



Around the... *Sport* CIRCUIT

With CHUCK KRUSE

Men in zebra-striped sweaters benefit from new league in town

Everybody knows what the World Hockey Association has done for players. But, have you ever wondered what it has done for officials?

Ten-to-one says you hadn't given it a thought. Had you? I mean, during its formation all attention was focused on who was spiriting whom from the National Hockey League.

Even I hadn't really thought about the officials until I got to talking to Sudbury Wolves rookie centre Richie Hansen one day after practice.

Seems his dad, Max, wears the zebra-striped shirt during the winter months. In past years, as a linesman, his ice patrol was the U. S. eastern seaboard.

During those years he work-

ed the Eastern Hockey League—at times in its existence known affectionately as the Eastern Hackers' League. His stint there came after he learned the trade working junior and college games in the New York City area.

His whistle - tooting days started in arenas in the vicinity of his New York City home, at industrial league games about 15 years ago... after he "didn't feel like playing anymore," Max said the other day when in Sudbury to visit Richie.

At the time, he was a ripe 22-years of age. If you had "the stuff" back then the ultimate to try for was the NHL, the granddaddy of North American leagues. Just as it was for players.

"The greatest break in my life"

However, when Max got up to the LHL and a step closer to the NHL, he found that unlike a player, the continent's top league was not an equal opportunity employer for officials.

Max said the word he got from NHL Referee - In - Chief Scotty Morisson was that when it came to selecting new officials, the league picked "young" whistle-tooters.

This, despite the fact Max worked at his officiating . . . even foregoing part of his summers to attend the National School of Refereeing at Haliburton. Tutelage there came from such established referees as Vern Buffey, Bruce Hood and Pat Shetler.

For Max, then in his thirties, Morisson's pronouncement was like water tossed on a fire.

Then along came the WHA and "the greatest break I got in my life," as Max tells it.



MAX HANSEN

Chance to do lines in WHA far cry from industrial league

As Gary Davidson (a 37-year-old Californian lawyer), Dennis Murphy (now president of the L.A. Sharks) and other maverick hockey people in two countries were putting the WHA together, Buffey was lining-up his officials.

You see, Buffey had been lured from the NHL to be the fledgling league's first Referee-In-Chief. One official he approached was Max Hansen. Buffey sought him as a linesman. Max had no hesitation.

An explanation is needed here. The WHA has eight referees—including NOHA product Ray Thomas of Capreol—and about a dozen linesmen under contract. The latter position is supplemented by the services of regional linesmen.

Regional linesmen work areas centered on their homes

and are paid by the game. Max is a regional linesman. He works home games of New York Raiders, Philadelphia Blazers, Ottawa Nationals and Quebec Les Nordiques.

In WHA games, the officials line up has an under-contract referee and linesman and a regional linesman.

The league plans to stick with the regional linesman concept this season as it evaluates the men. "I hope what I show is what they want," Max said.

The idea of regional linesmen in the first year of operation is excellent. It gives a new league a good chance to assess its officiating talent. An official couldn't ask for a fairer shake. Also, the WHA has ensured the fan will see "a different face" blowing whistle at each game.

Gives credit where it's deserved

In talking with Max Hansen one finds that a lot of credit should go to Buffey for the innovations the WHA has put in its game to speed up play.

"The man (Buffey) has an awful lot of class and, being an official, he knows what he is doing . . . he has taken some of the staleness out of hockey which the NHL put in," Hansen said.

Apparently, Buffey pushed through the rules that:

—eliminate the centre red line for offsides on passes as long as the puck isn't iced.

—see the third man in a fight given a 10 minute misconduct and not the gate, as in the NHL.

Hansen said the WHA's third-man in rule is better for game as it keeps players playing, ". . . the people the fan paid to see."

Also, the rules allow for

more exciting hockey . . . something else the fan also likes to see.



VERN BUFFEY