisters are determined to turn that progress into results.

"We made positive progress in how we played and how the players enjoyed themselves," said Unger, an agronomist who manages the fields by day and the Twisters' bench at night. "We had some success on the ice, and I thought we showed we could compete with some very good hockey teams."

Those improvements were evident late in the season.

Pembina Valley knocked off a strong St. Boniface squad that later pushed eventual champion Transcona to seven games in the league final. The Twisters also played Transcona tough in a pair of late-season contests, losing by just two goals each time with empty-net goals accounting for the final margins.

For a club that had struggled through another difficult campaign, those games offered proof that the gap between the Twisters and the league's elite wasn't nearly as wide as the standings suggested.

The challenge now is finding enough offence to turn close losses into victories.

"Scoring was our issue," Unger said. "For the most part, we could keep the puck out of our net enough to compete. But if we couldn't keep teams to three goals or less, we didn't have much chance of winning."

Recognizing that reality, the Twisters have made offence their top priority this offseason. The biggest addition so far is one of the region's own.

Pembina Valley recently secured the commitment of 20-year-old forward Acoyen Fehr, a former Pembina Valley Hawks standout who spent the last two seasons with the Thunder Bay North Stars of the Superior International Junior Hockey League.

Fehr arrives with impressive credentials. Thunder Bay represented the SIJHL at the 2026 Centennial Cup, and Fehr enjoyed considerable success throughout the season while producing at nearly a point-per-game pace.

For a Twisters team that struggled to generate offence, Fehr could be a game-changer.

"We anticipate he's going to help us in the area we need most, and that's goal scoring," said Unger.

The acquisition also sends a message about the direction of the organization.

Fehr had options but chose to return home, continue his education and play for the Twisters. It's the kind of decision Unger believes more players are beginning to consider and that's no accident.

Since taking over, Unger and his staff have worked aggressively to reconnect with players throughout the region. Monthly development skates in Winkler have become an important recruiting tool, regularly attracting dozens of players from communities across southern Manitoba.

The sessions give prospects an opportunity to experience the Twisters' culture while allowing the coaching staff to evaluate talent and build relationships.

The turnout has been encouraging.

"We had about 40 players at our last skate," Unger said. "I think we've turned the page from being a team nobody really wanted to come play for to being a team where players are starting to think, 'Yeah, that would be a fun place to play again.'"

That change in perception may prove as valuable as any player acquisition.

Junior hockey games are often won long before opening night. Teams that create positive environments, develop players and establish strong reputations are usually the ones that attract the best local talent. The Twisters believe they're beginning to build exactly that.

Just as important, the cupboard isn't bare.

While two overage players have graduated and a few others are moving on because of school or work commitments, Pembina Valley expects to bring back the vast majority of last year's roster.

Forward Owen Vanrobaeys, last season's team MVP, is expected to be one of the club's offensive leaders. Sawyer Leite, the team's Defenceman of the Year, returns to anchor the blueline. Veterans Josh Guilford and Ethan Wilde will also play key roles.

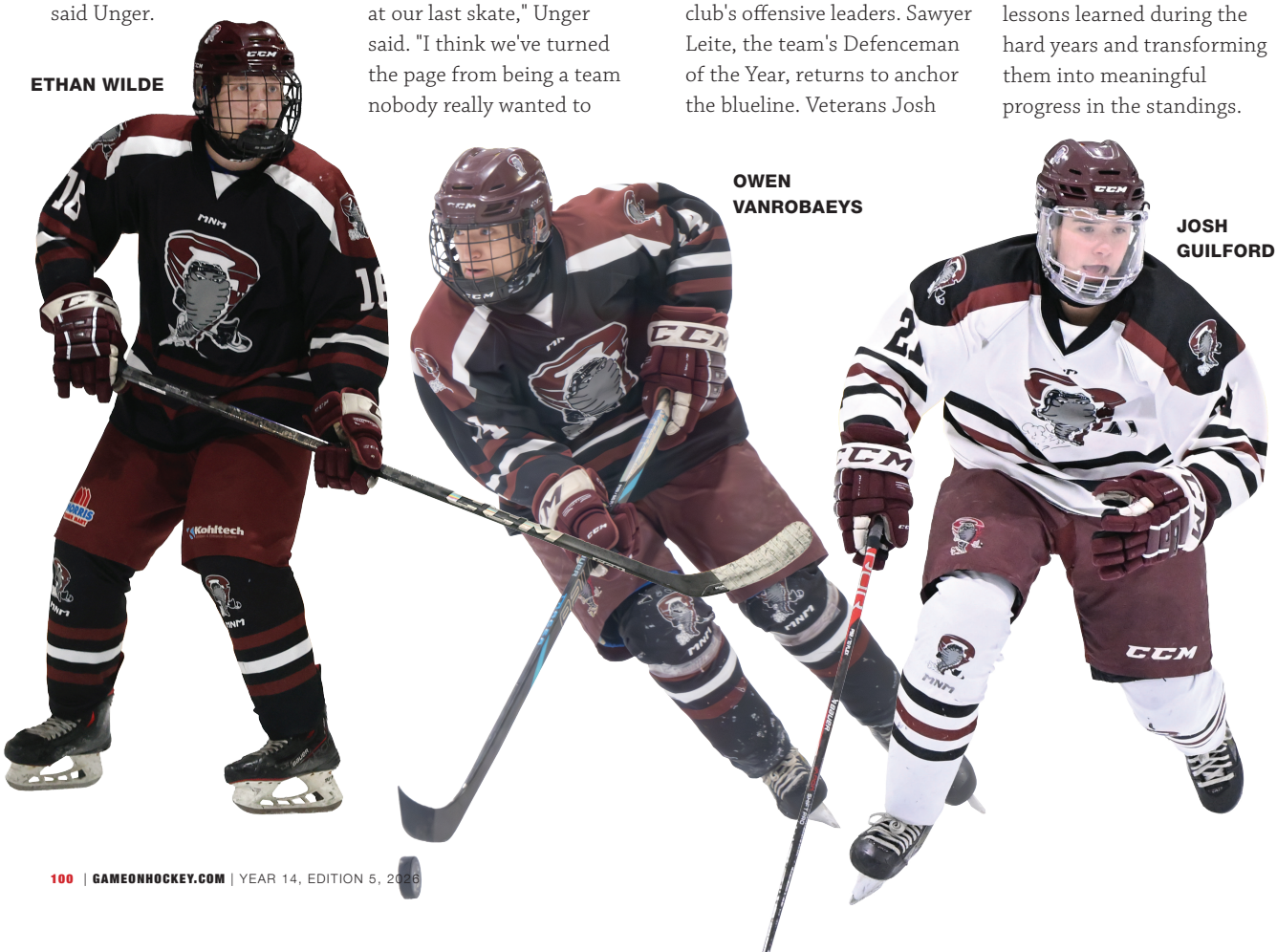
Unger is also excited about the growth of younger players, including his son Carter, who he believes is poised for a breakout offensive season.

"We have some very good hockey players coming back," said Unger. "A lot of them made really good progress last year, and I expect them to make significant progress this season."

That combination of returning talent, improved culture and targeted recruiting has generated optimism throughout the organization.

Of course, nobody is talking about championships just yet. The Twisters understand they still have ground to make up in one of the country's most competitive junior leagues.

Still, after two difficult seasons, the goal isn't simply survival anymore. It's advancement. It's taking the lessons learned during the hard years and transforming them into meaningful progress in the standings.



THREE-TIME MMJHL CHAMPION

PEMBINA VALLEY TWISTERS

ARE PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE
MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE



MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

BIGWAY FOODS

MORRIS BIGWAY FOODS IS A PROUD SUPPORTER OF
THE PEMBINA VALLEY TWISTERS AND
THE MANITOBA MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

654 MAIN STREET MORRIS, MB, ROG 1K0 1-204-746-2411



KOLTON SHINDLE LEADS CANADA'S BREAK OUT

HOCKEY NIGHT IN HOBART

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of Stop Concussions

KERRY GOULET'S TASMANIAN DEVIL DREAM COMES TO LIFE WITH THE FIRST SERIES OF ICE HOCKEY CLASSIC GAMES EVER PLAYED IN HOBART



It started, of all places, with Bugs Bunny.

Long before Kerry Goulet became a professional hockey player, a globe-trotting ambassador for the game and the driving force behind the Ice Hockey Classic, the Winnipegger was a kid fascinated by a cartoon character called the Tasmanian Devil.

Somewhere along the way, that childhood fascination became a dream.

And in July 2026, on an island off the southern coast of Australia, Goulet finally lived it.

"Playing in Hobart. The fact that I had a dream of playing a game in the city where the Bugs Bunny cartoon character introduced me to The Tasmanian Devil," Goulet said. "The first time I landed in the airport I knew it would be the right decision. Then, once I met Renee Brown from My State Bank Arena and her team which included Craig Skelly, it all became a reality."

For Goulet, the 2026 Ice Hockey Classic was another remarkable chapter in a hockey life that has taken him around the world. But the three games in Hobart, Tasmania, were different.

They were historic.

Since Goulet launched the Ice Hockey Classic in Australia in 2011, the event has taken Canada's game to thousands of fans through 14 tours, traditionally featuring hockey's most familiar international rivalry: Canada against the United States. This year, the tour raised funds and awareness for two important causes: StopConcussions and Mitch MacPherson's Speak Up! Stay ChatTY Suicide Prevention.

The 2026 edition featured seven games. The tour opened July 2, 3 and 4 in Hobart, moved to Melbourne July 7 and finished with games in Canberra. The Americans ultimately won the competitive series 3-2 (All-Star games were played against two Australian National Ice Hockey League teams: The Ice in Melbourne and the Brave in Canberra), but for Goulet, the real victory occurred in Tasmania.

Hobart had never hosted anything quite like it.

"You'd think Perth or Brisbane or Sydney," Goulet said of the obvious Australian destinations. "And Hobart turned out to be a tremendous place to play.

"Not only from a player's perspective, but just from the overall experience, the cultural experience. When I first arrived there at the airport, it felt like Nova Scotia. People were just so warm, and it felt like community. Almost felt like family."

That feeling is important to Goulet because, despite his long and successful playing and coaching career, hockey has never simply been about goals, championships or personal accomplishments.

It's about people.

Originally from Winnipeg and a member of the Manitoba Indigenous Sports Hall of Fame, Goulet enjoyed a remarkable professional career in Europe and North America. He became one of Germany's most prolific scorers, including an astonishing 221-point season.

Yet ask him about his hockey life and he invariably talks about friendships, communities and the people he met along the way.

That philosophy became the foundation of the Ice Hockey Classic.



CARMAN, MANITOBA'S KOLTON SHINDLE AVOIDS A US DEFENDER DURING THE 2026 ICE HOCKEY CLASSIC



MELBOURNE ICE OWNER PETER HARTSHORNE DROPS THE PUCK FOR THE CEREMONIAL OPENING FACEOFF FEATURING GORDON WHELAN OF THE UNITED STATES AND SIMON DESPRÉS OF CANADA



FROM LEFT, MC ERIC BALNER, KERRY GOULET AND HOST WARREN APPS FROM SUPERCURIOUS MARKETING



FORMER NHLER DAVID BOOTH OF THE UNITED STATES

The event brings together current and former professional players from leagues including the NHL, AHL, ECHL, NCAA and European circuits. They aren't chosen simply because they can play. Goulet wants ambassadors who understand that the Classic also supports his longtime mission to increase awareness surrounding concussions and mental health.

In Hobart, however, Goulet and his team faced a rather obvious problem.

There was no rink.

Hobart's permanent ice rink had closed in 2022, so the crew transformed MyState Bank Arena - normally home to concerts and professional basketball - into a full-sized hockey venue.

The ice surface, boards (thanks to Peter Lynch and his crew from Stars on Ice) and protective glass were brought in, while volunteers from Australia and overseas helped build the rink.

And then something wonderful happened.

The people of Hobart embraced it.

The temporary ice remained in place for a month before the Classic, allowing local skaters, hockey players and curling enthusiasts to experience a full-sized rink. By the time Canada and the United States arrived, Hobart was ready.

All three games sold out, with 3,400 fans packing MyState Bank Arena over three nights.

"It was locals experiencing hockey for the first time alongside Canadians and Americans reconnecting with a piece of home," Goulet said. "People were excited, they were cheering, and for a few nights it genuinely felt like I was back in a full arena back at home."

The players felt it, too.

Former NHLers David Booth and Simon Després were among the headline attractions, while Manitoba's Kolton Shindle emerged as one of the stars of the event.

For Shindle, a Carman product wearing Canada's colours, Tasmania became an experience he won't soon forget.

"What an incredible experience," he said. "Kerry and his wife Toni put on an amazing show and most importantly it is their passion to grow our game is second to none. The people of Hobart made us feel like rockstars and it reminded me of a Western Hockey League city in respect to the arena, the smaller city atmosphere and the crazy fans. It was a one-of-a-kind event and I was honoured to wear the Maple Leaf."

The "rockstar" treatment wasn't an exaggeration. Players were stopped for autographs and treated like celebrities throughout the city.

For Goulet, it demonstrated precisely what the Ice Hockey Classic can accomplish.

"It kind of brings people together from all walks of life that have maybe never seen an ice hockey match before," he said. "And all of a sudden they're there and completely invested in it."

But the dream required a partner.

Goulet found one in Renee Brown, general manager of MyState Bank Arena.

Brown had previously watched the Ice Hockey Classic and developed a dream of her own: someday she wanted the event in Hobart.

Eventually, two dreamers met.

"When we met, we just knew it was the right thing to do," Goulet said.

Brown and venue manager Craig Skelly helped turn a seemingly outrageous idea — building a hockey rink inside a Tasmanian basketball venue — into reality.

"I first saw the Ice Hockey Classic in Sydney in 2018, and had been to a few NHL games in the USA," Brown explained. "I loved it so much that bringing it to Hobart became a personal challenge for me. When I met Kerry Goulet — who brings so much excitement and energy to everything he does — we got talking about how we might make it happen, and together we pulled it off.

"It's been a massively successful event. Watching our full arena transform into a full-sized ice hockey rink was incredible to see, and even better was watching so many Tasmanians experience live ice hockey for the very first time. We also opened the rink to the public before the Classic itself, so people could get out on a full-size ice rink right here in the state — something that had never been done in Tasmania before.

"We must acknowledge the many people who contributed to making this happen, including the Tasmanian Government, Peachie Clean and Lion along with every person who turned out to witness the games."

For Goulet, Hobart is not the finish line.

It might be the beginning of something even bigger.

His long-range vision is an Australian version of Switzerland's famous Spengler Cup — an international tournament featuring teams representing Canada, the United States and Europe, along with an Oceania squad showcasing top players from Australia and New Zealand.

He believes Australians, with their love of fast, physical sports, are natural hockey fans waiting to discover the game.

In fact, one of the biggest fans was Griffin Louis, a young vision-impaired man who lives in a small town two hours north of Sydney. Louis flew three hours to attend the Hobart games and according to his caregiver, Joshua Landow, faithfully listens to NHL games on TV and always wanted to go to a game to "feel the atmosphere." Goulet heard Griffin's story and took him down to the ice to meet the players. It was a thrilling moment for Griffin and the players.

After six decades in hockey and 14 Ice Hockey Classic tours, Goulet still measures success differently. Not by goals. Not by wins. Not even by sold-out arenas.

But by people.

"It really is all about the people," Goulet said. "There's a fantastic opportunity to grow hockey in Australia because Australians love fast, physical sport.

"But more than anything, it's about bringing people together, building our community and sharing special experiences. That's what it's always been about."

A kid from Winnipeg once watched the Tasmanian Devil on television and wondered about a place on the other side of the world.

Decades later, Kerry Goulet arrived in Tasmania's capital city carrying hockey sticks, boards, glass, a dream and, most importantly, Canada's game.

And for three unforgettable nights in Hobart, the Tasmanian Devil had some competition.



CANADA'S KOLTON SHINDLE MEETS VISUALLY-IMPAIRED FAN GRIFFIN LOUIS



KERRY GOULET (LEFT) WITH SOME OF THE ADORING FANS



IT WAS A TOUGH SERIES. JUST ASK CANADIANS DOMINIC DELLA CIVITA (FRONT) AND KOLTON SHINDLE (BEHIND)


KERRY GOULET WITH BLIND AUSTRALIAN HOCKEY FAN GRIFFIN LOUIS AND HIS CAREGIVER JOSHUA LANDOW

JETS HOCKEY DEVELOPMENT

FALL & WINTER PROGRAMS



JHD

hockey for all centre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YOUR HEART.
RIGHT PLACE.
Discover trip ideas throughout this special supplement and find more inspiration for exploring the province at travelmanitoba.com
MANITOBA

Leveling Up Tournament Time

Where to stay, what to do and where to eat when a game or tourney takes your family on the road across Manitoba.

By Shel Zolkewich

The downtime between Friday night games and Sunday afternoon semi-finals is your opportunity to turn a tournament trip into a weekend of adventuring! Manitoba's cities and towns offer plenty of engaging attractions, delicious food stops and downright fun times beyond the team hotel. Here's how to level up your next tournament road trip—or turn a trek to an away game into a fun family weekend—in a handful of popular tournament destinations.



GIMLI

What to Do

Take a break from the rink and hotel to get out and explore the community, with attractions to entertain family members of all ages.



BRANDON

Manitoba's second biggest hub is a little bit country and a little bit big city and that means Brandon has plenty of attractions to keep the crew busy between games. Take a little trip back in time at the **Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum**. The attraction with the very long name is dedicated to the pilots of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, who trained at World War II air stations across Canada. You'll see training aircraft along with Bombardiers, ground crew and transport equipment. There's a gift shop too!

For some hands-on fun, head to **PlaySkape Family Entertainment Centre** where a thrilling VR experience awaits. Take your pick from Space Station Tiberia, Pirates Plague or Dragon Tower to embark on thrilling adventures inside free-roam escape rooms. For the younger set, the indoor playland offers a huge climbing structure, two touchscreens with games, complimentary rides, bouncy castles and a thrilling 16-foot-long triple slide!

Entertain family members of all ages at **T-Birds**, which has 20 bowling lanes, an arcade with nearly 50 games and a full food menu, plus a bar and grill upstairs.





DAUPHIN

When the team needs to burn off some energy, head to **Northgate Trails** just outside of Dauphin for some fresh air. The 26 kilometres of multi-use trails are great for mountain biking, hiking and trail running—or snowshoeing and cross-country skiing once the snow falls—all offering the stunning scenery of Riding Mountain National Park's North Escarpment. Best of all, entrance is free!

When it's time to slow down, the **Countryfest Community Theatre** in Dauphin offers your choice of first-run films on four screens. Built by the community and operated as a non-profit theatre, the cinema was created to ensure that families, friends and visitors could continue enjoying current movies close to home.

History buffs in the family will enjoy a visit to the **Dauphin Rail Museum**, located in the former baggage room of Dauphin's historic 1912 station building. The highlight: a large HO-scale model layout recreating Dauphin's rail operations in 1954. Opening hours vary or contact the museum to schedule a visit.

MORDEN

For those who dig dinosaurs, there's no better destination than the **Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre** in Morden, open seven days a week and offering galleries full of life from the Cretaceous period. The extensive collection of marine reptile fossils is the largest in Canada and includes one very special specimen! Visit Bruce—a Tylosaurus Pembinensis that holds the Guinness World Record holder as the largest publicly displayed mosasaur.

Also inside Morden's Access Event Centre you'll find the **Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame** where the province's most esteemed baseball figures get a perpetual standing O. Check out memorabilia including uniforms dating back to the early 1900s, and learn about Manitoba's connection to the movie "A League of Their Own".

In Winkler, head to **VB's Entertainment Center** for a few hours of bowling, mini golf and virtual golf, arcade games and a kids' play zone.

GIMLI

When the tourney takes you to the shores of Lake Winnipeg, make a stop at Gimli's larger-than-life **Viking Statue** for a selfie with serious size. Created in 1967, the Viking is 4.6 metres (15 feet) of imposing fibreglass.

Why a viking? Discover the story of Manitoba's first Icelanders at the nearby **New Iceland Heritage Museum**, which also includes newer exhibits focused on the first Ukrainians in the area and the important role Indigenous communities played in the survival of those first settlers. Don viking garb for a photo-op, and pick up some specialty Icelandic and Manitoba-made products in the gift shop.

For more retail therapy, pop into the historic **Tergesen's** which formally opened its doors in 1899. It's the province's oldest, continually-operating general store—although the offerings have changed through the decades. Today, you'll find clothing, jewelry, footwear, housewares and souvenirs along with an impressive bookstore tucked into the southern side.











PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

The **Central Plains RecPlex** in Southport, just three kilometres outside the city, boasts an all-new Golfzon NX Simulator, now available inside this top-notch rec facility that also has a 9-metre rock climbing wall, a 110-metre indoor track, a fully equipped fitness area and a gymnasium. And there's Southport Bowl too, a five lane, 5-pin bowling alley!

You'll find the province's largest indoor leisure / wave pool in Portage la Prairie, conveniently located inside Stride Place, which is also home to the city's two NHL-sized ice rinks. Kids of all ages love the **Shindleman Aquatic Centre**, where they can ride the waves, waterslide and lazy river or relax in the 14-person whirlpool. There's even a tots pool for little ones.

Packed skates for the whole family on a winter trip? Once Portage's scenic oxbow lake freezes it's time for **Skating on the Crescent**! Glide along the groomed rink on Crescent Lake, and warm up around the fire pit.

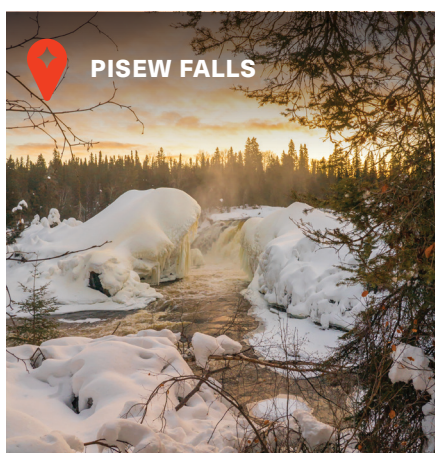


THOMPSON

This industrious mining town is actually Manitoba's sixth-largest city, and has a proud Indigenous identity and deep roots in the fur trade. Explore both of these elements at the **Heritage North Museum**, where you'll step back in time in two log cabins filled with mounted animals native to the area, an authentic birch bark and caribou hide tipi, and exhibits portraying days gone by, including the story of Thompson's mining history.

Thompson is also known for wolves—count how many of the city's nearly 50 whimsically painted, life-sized wolf statues you can find! A walk along the **Spirit Way** interpretive trail in the heart of the city will take you past many of them, and you also can't miss Thompson's 26-metre tall wolf mural. Snap the best pics at the "Wolf Mural Viewpoint" at the corner of Mystery Lake Road (highway #6 coming into Thompson) and Nelson Road.

And don't miss a stop at **Pisew Falls**! Manitoba's most impressive waterfall is about a 45-minute drives outhwest of Thompson and is stunning in any season.



Where to Eat

Grab some grub after a game or wrap up the weekend with a hearty meal before the drive or bus ride home. Try these local gems or ask the local rink staff and volunteers to recommend their favourite restaurants.

BRANDON

Lee's Buffet has become a destination all its own thanks to a seemingly endless variety of classic Chinese items, sushi, seafood, steaks and sweets! It's open until 9 pm most evenings for those late-night meals.

Visit **Sabor Latino** on the edge of Brandon's downtown for authentic handmade Colombian, Mexican and El Salvadorian dishes including tacos, baleadas, pupusas and empanadas. End the meal with a decadent homemade tres leches cake.

DAUPHIN

Place an order at **Jessy's Pizza** and be prepared to be stuffed! If pizza's not your thing, opt for the delicious donairs, burgers, salads, poutines or subs. Take it all back to your hotel for a feast!

You'll find an extensive menu of comfort food and other home-cooked favourites at **Corrina's on Main**, including gourmet burgers and sandwich platters with gluten-free options. Start your day with their popular Ukrainian Breakfast complete with kolbasa and handmade perogies topped with fried onions and sour cream!



FLAVORS OF MEXICO


CORRINA'S ON MAIN


SABOR LATINO

MORDEN

At **Flavors of Mexico**, start with housemade chips and dips but leave room for some delicious tacos, empanadas, chimichangas, fajitas... the list of scrumptious Mexican favourites goes on! Dine in or pick up one of their ready-to-eat family meal kits.

It's a short drive to **Del Rios** in Winkler for enchilada platters, Salisbury steak or a double cheeseburger platter. Yes, the menu truly has something for everyone at this long-standing local favourite. Leave room for pie!

GIMLI

The Sicilian, the Mexican, the Hot Hot or the buffalo chicken—it's nearly impossible to name a favourite at **Brennivins Pizza Hüs** in Gimli. Since 1987, they've also been serving up fabulous pastas, ribs and wings.

Inside the Lakeview Gimli Resort, **Seagull's Restaurant** has an extensive menu packed with locally sourced ingredients. For the ultimate in fresh and local, try the pickerel—caught right in Lake Winnipeg, which is steps away for a great view as you dine.



PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

It's the oven-baked subs that make **Over the Coals** a Portage favourite. Will it be the Cowpuncher, Plough Boy or Italian Stallion? Greek specialties are also on the menu including souvlaki, gyros and spanakopita. Don't skip the baklava for dessert.

A Portage staple for 30-plus years, **Bill's Sticky Fingers** is famous for their slow-cooked ribs and steaks, or you can't go wrong with their pizza or Greek specialties. Can't decide? Go with the weekly special.

THOMPSON

Spice up your life with **Chili Chat Indian Cuisine**'s creamy butter chicken, garlic naan bread, briyani rice, curries, samosas and more, including plenty of vegetarian options. Try the butter chicken nachos or butter chicken poutine!

A visit to Thompson must include Thompson-style pizza, with tangy sauce and mounds of toppings piled high on a dense crust. Locals disagree on who does it best—**Tom's Pizza & Restaurant** or **Santa Maria Pizza & Spaghetti House**. You can't go wrong with either!





Where to Stay

Whether booking a quick overnight before or after driving to an away game or settling in for the weekend with the whole team, here are some solid options.

BRANDON

Parents know what kids look for in a hotel stay—a pool and waterslide! **Canad Inns Destination Centre** Brandon has both, plus spacious rooms including family suites. As a bonus, it's connected to the Keystone Centre.

Comfort Inn Brandon is a solid budget-friendly choice with plenty of amenities including a hot breakfast, free WiFi and an EV charging station. Plus it's pet friendly!

DAUPHIN

The **Best Western Plus Dauphin** is the newest hotel in the city boasting a saltwater pool and waterslide, laundry facilities and RV parking. There's a fitness room, free hot breakfast and accessible rooms too.

MORDEN

A free, hot breakfast, free WiFi and a warm pool await at the **Super 8 by Wyndam Morden**. It's a budget-friendly choice for teams, with all the amenities you need.

GIMLI

Lakeview Gimli Resort rests between Lake Winnipeg and the town's main roadways, offering easy access for attractions and restaurants. Inside, there's a pool, restaurant, lounge and shops along with the Gimli Glider Exhibit (open seasonally).

PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

Microtel Inn and Suites by Wyndham Portage La Prairie is just off the TransCanada Highway and on the banks of Crescent Lake. A free, hot breakfast buffet is included along with WiFi, a pool and gym.

THOMPSON

Best Western Thompson Hotel & Suites is located near the city's main shopping area, and has suites with kitchenettes, plus free hot breakfast and parking. There's no pool, but players can relax post-game in the hotel's sauna.





Bonus: Take in a Game!

Looking for team-bonding activities to add to the weekend schedule? You're likely to find a hockey team on the ice in or nearby every city or town across the province, with game tickets that are affordable or even free.

See the **Brandon Wheat Kings**, Manitoba's only WHL team, battle teams from across Western Canada at ACU Place, Brandon's 4,600-seat arena.

To catch some Junior A action, cheer on the MJHL's reigning Centennial Cup champions the **Niverville Nighthawks**, or check out the brand-new Southeast Event Centre recreation complex, now home to the **Steinbach Pistons**. You can also watch a battle between the **Dauphin Kings**, **Neepawa Titans**, **Northern Manitoba Blizzard** (The Pas), **Portage Terriers**, **Selkirk Steelers**, **Swan Valley Stampeders**, **Virden Oil Capitals**, **Waywayseecappo Wolverines** and **Winkler Flyers**.

Junior B teams include the **Altona Maroons**, **Arborg Ice Dawgs**, **Beausejour Comets**, **La Broquerie Habs**, **Lundar Falcons**, **Selkirk Fishermen** and **St. Malo Warriors**.



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FORMER CHURCHILL HOCKEY ACADEMY STUDENT ATHLETES ZACH LANSARD OF THE REGINA PATS AND BREK LISKE OF THE EVERETT SILVERTIPS

CHURCHILL'S PIPELINE TO THE NHL

BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Photos courtesy of Images on Ice/Hockey Hall of Fame and Western Hockey League

HOW A WINNIPEG PUBLIC-SCHOOL HOCKEY ACADEMY QUIETLY BECAME ONE OF MANITOBA'S PREMIER PRODUCERS OF NHL TALENT.

The numbers almost don't seem real.

Over the past two NHL Drafts, 11 Manitobans have heard their names called by National Hockey League clubs. Amazingly, four of them developed their games at Churchill Hockey Academy.

Carter Bear became the Detroit Red Wings' first-round pick in 2025. Owen Martin followed as a third-round selection of the Winnipeg Jets. Then, this summer, Brek Liske was chosen 53rd overall by the Philadelphia Flyers and Zach Lansard went 68th overall to the Carolina Hurricanes.

For a program that began less than a decade ago with 25 Grade 7 students and a dream, Churchill Hockey Academy has quietly become one of Manitoba's greatest hockey success stories.

It isn't simply producing skilled players. It's producing NHL prospects.

"We'd like to keep growing the program. How can we do that?" current head coach Matthew Varnes remembers asking after joining the academy as a young teacher.

The answer, it turned out, was to think bigger.

Nearly 11 years ago, Tim Friesen and Dom Zagari recognized something missing in Manitoba's hockey landscape. Based on experiences with their own children, they envisioned a public-school program where elite hockey development could exist alongside a quality education. With the support of Churchill principal Donna Miller, that vision became reality.

The academy officially opened during the 2016-17 school year. Its first class featured approximately 25 Grade 7 students who logged roughly 140 hours on the ice.

Varnes was there almost from the beginning.

"I was a student teacher at that time and said, 'Hey, can I help out?' Tim said he'd always take the free help," Varnes recalled with a laugh.

He immersed himself in everything from skating mechanics and edge work to puck skills and game situations before eventually becoming one of the architects behind the academy's expansion into high school.

"When I was brought on board, one of the questions was, 'How do we keep growing the program?' I said we needed to increase it into the high school. We revamped the Grade 9 program and it was a big success. That was when Carter Bear decided to stick around, and from there it's just been constant growth."

That growth is now impossible to ignore.

Churchill graduates are not only reaching the Western Hockey League and Junior A hockey—they're reaching the NHL Draft with remarkable consistency.

Perhaps no one illustrates the academy's impact better than Zach Lansard.

Today, the Carolina Hurricanes prospect is preparing for another season with the Regina Pats after just hearing his name called in the third round of the NHL Draft.

For Lansard, Churchill provided exactly the environment he needed.

"It was great," he said. "Especially for me, who's not a big fan of school."

He laughed before explaining what made the academy different.

"You have most of your day cut out for hockey. Whether it's from 8 a.m. until noon or noon until three, you're on the ice, working out and getting better. They're still really focused on school and your education, but if you want to go there and be a hockey player in the future, I definitely highly recommend going there."

That combination of academics and elite development proved invaluable.

Lansard credits the coaching staff for exposing him to different teaching styles and experiences.

"There were skilled coaches, older coaches with more experience and hockey smarts. Getting a little bit from everyone and trying to soak it all in really helped me throughout my career."

The physical development was equally important.

"I definitely made strides," he said. "The workouts off the ice are amazing and if you take advantage of it, it'll definitely help you."

Looking back now, he has no hesitation in acknowledging how important Churchill was in his journey.

"It definitely helped me make Regina and get drafted. That was a step in the right direction and part of my path. That's the reason why I'm here. Definitely credit to them—they're part of my journey."

Draft day itself remains almost impossible for him to describe.

"It was unreal. It's a dream come true for every kid. To see my name get called was unbelievable. It didn't really feel real, but it shows the work I put in and the people who helped me—including Churchill—and I was very proud."

Only a few selections earlier, another Churchill alumnus experienced a dream of his own.



BREK LISKE, EVERETT SILVERTIPS



ZACH LANSARD, REGINA PATS

Brek Liske heard the Philadelphia Flyers call his name in the second round.

For Liske, Churchill represented something he had rarely experienced before.

"It was unreal," he said. "It was a hockey culture."

For the first time, he found himself surrounded by players who shared the same goals.

"I think it was the first time in my career where I was around hockey players all the time—always competing, always getting better with those guys.

"It's guys that share your interests and your aspirations or dreams, so it's pretty cool when you get to be around that all the time."

Liske has since graduated while continuing his hockey journey in Everett, where he also enjoyed an unforgettable run to the Memorial Cup.

"It was actually unbelievable," he said. "So much fun."

Then came draft day.

He admits the emotions were impossible to control.

"I woke up and it was just a weird feeling. I had a lot of nerves."

Family and friends gathered at his family's cabin for a draft party.

"It was already like, 'Wow, this is crazy. It's the day.'"

As the selections rolled by, the suspense became almost unbearable.

"A few picks went by and I was getting antsy. I was wondering, 'Where am I going?' Then I got picked by the Flyers, which was unbelievable."

The selection carried even greater meaning because Philadelphia had always been his favourite team.

"I've been a lifelong Flyers fan, so it was very cool."

Development camp only reinforced his excitement.

"The staff were awesome to me," he said. "I got to meet a lot of guys pretty quick and had a lot of fun."

For Varnes, seeing former students achieve NHL dreams never gets old.

Every draft pick represents years of work from athletes, families and coaches who believed in the academy's philosophy.

Just as important, it validates the original vision Friesen and Zagari had when they wondered whether elite hockey development could successfully exist inside a public-school setting.

The answer is now written across NHL draft boards.

Churchill Hockey Academy has become more than an innovative school program. It has become one of Manitoba's premier hockey development centres.

Of course, the program's success isn't measured solely by draft selections or scholarship opportunities.

It's measured by young athletes discovering that they can chase ambitious hockey dreams without sacrificing their education.

As Bear, Martin, Liske and Lansard continue climbing toward big time professional hockey, another generation of Churchill students skates onto the ice every morning hoping to follow in their footsteps.

Banners may not hang from the rafters, but the blueprint is firmly in place.

And if the last two NHL Drafts are any indication, Churchill Hockey Academy's pipeline to the National Hockey League is only beginning to gather momentum.

MANITOBANS IN THE 2026 NHL DRAFT

Rd	Player	Team	Hometown	Roots
1	Carson Carels	Prince George (WHL)	Cypress River	PMHA
2	Brek Liske	Everett (WHL)	Beausejour	Churchill
3	Zach Lansard	Regina (WHL)	Ste. Anne	Churchill
6	Jonas Woo	Medicine Hat (WHL)	Winnipeg	AAA Warriors





BY PAUL EDMONDS
Photos by James Carey Lauder

BETTER



LEFT TO RIGHT: BYRON SPRIGGS, ISAAC BELLAN, JOHN MORK, LARRY WOO, CAIDEN DALEY AND CORY GURMAN.

TOGETHER

There is a certain formula that usually defines successful coaches. They are competitive, organized, hardworking and – perhaps most importantly – benefactors of a skilled team and supportive staff.

That last group might be the most important to Larry Woo and the success he's experienced behind the bench in recent years.

Selected as the 2025-26 Winnipeg AAA Council's Coach of the Year for the second time in the last four seasons, Woo keenly understands the important dynamic of cultivating a highly motivated and cohesive coaching staff.

It's one of the primary reasons his teams win and why the base of Woo's staff with the U18 Winnipeg AAA Bruins has been together for years, including assistant coach Isaac Bellan.

After finishing his amateur career in the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League, Bellan moved into coaching at the AA level. After just two seasons in the coaching ranks, he was asked to join Woo's staff and from there the relationship has now continued for over a decade.

In addition to Bellan, the U18 Bruins staff also consists of assistants John Mork and Caiden Daley, goaltending coaches Byron Spriggs and Cory Gurman, manager Jeff Mager and athletic therapist Hayley Arpin.

All will be returning this coming season to the U18 Bruins, while former MJHL player Michael Tanchak joins the group as an assistant coach.

It's a collective that has shared many hours at the rink, miles on the bus and successes on the ice, including last season's 2025-26 Manitoba U18 Hockey League (MU18HL) championship with a regular season record of 42-3-1-2 and a perfect 9-0 run in the playoffs.

It's a coaching "secret sauce" that might be the envy of many elite programs in the province.

"The game's not black and white," says Bellan, a Phys-Ed and Science teacher at Gray Academy. "Larry wants input. He wants people to give ideas and push back a little bit. Everyone has a voice.

"I thought I knew the game coming out of Junior, but once I started working with Larry it was a different level.

"Understanding the game, its details and preparation showed me there's a lot more that goes into it than I already knew."

For Woo, 55, who was also awarded the Winnipeg AAA Council's top coach in 2022-23 when he guided the U17 Bruins to a provincial title with the same staff, assembling the right mix of people behind the bench is paramount.

In addition, providing trust, responsibility and valuing their opinions even if they aren't necessarily congruent with yours one hundred percent of the time are also key factors in a successful collective.



"I don't really know what the secret formula is," says Woo. "But for things to happen and go in a positive way you need a buy-in from everybody and we've had that for years and decades. We've been very fortunate. Every voice that we have is important. It helps us make decisions on how we treat, develop and coach these young players.

"(My staff) plays a major role in how our team moves during the year. Their opinions matter and many times when we're making decisions (tryouts, lineups, special teams, workout times, etc.) having people that are around who have an understanding of the game is vital."

For instance, the 26-year-old Daley joined Woo's staff last year after a stellar amateur career that included five years in the Western Hockey League (Brandon, Regina, Saskatoon) and another four years at U SPORTS with McGill University.

His relationship with Woo dates back to when he played for him at U13 AA. Today, he now has input with the Bruins forwards and is also responsible for drafting many of the team's power play schemes.

Bellan handles the team's defence with contributions to the penalty kill while John Mork, the longest serving "Lieutenant" to Woo's staff since 2010, tackles video preparation, practice plans and pre-scouts.

In terms of the goaltending decisions, Woo admits he might have final say as the head coach, but he leaves most of the coaching and decision making regarding the team's two goalies to his experts in Spriggs and Gurman.

As for Mager, he and Woo met when they were in high school and have been working in tandem for the last many years through the AA and now AAA ranks. Arpin enters her third year with the group and according to Woo is a respected resource in decisions on injuries, treatment and recovery.

"When people come to the rink they want to feel important," Woo says. "That's something that's key for wanting people to come back. It's not just the X's and O's, but rather relationships with the players. I believe we do a real good job at it."

Now, to suggest there's a utopian environment around the U18 Bruins coaching staff would be inaccurate. In fact, like any family, there's going to be some disagreements with Woo welcoming the feedback and – at times – pushback.

"Sometimes it's beneficial not to agree," he says. "Just because I get a feeling doesn't mean it's the right feeling. If they give me an alternative idea or an idea that sits in the back of my head, then maybe we can go to that if we need to venture off the road we're on.

"It's too easy and convenient to say that everyone is on the same page all the time, but when we do have a disagreement we'll always try to come to a medium and figure things out. That's a huge part of the process."

But ultimately, there's a significant bond amongst the U18 Bruins coaching staff and the results are tangible proof. It's a group that's pulled together by hockey, but the relationship is much more vast than the game as the years have progressed.

According to Bellan, the group is tight and more than just acquaintances at the rink. They socialize together outside of hockey, including weddings and other extended family gatherings with their wives, partners and significant others included in those functions.

"It's more than just hockey with us," says Bellan, 32. "I've learned about life and how to be good with my family and around my house with this group. We're all pretty close. It's not like you leave the rink and we're done, which makes it hard not to (continue with them)."

That cohesion is a testament to the functionality and longevity of the U18 Bruins coaching staff, thanks in large part of Woo's leadership. It would also be logical to suggest it's a major reason why his teams are successful on the ice.

The two do, indeed, go hand-in-hand!

"Yes, there's a lot of hockey talk (amongst the group)," says Woo. "But at the end of the day we talk a lot about life and relationships. I believe we have a strong group that likes spending time together. I'd like to believe that we make people feel comfortable and welcome. I'm fortunate to have these people want to come back each year and help guide these young players."

"What we've built has taken time. We don't all have the same interests outside of hockey, but at the same time we value each other. We're a close-knit group."

COACH OF THE YEAR, LARRY WOO





CONNER ROULETTE (LEFT WITH HIS GOLD MEDAL IN 2019) ALONGSIDE KEVIN MONKMAN



BETTER THAN EVER

BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Photos by James Carey Lauder, Nick Lacoste and Lucas Rotondo, Images on Ice/Hockey Hall of Fame and Dave Mahussier/University of Manitoba

MANY OF THE MALE PLAYERS WHO HAVE LED MANITOBA TO FIVE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS – INCLUDING THE LAST TWO – ARE STILL PLAYING AT HIGH LEVELS OF THE GAME TODAY. IN FACT, ACCORDING TO TEAM MANITOBA GENERAL MANAGER, KEVIN MONKMAN, THESE PLAYERS ARE BETTER THAN EVER.

There was a time when many of Manitoba's finest Indigenous hockey players slipped through the cracks.

Some never had the opportunity. Others lacked the exposure. Still others faced barriers that had little to do with talent and everything to do with circumstance.

Today, that story has changed dramatically.

From the Western Hockey League to NCAA Division I, Canadian university hockey, professional leagues in Europe and even the National Hockey League, Indigenous players from Manitoba are making an impact at every level of the game.

And few people have had a better view of that transformation than Kevin Monkman.

Since taking over as general manager of Manitoba's Indigenous provincial men's team in 2013, Monkman has overseen one of the most successful programs in National Aboriginal Hockey Championships history. During his tenure, Manitoba has captured five gold (including the last two and three of the last four) and three bronze medals, while producing a remarkable list of players who have gone on to outstanding hockey careers and equally successful lives away from the rink. Only Saskatchewan has won more gold medals at the NAHC than tiny Manitoba.

For Monkman, however, the medals tell only part of the story.

"It's a credit to the players, their parents, caregivers and grandparents," he said. "We've been fortunate enough to bring them into our program, watch them do well and, in turn, they've made our program look good."

That humility has become one of Monkman's trademarks. Raised in Vogar, Manitoba, where frozen outdoor rinks served as community gathering places, Monkman developed his passion for hockey the old-fashioned way. He progressed through minor hockey in Ashern, suited up for the Parkland Rangers at the AAA level and later played junior hockey in Dauphin and Portage.

Coaching wasn't originally part of his plan.

After spending time behind the bench in the early 2000s, he stepped away to focus on raising his three children while building a career with Manitoba Hydro. A chance meeting years later brought him back into hockey, and eventually into the provincial Indigenous program. The timing proved perfect.

When Monkman arrived, he envisioned changing the culture of the program by attracting more elite AAA players while surrounding them with coaches and staff who shared the same commitment to excellence.

"The biggest thing for us was trying to get more AAA guys involved," he explained. "The mindset is different at that level. Those players already understand the commitment, the training and what it takes to get to the next level.

"It all started with finding the right staff and then finding players who wanted to keep climbing."

That philosophy has transformed Manitoba into a perennial national contender.

More importantly, it has become a launching pad for young Indigenous athletes.

The list of alumni is impressive.

NHL defencemen Zach Whitecloud and former NHL defenceman Brady Keeper helped establish the standard during Monkman's early years. Dynamic forward Conner Roulette continues his collegiate career in the United States after earning Rookie of the Year honours in Canadian university hockey; Justin Nachbaur of the AHL's Hershey Bears is climbing the professional ranks, while Tristin Langan continues his career in Europe.

In the meantime, the next wave has already arrived.

Young talents such as Alexander Andre, Hubert Clarke, Tyden Lafournaise, Athens Shingoose, Carter Haney and goaltender Urijah Moosetail are continuing the tradition, joining a growing list of Indigenous players earning opportunities in the WHL, MJHL, NCAA and Canadian university hockey.

Monkman believes the difference today isn't necessarily that there are more talented Indigenous players. The talent has always existed.

"The biggest thing is there have always been great Native hockey players," he said. "Even before my time there were great players. But maybe they didn't get the opportunities. Maybe they weren't allowed to play in certain places. Sometimes, because of the social situation at the time, they didn't take opportunities they otherwise might have had."

Today's generation is different. Players are embracing every opportunity available.

Summer development programs have expanded. Elite coaching is more accessible. Families are investing countless hours driving to practices, tournaments and showcases.

"The parents are committed to helping their child get to the next level," Monkman said. "There are a lot of good Indigenous hockey players playing on non-Indigenous teams because they're committed."

Just as importantly, the players have embraced the work required to succeed.

"The mindset is different now," Monkman said. "Players want to play at the higher levels."

For him, hockey has never been solely about producing elite athletes. It's about producing quality people.

"I've always thought hockey isn't just about hockey," he said. "You build life skills. You build work ethic. Showing up on time for practice becomes showing up on time for work. Working hard in games becomes working hard in your career."



ZACH WHITECLOUD WITH THE CALGARY FLAMES

LINDEN MCCORRISTER WITH THE U OF M BISONS

BRADY KEEPER, WITH THE AHL'S LAVAL ROCKET

JUSTIN NACHBAUR WITH THE AHL'S ONTARIO REIGN

That may be the accomplishment of which Monkman is proudest. Some of his former players have become police officers. Others, like Brown University graduate Colin Burston, have entered business. Many have become leaders in their own communities. Several have even asked Monkman to provide professional references as they pursued careers outside hockey. Those requests mean every bit as much as another championship medal.

"Hockey is kind of an outlet for life," he said, "a stepping-stone to something greater."

That perspective has helped shape a program that values character every bit as much as talent.

Winning certainly matters. Five national championships prove that. But success has never been measured exclusively by what happens during one week at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships. Instead, it is measured years later when another former player graduates from university, signs a professional contract, lands a meaningful career or returns to help mentor the next generation.

Monkman sees that cycle continuing. His long-term vision extends beyond the annual national championship. He would like to see a Western Canadian Indigenous championship established and eventually an Indigenous all-star team capable of competing internationally.

"We're working on building something bigger," he said. "There's so much talent out there. We just need to bring it together."

Considering what Manitoba has already accomplished under his leadership, it's difficult to argue with that optimism.

For more than a decade, Kevin Monkman has quietly helped showcase the extraordinary depth of Indigenous hockey talent across Manitoba. The medals sparkle. The list of successful alumni continues to grow. And with every young player who follows the path forged by those who came before, Manitoba's Indigenous hockey story becomes richer still.

It turns out the province never lacked elite Indigenous hockey players. It simply needed someone to bring them together.



CONNER ROULETTE WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN HUSKIES

KEVIN MONKMAN'S TOP 5
The five best players, he's recruited, coached or watched for Team Manitoba and where they are now.

ZACH WHITECLOUD, CALGARY FLAMES, NHL

Whitecloud, 29, played on Team Manitoba in 2014 and surprisingly, with what appeared to be a great team on paper, did not win a medal. The defenceman from Brandon played in the MJHL with the Virden Oil Capitals, NCAA D1 hockey at Bemidji State and then won an AHL Championship with the Chicago Wolves before winning a Stanley Cup with the Vegas Golden Knights in 2023. After a trade last year, he now anchors the defence of the NHL's Calgary Flames and just played at the IIHF's senior men's World Championship for the second year in his career.

BRADY KEEPER (RETIRED)

Keeper, 30, played on the 2014 Manitoba team at the NAHC alongside Whitecloud and surprisingly, did not win a medal. He went on to become the Most Valuable Player in the MJHL while playing for the OCN Blizzard and then played two seasons at the University of Maine before signing with the NHL's Florida Panthers. He played one NHL game with Florida (2020-21), but spent most of his pro career in the AHL with Syracuse, Abbotsford (Vancouver Canucks) and Laval (Montreal Canadiens). Last year, he played seven games with the ECHL's Rapid City Rush.

LINDEN MCCORRISTER (RETIRED)

McCorrister, 28, played at the NAHC in 2014 and 2015 and like Whitecloud, did not win a medal. He went to play for the Swan Valley Stampeders for one season in the MJHL, the Brandon Wheat Kings for three seasons in the WHL and finished his career after four seasons of U SPORTS hockey with the University of Manitoba Bisons in 2023.

CONNER ROULETTE, MICHIGAN TECH UNIVERSITY, NCAA D1

Roulette, 23, played on the 2018 Manitoba team and won a bronze medal at the NAHC in Membertou, N.S., and then won a gold medal in 2019 in Whitehorse, Yukon. After playing with three different teams in the Western Hockey League, Roulette played one season with the Tulsa Oilers in the ECHL before returning to school. Last season, at the University of Saskatchewan, he was named winner of the Clare Drake Award as U SPORTS' Rookie of the Year. This coming season. He will play NCAA D1 hockey for Michigan Tech University.

JUSTIN NACHBAUR, HARTFORD WOLF PACK, AHL

Nachbaur, 26, played on Team Manitoba in both 2016 and 2017 and won bronze in Mississauga in 2016 and gold in Cowichan, B.C. in 2017. After playing for Team Manitoba, he went on to play four seasons with the WHL's Prince Albert Raiders, and then turned pro with the AHL's Charlotte Checkers in 2021. Since that first year, he has now played on seven different pro teams in two leagues and just recently signed a one-year contract with the Hartford Wolf Pack of the American Hockey League.

BUILDING BETTER STUDENT ATHLETES

BY CARTER BROOKS
Photos by Dylan Asmundson

R1 HOCKEY ACADEMY HELPS MANITOBA'S YOUNG PLAYERS GROW ON THE ICE, IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND.



For today's young hockey players, development rarely stops when practice ends. Between early morning skates, evening team practices, dryland sessions and homework, finding the right balance has become one of the biggest challenges for families trying to help their children pursue the game they love.

At Winnipeg's RINK Training Centre, the R1 Hockey Academy was designed to ease that balancing act.

Rather than asking student-athletes to squeeze additional training into already packed schedules, the academy integrates hockey development, strength training and academics into a single school day, creating an environment where players can grow both on and off the ice.

For R1 Program Lead and Coach Mentor Dwayne Gylywoychuk, that's exactly the point. "It's really about giving kids that added development while surrounding them with like-minded student-athletes," he said. "We wanted to create an opportunity where they could continue developing their hockey while also receiving a strong education and learning the habits they'll need to be successful in life."

Originally launched as a morning hockey development program for Grades 7 and 8, R1 has continued to evolve. As demand increased, the academy partnered with St. Ignatius School to establish dedicated classrooms inside the RINK Training Centre. This fall marks another step forward with the addition of a Grade 6 program, allowing the academy to serve student-athletes through three pivotal years of their development while continuing to let them compete for their community, AA or AAA teams during the season.

For Gylywoychuk, the academy represents the next chapter in a hockey career that has taken him from the Western Hockey League to the international stage with Hockey Canada.

After coaching the Brandon Wheat Kings and spending time behind the bench with Canada's national women's program—including the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang—he was looking for an opportunity that would allow him to remain in hockey while spending more time at home with his family.

"I still wanted to coach. I still wanted to give back to the game and teach young athletes about a sport that had been so good to me as both a coach and a player," he said.

Today, that same philosophy shapes every aspect of the R1 Hockey Academy.

"If we create good people, we're going to create even better athletes," Gylywoychuk said. "That's really become our model."

It's a belief that stretches well beyond skating technique or stickhandling. Leadership, coachability, accountability and respect are woven into the daily routine just as intentionally as time on the ice.

"We're big believers in teaching them about being good people, good individuals, being coachable and making sure they respect the game," Gylywoychuk said. "If we can check all those boxes at this age, we feel we're giving them a pretty strong foundation."

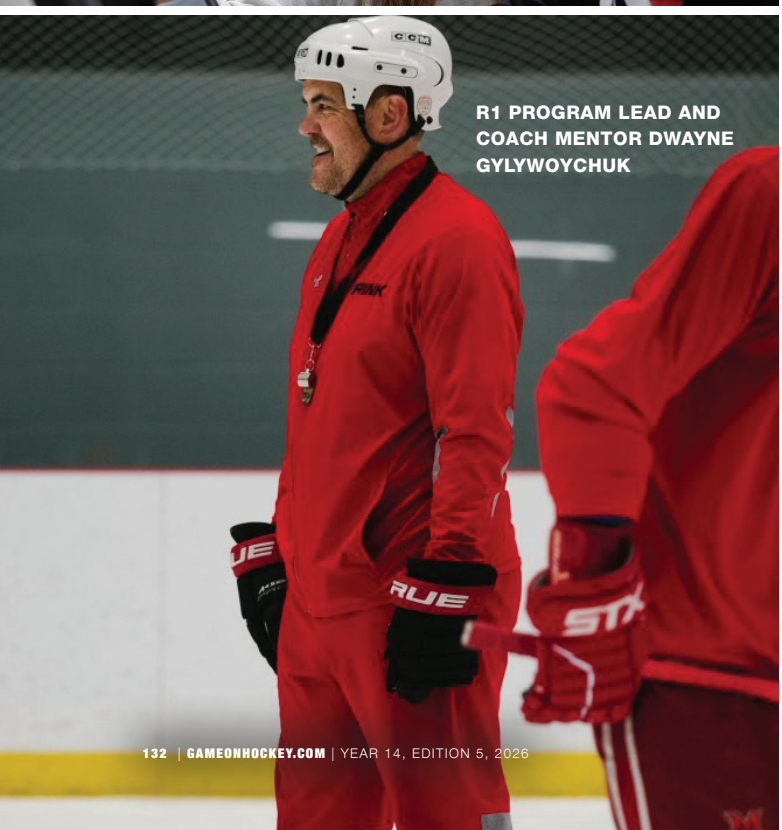
Rather than beginning at the high school level, R1 focuses on middle-years students during what the











R1 PROGRAM LEAD AND COACH MENTOR DWAYNE GYLYWOYCHUK

staff believes is one of the most influential stages of athletic and personal development. Some graduates continue into RINK Hockey Academy's U15 and older programs, while others return to community hockey carrying with them a stronger foundation, both as players and as people.

A typical day reflects that philosophy: Students arrive around 8:00 a.m., often gathering to discuss games from the previous evening before beginning classroom instruction. Those conversations can lead to lessons about leadership, teamwork and sportsmanship before anyone even steps onto the ice. From there, students move between academics, on-ice development and strength training at Testify Performance before returning to the classroom for the remainder of the afternoon.

"It's all integrated," Gylywoychuk said. "They're getting their education, their hockey development and their off-ice training all within the regular school day."

The development doesn't stop with hockey. Students also participate in activities designed to improve overall athleticism through sports such as football, basketball, volleyball, badminton and ultimate frisbee.

"We want them to be functional athletes," Gylywoychuk said. "If they're throwing footballs, playing basketball, volleyball or badminton, we believe that helps them become even better hockey players because they're simply becoming better athletes."

Supporting that approach is a staff of full-time coaches, player development specialists, goalie instructors and performance coaches – all working under one roof alongside the academy's educational partner, St. Ignatius School. That collaborative environment, Gylywoychuk believes, is what truly separates R1.

"When you walk through the door, you're going to get everything you need," he said.

For families, that means less time driving from school to the rink, then to the gym and back again. Instead, the pieces fit together as part of one coordinated school day, allowing student-athletes to focus on their education while continuing to pursue their passion for hockey.

Looking ahead, Gylywoychuk sees opportunities to continue growing the academy, potentially expanding into additional grades and even introducing similar models for other sports. But growth, he says, isn't the ultimate objective.

For Gylywoychuk, success won't be measured by championships, scholarships or professional contracts. It will be the students who return years later remembering the lessons they learned both on and off the ice.

"We know everybody who comes through here isn't going to play professional hockey," he said. "But if, 10 years from now, they're graduating from university, they're proud they came through this academy and maybe they come back to help the next generation, then we've done our job.

"We want them to become strong student-athletes, but more importantly, strong people in the community."



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NOTES FROM PILOT MOUND

BY SCOTT TAYLOR
Photos courtesy of Pilot Mound Hockey Academy, Gordie Tumilson

Wow! The folks in Pilot Mound sure put in a lot of work on their summer vacations.

1. As expected, PMHA graduate **Carson Carels** of Cypress River, Man., was selected quickly in the 2026 National Hockey League Draft. Carels was taken in the first round, sixth overall by the Calgary Flames. Shortly after the draft, Carels announced that he would leave the Prince George Cougars of the Western Hockey League and attend the University of North Dakota in the fall of 2026.



2. It's the passing of the guard at Pilot Mound Hockey Academy this season. Longtime goalie coach **Gordie Tumilson** (left) will pass the torch to incoming goalie coach **Frank Longo.** Longo has a load of experience with Prep School coaching and in 2025 was the guest training camp goalie coach for the Toronto Maple Leafs.





3. **Frank Longo** at Leafs camp.

4. The Buffaloes' U18 Female Team has a new assistant coach. **Remi Harvey,** an experienced hockey professional with over 15 years of experience in mentoring and coaching, including more than 25 years as a player, has joined new head coach Oona Parviainen's staff. She spent nine years playing for the Australian Women's National Team at the IIHF World Championships, coached nationally and internationally for Ice Hockey Australia and has spent the past two years extending her high-performance coaching in Toronto as an assistant coach with U SPORTS' York Lions.



5. **Cole Landreville** of St. Claude, Man., who left Pilot Mound after the 2025-26 season and played with the Western Hockey League's Edmonton Oil Kings, has been tapped to attend Hockey Canada's U17 National Team camp. Landreville played three full seasons with the Buffaloes and was named to the CSSHL's U18 Top Freshman Team in 2025-26.



6. As many as seven young North Dakota and Minnesota stars have signed on to play for PMHA's U17 Prep head coach **Rick McConnell** this coming season. "We had a couple kids come in the last few years," said McConnell. "So, Isaac Friesen, our head recruiter, got in contact with an advisor down there that was looking for a change for some of his players, so we had a couple come up and skate, and they were very good, and I offered them spots right away, and the next thing you know, I had a couple more coming up to skate and with the word of mouth down there, a couple more came up, and here we are, so I'm pretty excited. We have some good hockey players coming in."



7. Pilot Mound's two 2026 female graduates have selected their college hockey programs for the 2026-27 season. **Logan Sullivan,** from New Hope, Pa., will play NCAA DIII hockey at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, PA. while **Ryley Sanders** from Weyburn, Sask., will play U SPORTS hockey this coming season for the York University Lions in Toronto.



8. **Ryan-Glen Walters** has been named the new assistant coach with PMHA's Male U17 program. Walters has experience as a high school teacher, Jr. A coach, official, scout, and former player. He brings a uniquely well-rounded perspective to the Buffaloes' developing U17 roster.



9. The construction is proceeding nicely on the new dorms that will house PMHA's fifth team in 2026-27. The outside of the building is finished so now they're putting the final touches on the inside.





PILOT MOUND BUFFALOES

Congrats 2025/26 GRADUATES

LOCAL. NATIONAL. INTERNATIONAL. LIFELONG.



ADAM ZAMECNIK
Orlando, Florida
3 years
Male U17 Prep



GAVIN DAVIS
Portage la Prairie, MB
1 year
Male U18 Prep



AIDEN MASSE
Calgary, AB
1 year
Male U18 Prep



HECTOR KAPITONOV
Roermond, Netherlands
1 year
Male U18 Prep



AUSTIN JEFFRIES
Calgary, AB
1 year
Male U18 Prep



KOLTON BIGRAS
Fort St. John, BC
2 years
Male U18 Prep



CASEY SILVERMAN
Hellerup, Denmark
2 years
Male U18 Prep



CHADRICK SCHULZ
Medicine Hat, AB
2 years
Male U17 Prep



COLLIN FRIEDRICH
Tampa, Florida
2 years
Male U18 Prep



LOGAN SULLIVAN
New Hope, Pennsylvania
2 years
Female U18 Prep



LUKE ADAM
The Pas, MB
4 years
Male U18 Prep



RYLEY SANDERS
Weyburn, SK
2 years
Female U18 Prep



OUR ETERNALLY GRATEFUL LOCAL, NATIONAL AND

INTERNATIONAL GRADS

HAVE THIS TO SAY ABOUT THEIR PMHA EXPERIENCE:

THANK YOU to our coaches, teachers, dorm parents, cooks, athletic trainers, medical staff, bus drivers, owners and teammates.

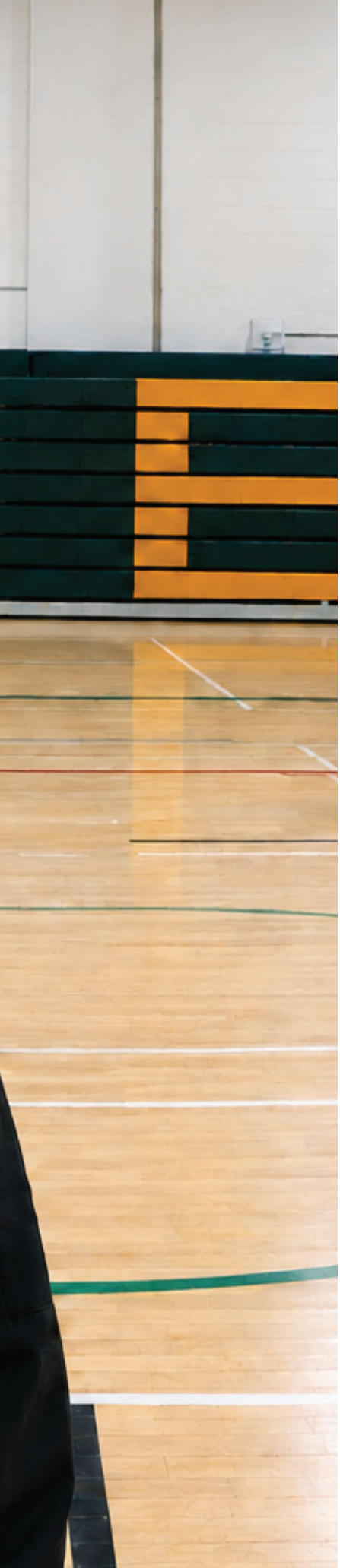
This has been an amazing, maturing experience. We have formed lifelong friendships and memories! The absolute best overall, personal development a student could ask for.

THANK YOU PILOT MOUND!





MAGGIE LITCHFIELD-MEDD INSIDE HER NEW HOME AT BALMORAL HALL SCHOOL



A NEW BOSS: SAME CHAMPIONSHIP STANDARD

BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Photos by Scott Taylor, James Carey Lauder, Jeff Miller/University of Manitoba and courtesy of the Balmoral Hall Blazers

MAGGIE LITCHFIELD-MEDD BRINGS INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, CHAMPIONSHIP CREDENTIALS AND A PLAYER-FIRST PHILOSOPHY TO THE BALMORAL HALL BLAZERS

The résumé is impressive.

She captained the University of Manitoba Bisons after beginning her career as a walk-on. She wore the Maple Leaf for Canada at the World University Games. She played and coached professionally in Sweden. She helped build winning programs at the University of Manitoba, The RINK Hockey Academy and the Winnipeg Jets Hockey Academy.

Yet when Maggie Litchfield-Medd walked through the doors at Balmoral Hall this summer as the new head coach of the Blazers Prep team, none of those accomplishments mattered nearly as much as one simple objective.

She wanted to earn the trust of her new players.

"I'm just trying to get to know everyone," she said modestly. "I've introduced myself to all the families and I'm having individual meetings with each player. It's all about relationship building, getting to know everyone and getting players to buy into something bigger than themselves."

It's a fitting approach for a coach whose own hockey journey has been built on perseverance, patience and teamwork.

Litchfield-Medd officially took over the Blazers program in June, replacing longtime bench boss Sarah Zacharias and inheriting one of the most respected programs in the Canadian Sport School Hockey League (CSSHL). It is a position that attracted considerable interest, but one she believed was worth pursuing.

"Balmoral Hall has such a long-standing history as a prep program in Winnipeg," she said, praising her assistant coach Chelsea Dinnin who kept everything together during the blank space between head coaches. "I was ready to get back into high-level coaching and thought, 'What an opportunity.'"

The hiring marks another important chapter in a career that has steadily climbed through virtually every level of the game.



THE TEAM MANITOBA STAFF FOR THE 2023 U18 NATIONALS, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT CHRISTINE BUMSTEAD, ASSISTANT COACH, TESS SERHAN, ASSISTANT COACH, SHANE CARSON, EQUIPMENT MANAGER AND MAGGIE LITCHFIELD-MEDD, HEAD COACH

Born and raised in Charleswood, Litchfield-Medd attended Oak Park High School before enrolling at the University of Manitoba. Her dream was simple: make the Bisons.

It wasn't easy.

Then-head coach Jon Rempel offered her the opportunity to redshirt—practice with the team without playing. Instead, she chose the more difficult road, earning a spot as the 13th forward.

"There wasn't any promise of ice time," she recalled in an earlier interview. "I just knew I'd worked my butt off."

For a fiercely competitive player, spending games in the stands was frustrating. But instead of becoming discouraged, she turned disappointment into motivation.

"You go back to practice the next week and work even harder."

That determination eventually transformed her from an overlooked depth player into the captain of the Bisons in her fifth season—a remarkable journey that still shapes the way she coaches today.

She understands what it's like to fight for every opportunity. She understands what it's like to wait. Most importantly, she understands what it's like to grow.

Following her university playing career, Litchfield-Medd represented Canada at the 2015 FISU World University Games in Granada, Spain—an experience she still describes as unforgettable.

"Wearing the Team Canada jersey with your name on the back is what everybody dreams about."

Professional hockey soon followed.

She joined SDE Hockey in the Swedish Women's Hockey League, playing one season before stepping behind the bench while also serving as a player-coach.

"It was a lot," she said with a laugh during an earlier interview. "But we stayed in the top division, which was our goal."

Her biggest contribution wasn't necessarily offensive production. It was structure.

Drawing heavily on the defensive principles she learned under Rempel at Manitoba, Litchfield-Medd helped transform a team that had struggled defensively into one capable of frustrating some of Sweden's top clubs.

"Once our players realized they could defend together as a team, everything changed," she said. "That gave them confidence."

Those lessons continue to influence her coaching philosophy today: Strong habits. Commitment away from the puck. Players trusting one another.

After returning to Winnipeg, she resumed coaching with the Bisons before spending seven years at RINK Hockey Academy – a skills coach from 2016 to 2022 and head coach from 2019-2022 -- and another four years with the Winnipeg Jets Hockey Academy.

Along the way, she coached teams ranging from elite female players to U13 boys, proving that effective coaching isn't about age or gender—it's about communication. In fact, last season, her U13 AA boys captured a championship.

"My family jokes that's probably why Balmoral Hall hired me," she laughed.

The reality, however, is that the school was looking for far more than a coach with another trophy on the shelf. They were looking for a leader.

Now, Litchfield-Medd inherits a program that has already established itself as one of the premier destinations for female hockey players in Manitoba.

While eight players return from last season's roster, the Blazers will also welcome 11 newcomers, making this year's club younger but full of opportunity.



MAGGIE PLAYING PRO IN EUROPE



MAGGIE IN HER SENIOR YEAR AS CAPTAIN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA BISONS.

"I actually think that helps us," she said. "We've got a new coach and a lot of new players, so everyone gets to contribute to creating our new identity."

That identity won't ignore the foundation already established.

Litchfield-Medd has spent her first few weeks studying the systems, traditions and culture left behind by the previous coaching staff.

"I've been looking through all the documents and talking with the returning players," she explained. "I'm asking them what Balmoral Hall characteristics they want to carry forward, what team-building activities worked, and what they feel is important. There are definitely things we want to keep because they've helped build this program."

Rather than changing everything overnight, she's carefully blending continuity with fresh ideas. It's another lesson learned throughout her own career. Winning cultures aren't created by tearing everything down. They're strengthened by building upon what already works.

The timing couldn't be better.

The CSSHL continues to grow as one of Canada's premier development leagues, producing NCAA commitments, U SPORTS standouts and national team players on a regular basis.

Litchfield-Medd knows the league well, although she admits it has evolved since she last coached at that level.

"It's changed a little since I've been away, but I forgot just how well it's run," she said. "I'm excited to be back."

She's also looking forward to seeing familiar faces on the opposite bench, including coaches she worked alongside during her years at The RINK and the Winnipeg Jets Hockey Academy.

Still, her focus remains firmly on the players wearing Blazers jerseys.

Many of them are already familiar with her. Some attended spring hockey programs she coached years ago.

"Now they're all taller than me and have harder shots than I do," she laughed.

THE 2026-27 BALMORAL HALL BLAZERS ROSTER

Number	Player	Position	Grad Year
1.	Isabelle Labossiere	G	2027
2.	Reika Iwami	D	2027
3.	Rachel Lyver	F	2028
4.	Emilie Bonin	D	2028
5.	Lucy Ring	D	2027
7.	Kittson Dunning	F	2029
8.	Sadie McKay	D	2029
9.	Jakiah Curle	F	2027
10.	Bree Farmer	F	2029
12.	Lillian Wang	F	2030
13.	Mya Rosenbaum	F	2029
15.	Brannagh Rae	F	2029
16.	Adley Harrison	F	2030
17.	Lydia Hill	F	2028
18.	Madilynn Frey	F	2028
19.	Peyton Sheppard	D	2029
20.	Angelina Frey	F	2030
31.	Casey Morand	G	2029

Head Coach: Maggie Litchfield-Medd
Assistant Coach: Chelsea Dinnin

Watching young athletes develop from eager 13-year-olds into elite prep players is one of the most rewarding parts of coaching. It's also a reminder of why she continues to love the profession.

For Litchfield-Medd, coaching has never simply been about systems, drills or wins and losses. It's about helping players become better teammates, better competitors and better people.

That philosophy has carried her from Winnipeg to Sweden and back again. Now it brings her to Balmoral Hall.

The expectations will always be high inside one of Manitoba's flagship prep hockey programs and that's exactly how she likes it. After all, nobody appreciates opportunity more than someone who once had to fight for every shift.

From overlooked walk-on to university captain. From Team Canada to professional hockey in Sweden. From assistant coach to head coach.

Maggie Litchfield-Medd has spent her entire hockey life proving she belongs. Now she has the opportunity to help the next generation of Balmoral Hall Blazers do exactly the same.

PHOTOGRAPHERS' NOTEBOOK

BY DICKIE DUNN
Photos by Images on Ice/Hockey Hall of Fame, Justin Berl/Robert Morris University, St. Cloud State University, Clarkson University, Prince Albert Raiders, RINK Hockey Academy, Danny Truong, James Carey Lauder, Rusty Barton and the Everett Silvertips

MANITOBA'S HOCKEY COMMUNITY - GAMEONHOCKEY.COM

Look what everybody got up to on their summer vacations. Manitoba hockey stars were busy all offseason.



1 LINNEA MISNER AT ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY LAST SEASON

1. Last season at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, Winnipeg's Linnea Misner was named to the All-AHA Rookie Team and was conference rookie of the week twice. A defender, she had four goals and 19 points in all 36 games as a freshman. But Misner wanted something more and has transferred to the University of Vermont for the 2026-27 season. "I thought that Vermont was a good fit for me," she said. "I really liked the Hockey East Conference because it's so competitive. I've watched Hockey East games in the past and I like how even the conference is right across the board. You're going to get a good game every game. So that, and some extra scholarship money, was my intention with that decision."



2 FROM LEFT, LISKE, BEAR, GOULD, LEGALL AND CHASTKO OF THE SILVERTIPS

2. The Manitoba-heavy WHL Champion Everett Silvertips made it all the way to the Memorial Cup final before losing to Kitchener. During the off-season, all five Manitobans who played for the Silvertips this past year made plans for the 2026-27 season: Nolan Chastko of Brandon committed to the University of Manitoba; Raiden Legall of Winkler committed to Minnesota State (Mankato); Winnipeg's Carter Bear prepared to attend Detroit Red Wings training camp and will hopefully move to the AHL's Grand Rapids Griffins; Headingley's Rylan Gould committed to NCAA D-1 Bemidji State University; and Brek Liske of Beausejour was selected in the second round by the Philadelphia Flyers in the 2026 NHL Draft.

3. Former member of the Winnipeg Thrashers, Indigenous Team Manitoba and the Prince Albert Raiders, Hubert Clarke of Norway House has committed to Western Michigan University for the 2026-27 season. He spent part of the summer running a successful hockey school in Norway House.



3 HUBERT CLARKE WITH THE PA RAIDERS



4 DAIMON GARDNER WITH ST. CLOUD STATE LAST SEASON

4. Former Winnipeg Monarchs, RINK Hockey Academy and Indigenous Team Manitoba star Daimon Gardner has gone into the portal and switched NCAA D-1 teams for the third time. First, he moved from Clarkson to St. Cloud State and this year he'll suit up in the purple for Minnesota State Mankato.

5. This one's a rarity: last season, three players with Manitoba connections played for NCAA D-1 Northern Michigan University and all three signed with ECHL teams at the end of the 2025-26 season. Caiden Gault of Oakbank signed with the Greenville Swamp Rabbits, Pilot Mound Hockey Academy graduate Tynan Ewart signed with the Maine Mariners and Kyle Bettens of Winnipeg signed with the Indy Fuel.



5 FROM LEFT, GAULT, EWART AND BETTENS AT NMU.

6. Trevor Kidd came out of Dugald, Man., and played 11 seasons in the NHL with Calgary, Carolina, Florida and Toronto. He also played for Team Canada at three World Junior Championships, the 1992 Olympics and the 1992 World Championship. This spring, the 54-year-old proud citizen of the Red River Metis was inducted into Manitoba Indigenous Sports Hall of Fame.



6 WINNIPEG'S TREVOR KIDD WITH THE TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS



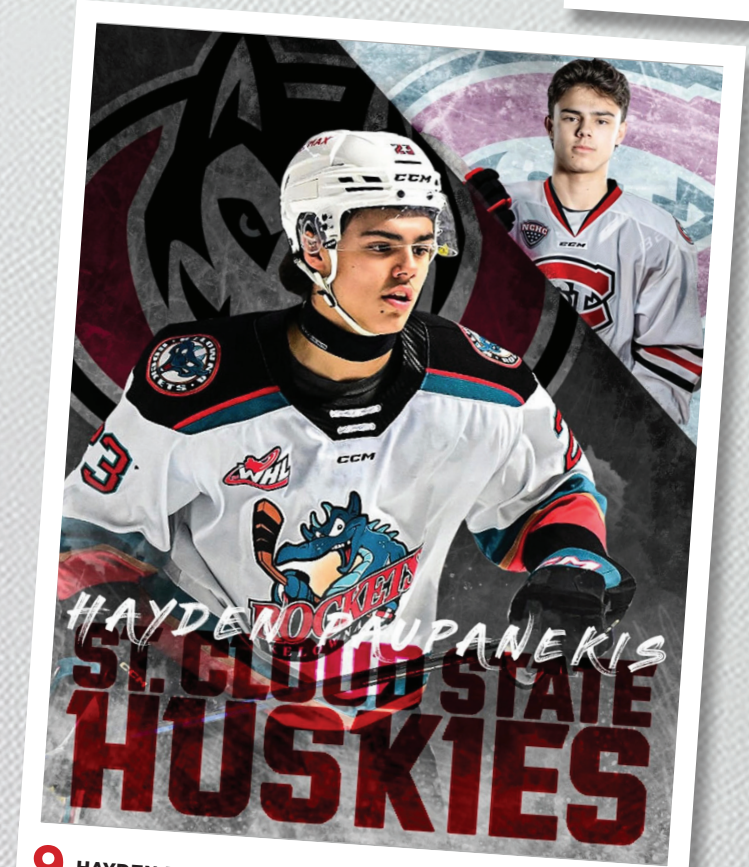
7 JONAS WOO

7. After four full seasons in the Western Hockey League, two with the Winnipeg Ice and two with the Medicine Hat Tigers, former AAA Winnipeg Warriors star Jonas Woo is off to college. Woo, 19, who was selected in the sixth round of the 2026 NHL Draft by the Columbus Blue Jackets, has committed the next chapter of his hockey career to Arizona State University. “I really like the coaching staff and I think I have a great connection with them,” Jonas said. “I think it's pretty much a new team this year. I'm really excited to go there.”

8. Just call her “The Award Winner.” In 2025-26, Winnipeg’s Sara Manness of Clarkson University was named to the All-ECAC first team and All-ECAC rookie team. She was also named ECAC Rookie of the Year, Forward of the Year and Player of the Year. She became the first rookie to win ECAC Player of the Year and was also named co-National Rookie of the Year.

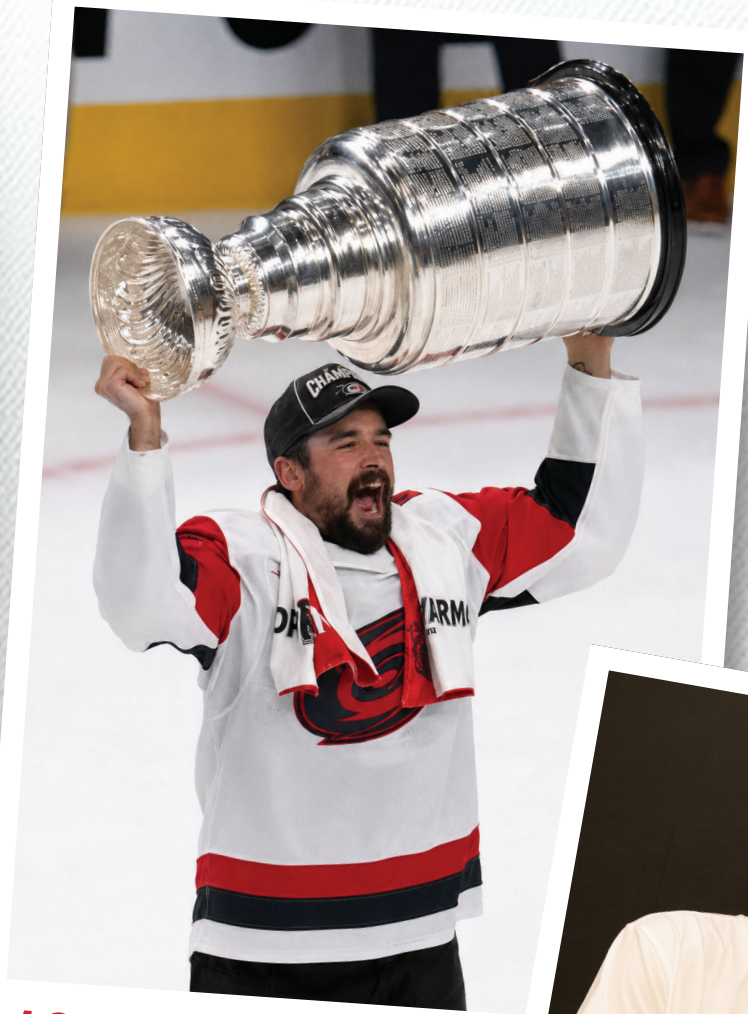


8 SUPERSTAR SARA MANNESS



9 HAYDEN PAUPANEKIS HEADING TO ST. CLOUD STATE

9. In 2022, when we first saw former Indigenous Team Manitoba star Hayden Paupanekis at RINK Hockey Academy, we saw a big, smooth-skating goal scorer with plenty of potential. This coming season, the 6-foot-5, 205-pound centre from Winnipeg will skate with St. Cloud State University after three full seasons with the Spokane Chiefs and Kelowna Rockets in the Western Hockey League. A third-round selection of the Montreal Canadiens in the 2025 NHL Draft, Paupanekis has not signed an NHL contract. He has a load of upside starting his NCAA D-1 career.



10 SETH JARVIS

10. After a regular NHL season in which he scored 32 goals and 66 points — his third straight 30-plus goal season — Winnipeg's Seth Jarvis lived the dream of every Canadian kid who grew up watching Hockey Night in Canada. On June 14, 2026, Jarvis joined his Carolina Hurricanes teammates and raised the Stanley Cup. His first Stanley Cup win came just four months after earning a silver medal at the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milano, Italy.



11 KATI TABIN

11. 2026 was the year of Kati Tabin. Not only was she the oldest first-time defender ever named to Canada's Olympic hockey team at 28, she won a silver medal at the Olympics and then won the PWHL championship with the Montreal Victoire. Tabin also had the chance to play in a PWHL regular season game at Winnipeg's Canada Life Centre. She brought the Walter Cup and her silver medal to Oakbank in late July.



A DAY WITH STANLEY

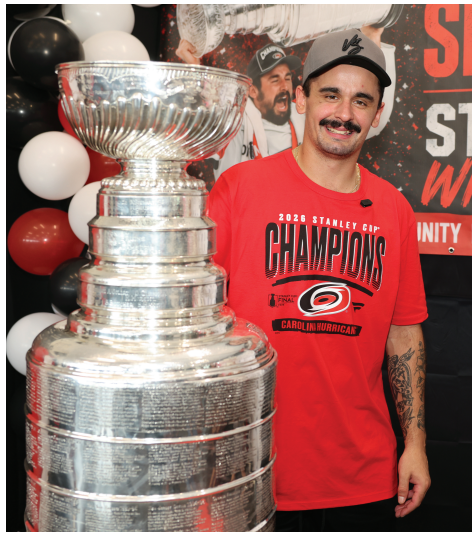
There are only so many ways to spend a day with the Stanley Cup. Somehow, Seth Jarvis managed to do it all.

The Winnipeg product brought hockey's most famous trophy home on August 10, taking it on a tour through the city and the places and people that helped turn a local kid into an NHL champion.

The 24-year-old began at the Children's Hospital, bringing the Cup bedside and spending time with young patients and their families.

From there, it was off to Tuxedo Community Centre - the very rink where Jarvis spent countless hours growing up. He arrived in style, riding in a vintage 1940 Chevrolet pickup truck with the Stanley Cup in his hands, before greeting hundreds of fans who packed the building, some arriving over six hours early to be first in line!







It was a fitting return. Growing up nearby, Jarvis was given virtually unlimited access to the rink, joking that the people at Tuxedo essentially "gave me the keys to this place."

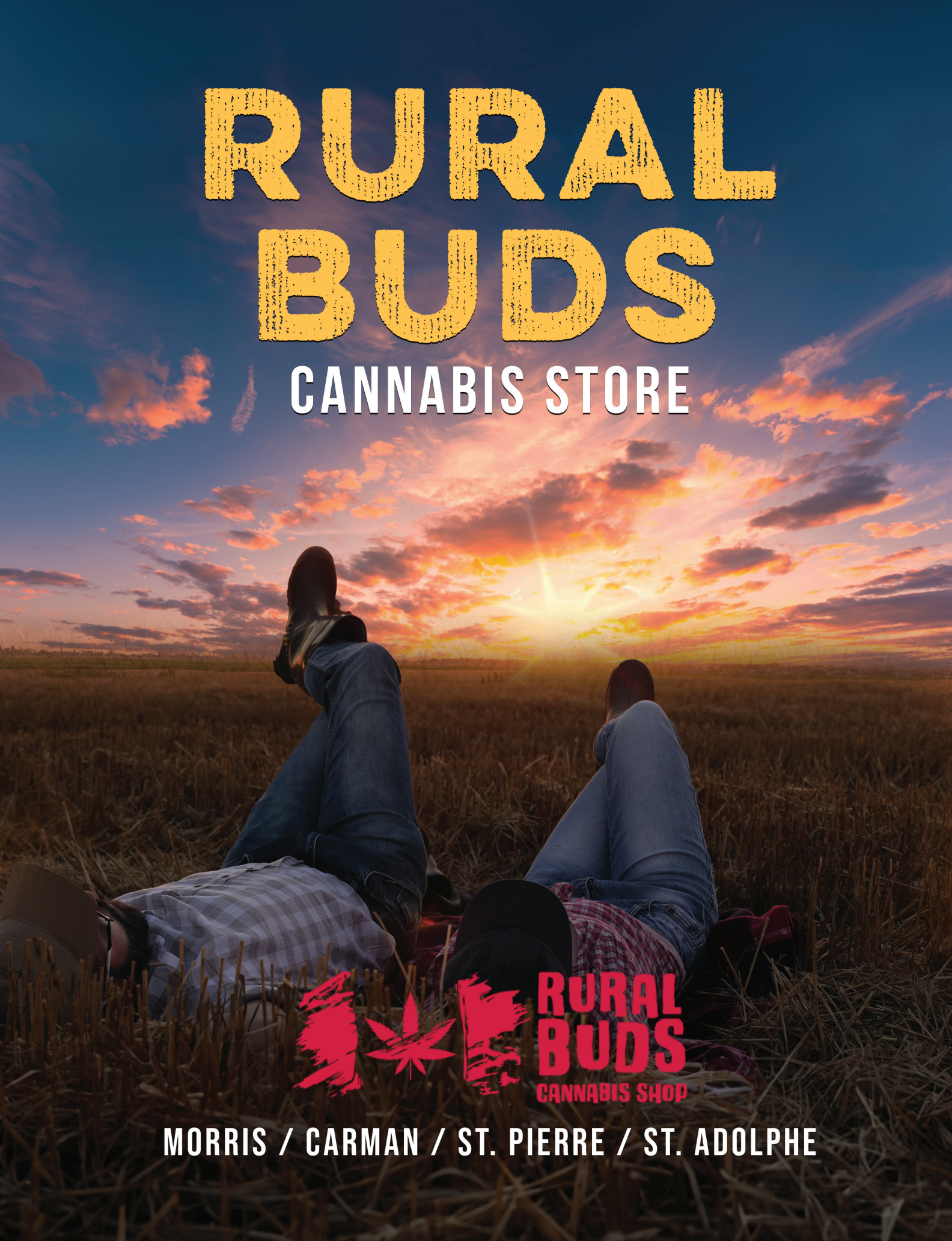
Next came the RINK Training Centre, another important piece of his hockey journey and a place where Jarvis has spent countless hours developing his game.

Finally, he celebrated privately at JOEY Kenaston alongside roughly 200 family members and friends, with ribs and poutine eaten from the Cup and plenty of photos along the way.

Twenty-four hours really isn't all that much time with hockey's greatest prize. But Winnipeg's golden boy sure made his count. From sick children to childhood rinks, training grounds to family and friends, the Stanley Cup's day in Winnipeg wasn't simply a celebration of where Seth Jarvis is now, but rather a tour through everything that helped him get there.

Way to go, Seth.

Photos by James Carey Lauder and Rusty Barton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