

Controversies Related to the 1936 Canadian Olympic Hockey Team

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For the first time, at the 1936 Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, Canada failed to win a gold medal in hockey. The British Olympic hockey team, comprised mainly of Canadian trained hockey players defeated the Canadian squad by a narrow margin to capture the gold medal.

In this paper, the author investigated the controversies and obstacles encountered by the 1936 Canadian Olympic hockey team in an attempt to account for the team's second place finish. problems began with the selection of the team and continued with controversies centred around the

use of Canadian hockey players on the British team and eventually the elimination system used in the Olympic tournament.

The Canadian team which was comprised of seven players from the Port Arthur Bear Cats and seven players from Central Canada had little opportunity to play or practice together before sailing to Europe and consequently never did function as a cohesive unit. Ironically, in the game which Canada lost to Britain seven of the nine players in the British line-up were Canadians and two of these players had been suspended by the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (C.A.H.A.) for playing in England without C.A.H.A. approval.

The final issue which contributed to Canada's first loss in Olympic hockey centred around the elimination system used. It was not until after Canada's loss to Britain that Canadian officials became aware of the fact that this loss would be carried into the final round robin. They claimed that the tournament scoring system was changed during the Olympics while Mr. Loicq, the President of the International Ice Hockey League, maintained that the system was not changed and that the Canadian officials had misunderstood earlier explanations.

To a great extent the C.A.H.A. and its officials can be blamed for the problems encountered. The selection of the team was handled poorly and considering that players-were being added to the team up to four days before the Canadian contingent departed for Europe it is not surprising that the team did not gel together. C.A.H.A. officials undermined the coach's authority by seeking input into the selection of team lure-ups and worse yet, they failed to understand the Olympic tournament scoring system. Had the Canadian team been aware of the importance of their game against Britain they might have carried on Canada's gold medal tradition in hockey for yet another Olympics.