

Northern rivalry provides thrilling finish

By **ECHO ROSS**
Star Sports Editor

It was a game Andy Williams had circled on his calendar months in advance.

There were no medals at stake, no trophies or first-place ribbons on the line. Instead, it was about something more important for Williams – bragging rights.

“There was way more at stake in this game than in any other tournament,” smiled the lanky, 16-year-old goaltender from Yellowknife.

“We came here just for this game.”

It was a game for 11th place versus 12th place in men’s hockey at the Canada Winter Games. It was the Yukon vs. long-time rival the N.W.T.

Both teams had fallen short in their first four games of the tournament, making them even more desperate for a victory as they filed onto the ice at Takhini Arena Friday afternoon.

Team Yukon came out firing on all cylinders in the first period, recording 21 shots to Team N.W.T.’s three. But they had nothing to show for it, thanks to some dandy saves by Williams, and it was tied 0-0 as they headed into the first intermission.

In the second period, it was more of the same, as Williams stopped 23 shots while Yukon netminder Mitch Heynen was forced to turn aside just five.

Lowell Johnston finally got the Yukon on the board at 19:54 of the third period, assisted by Kane Dawe, but the N.W.T. drew even on a power play marker by defenceman Jeff Bembridge just over seven minutes later.

Brett Hodges provided the go-ahead goal for the N.W.T. at 9:27 of the third, and it looked as though Williams could end up stealing one for his team, but Johnston notched his second of the game with the Yukon on its 10th power play of the afternoon, and regulation ended with the squads locked in a 2-2 tie.

The final shots on goal in regulation were 61-12 in favour of Team Yukon.

Ten minutes of overtime settled nothing, despite the fact both teams were given power plays, so it was off to the shootout, with each side providing five shooters.

The Yukon won the coin toss, and it was Ted Stephens who stepped to the line first, pulling off a move reminiscent of NHL superstar Pavel Datsyuk, as he tucked the puck past Williams to give his team a 1-0 early lead.

“I’ve been practicing it all year on my backyard rink,” grinned Stephens, when asked about his crowd-thrilling move. “I knew before I even shot I was going to do it.”

Asked if either he or assistant coach Joe Martin had taught Stephens



TED STEPHENS

the move, Team Yukon head coach Mike Young laughed.

“No, neither one of us. Obviously both of us would kill to have hands like that. It was a beautiful goal.”

After Heynen turned aside four N.W.T. shooters, and Kevin Pike, Jeff Gartshore and Johnston all missed for Team Yukon, it was up to Robbie Stuckey to win it all for the home team. As hundreds of fans waited with baited breath, that’s exactly what Stuckey did.

“I was just thinking, put the puck in the net,” explained Stuckey. “I knew I couldn’t match Ted’s fancy move there, so I figured I’d try a deke

and see what happens.”

It was a big victory for Team Yukon, a positive end to what had been a tournament marked with some off-ice drama, including a suspension to former starting goaltender Ian Perrier for an off-ice incident.

They were also minus four other key players for Friday’s final contest. Forwards Drew Pettitt, Owen MacKinnon and Glen Skookum were out with injuries while forward Evan Campbell had to fly out for a playoff game with his AAA midget team, the Fort St. John Flyers.

Head coach Mike Young said he was proud of the way his team handled the obstacles.

“We were down to three forward lines and five d-men. We had to have short, hard shifts and keep rolling all the lines. The good thing is, some of the guys who weren’t getting much ice time before ... it was great to get them out there more.”

Young gave credit to N.W.T. goalie Williams for what he called an “unreal” performance, in a game which shouldn’t have been as close as it was.

“He made just point-blank saves. He frustrated our guys a little bit. I told the guys, ‘Don’t worry about the last shift, get ready for the next shift.’”

Williams said he knew going into the Games that the goaltenders would have to play a big part for Team

N.W.T. Splitting duties with Michael Taylor, the tenders faced at least 60 shots every game – Taylor saw more than 100 shots against Alberta.

“I’ve just been trying to see through the screens and cover up anything I can, put it all in the corners,” Williams, who plays at Notre Dame hockey school in Saskatchewan, said of his role.

While beating their rivals on Friday to wrap up the Canada Games meant a lot to every member of Team Yukon, it was especially important for goaltender Heynen, who was reduced to the backup role during the Games and wasn’t even sure he would get a chance to play until Perrier was suspended.

Young said all of his players worked hard and really pulled through for their goalie in the end.

“We had to get this win for Mitch,” agreed Johnston.

Heynen, who seemed to have become a crowd favourite judging by the cheers during Friday’s game, was all smiles as he emerged from the dressing room following the win, insisting he didn’t mind the shootout, although he did admit it was tough to stay focused when he wasn’t seeing much action at all during the game.

“It was kind of hard, but I just tried to keep my legs moving,” he said.

“This is pretty important for me, and the fact it ended in a shootout ... I’ll remember it for a long time.”

Alberta takes bronze with 4-3 win over B.C.

By **JAMES BISSON**
Canadian Press

WHITEHORSE (CP) - The Alberta men’s hockey team kept its Canada Games podium streak alive Friday afternoon – with plenty of help from B.C.

Jordan Eberle scored twice and added an assist and Alberta rode three power-play goals to a 4-3 win over B.C. in the bronze medal match.

The victory erased some of the sting left over from Thursday’s stunning 5-1 semifinal loss to Manitoba, knocking Alberta out of the title game for the first time since 1987.

Ontario and Manitoba faced off for the championship later Friday night (see coverage, pg. 25).

Alberta fell short in its quest for a third straight gold medal, but has still reached the podium in five straight Canada Games competitions.

“Obviously coming into the tournament we wanted to win the gold medal,” said Eberle, who plays for the WHL’s Regina Pats. “It’s frustrating, but we still won the bronze.”

“It feels better to win the bronze than it would to lose the gold.”

Steele Boomer of the AJHL’s Fort Saskatchewan Traders added a goal and two assists for Alberta, while Jordan Rowley of the WHL’s Kamloops Blazers also scored.

Jacob DeSerres of the WHL’s Seattle Thunderbirds stopped 22 shots, including several in the final two minutes as B.C. pressed for the tying goal.

Tyler Shattock of the Blazers, Evan Bloodoff of the Kelowna Rockets and Kyle St. Denis of the BCHL’s Vernon Vipers replied for B.C., which placed fourth for the second straight Games.

“It was pretty emotional in that dressing room,” said B.C. captain Derek Lee.

“Fourth is nothing to hang your head down low for.

“We would have loved to win this

game and come in third, but fourth place isn’t bad.”

Special teams made the difference,



UP AND OVER - Team Alberta’s Craig Orfino gets a piggyback ride from an unidentified B.C. player during the men’s hockey bronze medal matchup at the Canada Winter Games Friday.

with B.C. suffering the consequences of an undisciplined second period. Tied 2-2, Alberta capitalized on a two-man advantage at 14:44 when B.C. goalie Martin Jones couldn’t corral a rebound. The puck fell into the crease and right on to the stick of Eberle, who put it into the open net.

Alberta extended its lead on the power-play at 17:22, when Boomer slid a backhand shot past Jones on a goal-mouth scramble.

B.C. made it close with 3:11 left in regulation, when St. Denis fired a quick shot underneath a fallen DeSerres.

Lack of discipline was B.C.’s downfall, even beyond the three power-play goals it surrendered. Each of B.C.’s final three man-advantage opportunities were negated by penalties, killing any chance of a comeback.

B.C. fans and players jeered several of the calls, but Lee said his team wasn’t blaming shoddy officiating for the loss.

“We’re not going to make any excuses,” said Lee, who plays for the BCHL’s Salmon Arm Silverbacks. “We took penalties, and they were penalties.”

“People can question the calls, but that’s not something we’re going to use as an excuse.”

The game was a physical affair, with both teams exchanging jarring hits from start to finish. The rugged pace seemed to favour Alberta more, with the defending champions winning the majority of battles along the boards.

“We need to be physical and bang and get after people,” said Alberta head coach Mark Howell. “That’s who we are, and the kids enjoy doing that.”

“I think that had a part in a couple of the goals we scored.”

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