

Get Out, and Stay Out! We Did, and We Will!

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Hasty decisions are not always the most intelligent ones, as was the case with Team Chicago, a group of local superintendents and assistants who thought it would be fun to participate in the 4th Annual Golf Course Hockey Challenge in Niagara, New York. After pondering the idea for a good minute or two, Team Chicago was formed and committed to make the trip to the Northeast for the two-day tournament founded by some real hockey players (some of whom are actually in the golf course business). The team was comprised of Captain Dave Schlagger, Dave Blomquist, Joel Purpur, Kevin DeRoo, John Otis, Dave Fisher, Matt Springer, Erwin McKone,

some guy named Dave from New York, Mike Cote (our goalie who, being from Toronto, was expected to be good), and myself. For those of you who are hockey-illiterate, that means we had two lines of generally out-of-shape, fat, old men to be sent to the lions. Preparations were made, the Winnebago was packed, and we were on our way to show those Canucks and Noreasters what real hockey, Chicago-style, was all about.

The tournament consisted of eight teams: Two-time defending champion Kitchener, Toronto (whose third-string goalie was our only goalie), North Toronto, London, and Niagara from Ontario, along with Western New York, Michigan, and, yes, Team Chicago. Four games were scheduled in two

days for each team, followed by the championship playoff, which was fun to watch from the bleachers of the University of Niagara Ice Rink.

We Chicagoans knew we were in trouble from the get-go when, while waiting for Kitchener to arrive during a blizzard, we decided to practice, thus using up any wind and energy we might have had. Just watching Kitchener take the ice was disheartening, as a seemingly endless number of players skated out including two goalies AND two tie-clad coaches (which turned out to be the case with all seven other teams). What will go down in the books as our second greatest achievement (the first to be related later) was that we held the game scoreless for the entire first period (never mind that the first period served as Kitchener's warmup).

In the middle of the second period, we suffered a major setback

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when Kevin DeRoo—our hero—tried to skate between two behemoths on skates, winding up on his backside with a separated shoulder. Doc McKone popped it back, and Kevin was forced to sit out the remainder of the game, which was lost by . . . well . . . a lot. Amazingly, Kevin returned for the three remaining games, playing through pain—a true inspiration to all (you reading this, Alonzo?).

Our strategy of “Pass not to specific players but to general areas” worked well against New York in game two, which was lost only by two goals—really one, but the ref sucked.

To get our minds off hockey, we took in the Buffalo-Vancouver game that night, which was more a rumble scene from West Side Story than a hockey game. Had they not served beer at that game, Friday’s two games might have turned out differently. In the morning, we played the Niagara team which,

rumor had it, had a guy who once played for the Philadelphia Flyers. Once apprised, of this, John Otis, team diplomat, extended the olive branch by giving the big lug a kiss on the cheek while mucking it up in front of our crease. I think the guy liked it, as engagement announcements were sent out after the game.

Team Chicago utilized its patented “Slow Down Offense” in textbook fashion, losing by only single digits. In the last game, we played the also victoryless London squad which was beatable, but, alas, it wasn’t to be. It seemed everybody named Dave on Team Chicago with the exception of one (you figure it out) took the afternoon off. Coincidentally, those two Daves had ventured over the border for some late-night entertainment after the Sabres game—which may have contributed to their absences, be they mental or physical. The aforementioned greatest achievement for Team Chicago occurred in this game when two of London’s youngsters lost their lunch compared to just one for us (no names

necessary). The championship game was won handily by Michigan over Kitchener, which used our chants of “USA! USA!” to motivate their team to victory.

Looking back upon our experience in the tournament, I can only say that we showed up. Hockey aside, we did have an enjoyable time. We saw that waterfall thing they have out there, along with the lesser-known but equally-spectacular Christy Canyon; we sweated a lot; we put some loonies in some bahoogies; and we made a friend or two (although NOT with the refs). Thanks to the Club Car folks and several local suppliers from the Northeast for sponsoring the tournament and to Dave Schlagetter for putting our “team” together. Oh, and an added bonus, thank you again to Club Car for giving out the free hats—funny, only team Chicago’s hats had the “Get Out, and Stay Out” logo on them. Who’d a thunk Canadians could play hockey? ■



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