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Broken Time and Broken Hearts: the Maritimes and the Selection of Canada's 1936 Hockey Team

The Halifax Wolverines were the Allan Cup winners of 1935, which automatically qualified them to represent Canada at the 1936 Winter Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. This right was stripped from them, however, when central Canadian hockey officials complained that the Maritimes' hockey teams had been violating the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association's (CAHA) strict residency requirements. The Wolverines first saw their league forced to disband and then saw the same of their team. The Olympic bid instead went to the runner-up Port Arthur Bearcats of Ontario. Four remaining players from the Wolverines were allowed to join the Bearcats for the Olympic team, but were summarily dismissed from the team two weeks prior to departure on the grounds that they had asked for pay for time lost from work.

Maritimers were furious. They saw in these events the exercise of central Canadian bias against them reminiscent of their earlier struggles for national recognition in the political agitation known as the Maritime Rights Movement. Maritimers joined western Canadians in asking why the CAHA applied an outdated definition of amateur status that

had not been enforced for years. Central Canadians insisted that such a definition was necessary to avoid 'creeping' professionalism.

This paper examines the impact upon the Maritimes of the decision to leave all members of the Halifax Wolverines off the Olympic hockey team. It does not argue that there was a central Canadian bias or conspiracy to keep these players off the team, but looks at the way in which this incident was viewed in the Maritimes, as a source of provincial grievance akin to the Maritime Rights Movement. This is part of a larger cultural history that considers the role of sport (particularly ice hockey) in the construction of local, regional, and national identities in the Maritimes. It discusses the regional disparities within Canada over the issue of amateurism and the frustration often felt by provincial Canadians over the dominance of sport by central Canadians.