

Ice Time!

No bad calls, no hockey cards, no early morning practices. Can you imagine winter without hockey? No way! It's our game, and there's a lot to love.

by Glen Herbert

Games that resemble hockey have been around for a long time. A *really* long time. The Ancient Greeks played a game like hockey more than 2,600 years ago. Of course, the Greeks didn't have ice.

But the ice part is old, too. In the 1700s, people in Ireland were playing hurly — a game with two teams, curved sticks, and a ball — on frozen rivers. Meanwhile, people in other parts of Europe played similar ball-and-stick games, including bandy and shinty.

Coming to Canada

When European settlers came to Canada, they brought these games with them. They also discovered that some First Nations groups had similar games. The Mi'kmaq played *oochamkunutk*. The Iroquois had *baggataway*.

Soon, early settlers and Native peoples shared the games they knew, and new versions were created. These games had names like shinny, hurly, and hockey. Players used curved sticks and a ball. Or if they didn't have a ball, they used pieces of wood, lumps of coal, or even frozen animal poop.

The "First" Hockey Game

By the mid 1800s, lots of people in eastern Canada played those early versions of hockey. One of them was James Creighton. He loved playing so much that when he moved from Halifax to Montreal, he taught some friends his version of the game. On March 3, 1875, they took to the ice of Montreal's Victoria Skating Rink to show it off.

There were about 40 people watching that night. What they saw was the first game of organized hockey as we know it today — you know, on an indoor rink, with skates, goal posts, and some rules for people to argue about.

Hockey Makes the Big Time

People *loved* it! Within ten years, there were hockey teams starting up everywhere. And as the railroad moved west, hockey did, too.

Today, hockey is played all over the world, from Medicine Hat to Mongolia. The National Hockey League (NHL) now has 30 teams with players from 18 different countries. Add in the amateur leagues, the Olympic teams, the pickup games, and the countless fans, and hockey is an international phenomenon. Still, thanks to James Creighton and his friends, it will always be Canada's game. And we can't imagine winter without it!

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How do you spell "Stanley Cup"?

It's been on Letterman, run in a marathon, and vacationed in the Bahamas. It's also full of spelling mistakes. The Stanley Cup is has all the players names on it, but you'd be amazed at how many are spelled wrong. Jacques Plante's name was misspelled five times! He's even on there as

"Jocko" Plante. In 1972 it says that the "Bqstqn Bruins" were the winners. Sheesh! There is a copy of the Stanley cup that stays at the Hockey Hall of Fame, and it has everything spelled right. That's about the only way you can tell the two of them apart.
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Hockey Highlights

1886 The first vulcanized puck! It's rubber, flat ... and square.

1892 Lord Stanley creates the Dominion Hockey Challenge Cup. Everyone else calls it the Stanley Cup.

1910 Periods are invented. Three of them, 20 minutes each.

1911 Teams are limited to six players on the ice at a time.

1917 The NHL is formed. It begins with five teams.

1959 Jacques Plante wears a goalie mask. Soon, lots of other goalies do, too.

1967 Bent stick blades are allowed for the first time.

1994 It's official! Hockey becomes Canada's national winter sport.

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