

Sports

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Canucks grow close with end near

By IAIN MacINTYRE
SouthamStar Network

LOS ANGELES — It is the tragedy and irony of team sports that players who care are never closer than the moment they face their collective demise.

With the end in sight, there is no tomorrow, no next game. For the Vancouver Canucks, there is only tonight.

Trailing the Los Angeles Kings 3-2 in the best-of-seven Smythe Division final, the Canucks face elimination here in game six, and they will be playing as much for what they wish not to lose as what they hope to gain.

"I don't think I've ever played on a team where the same team comes back the following season," Canuck defenceman

Robert Dirk said. "There's always guys moved out and brought in. It's true this is a once in a lifetime thing for this bunch of guys."

"We realize that. We're going to draw from it and we're going to respond. I expect us to come back for Game 7."

"There's a lot of emotion," veteran Dave Babych said. "We don't want it to end like this. We want to end the season with a win, and that means going to the final. I'm sure we're going to be thinking about it."

The unconventional series reached a new degree of unpredictability on Tuesday, when Gary Shuchuk, who didn't dress for any of the first four games, came

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off the bench to score in the second overtime as the Kings won 4-3.

The Canucks must win tonight to force a deciding game Saturday at the Pacific Coliseum.

"You have to recover, that's all there is to it," Vancouver coach Pat Quinn said. "A lot of things that you don't like happen to you in this business."

"That's something that players have to deal with. And they have to deal with it in the right way, a positive way. You can't dwell on the negative side, because if fear takes over it will defeat you. We have to use that fear as a positive thing."

"You have to put it behind you," forward Geoff Courtnall said. "(Tuesday's game) was a tough one to lose. We know it's do or die now. It's pretty easy to get motivated."

The Canucks have often seemed their own enemy. They lack a killer instinct in games and that forces them to take the longer route through playoff series.

In the opening round last season, the Canucks fell behind 3-1 to the Winnipeg Jets before winning the final three games to avoid a major upset. In the second round, they blew the opening game at home against the Edmonton Oilers and never recovered, losing the series 4-2.

This spring, they had a chance to finish off the Jets early but lost game five at

home, forcing another trip to Winnipeg, where the Canucks went to overtime before clinching the series.

Against Los Angeles, Vancouver again lost home-ice advantage, dropping game two, but recaptured it with a huge victory two games later in California. But on Tuesday the Canucks again let the Kings escape pressure.

"It seems like we've always had to do things the hard way," Dirk said. "And the harder it is, the better this team plays. I don't think this team's going to buckle."

Vancouver Sun

Game 6 begins at 7:30 this evening on CKPG (channel 2, cable 3) and Radio C101.



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

Debbie Stewart (centre) and teammate Shannon McCaffray chase the ball with Mazda players Arlene Schultz (left) and Barb Denman.

Women's soccer draws new blood

by GORDON HOEKSTRA
Citizen Staff

Debbie Stewart wanted to do something a little different.

She had always stayed in shape by jogging and biking but missed the social atmosphere of a team sport.

She's now a member of the newest team in the Prince George Women's Soccer League — Earl's.

Stewart's sister and sister-in-law are on the team, as well as her husband Brad, who is the coach.

"It's kind of a family affair," said Stewart. "I'm just not into that competitive individual thing — I like team sports."

And even though soccer is a good workout, you don't think about it, she said.

"It's not like riding your stationary bike."

The eight-team women's league got its start in 1987 with four teams. It grew slowly at first, then added two youth teams and a fifth adult team last year.

This year a sixth adult team was added. League president Patti Smith, who was there

at the beginning, said she's not sure why the game has become so popular for women.

"People like to get exercise," she said. "And now there is so much interest the league has a waiting list," said Smith.

The newest team is a mixture of players with a lot of experience and some, like Stewart, with very little experience at all.

"We've got one of the nicest teams — lots of beginners and a few good girls from the youth team," said Stewart, who despite her lack of experience scored one of Earl's two goals in a 4-2 loss to University Mazda Wednesday evening.

Kirsty Ames, 19, scored the other goal for Earl's Wednesday evening.

Ames is on the other side of the soccer-experience spectrum from Stewart. She's been playing the game for 13 years.

"I've been playing it so long; I just have fun playing the game," she said. "It's something I'm good at."

Ames played for a youth team last year, but like a lot of other youth soccer players had to move onto an adult team when she turned 19 this season.

"I think lots of people my age moved up (this year)," she said.

The youth players are often more skilled than the adult players, she said, but added the competition is better in the women's league.

The varying degrees of skill and competitiveness on the field don't seem to be a problem, said Earl's team representative Lydia Gerovac.

"It really works out pretty good," she said.

Some players are very competitive and some are just playing for fun, but it balances out, she said.

There is always someone on the field who knows the game, so people don't have to turn to the sidelines, she said.

"There's someone to give you an extra hand," said Gerovac, who has been playing soccer for eight years and just moved to Prince George from Victoria via Vernon.

"In Vernon, when I played there was always more and more girls showing up. It's getting so you can't play one night a week."

Still, Gerovac said, "The more players that come out, the better."

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GAME 7 FRIDAY

Islanders' heart no big surprise to Penguins

by KEN RAPPOPORT
Associated Press

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — The New York Islanders have become the big story in the NHL playoffs this season. It isn't news to the Pittsburgh Penguins, however.

"I never thought to take them lightly," Pittsburgh's Kevin Stevens said. "They're tough. I feared the Islanders all throughout the year."

He had good reason. The Islanders almost played the Penguins to a standstill during the regular season, winning three of seven games, and now would appear to have them on the run in the Patrick Division final.

The Islanders outplayed the Penguins at their own run-and-gun style in a 7-5 victory Wednesday night to send the best-of-seven series back to Pittsburgh for a deciding seventh game Friday night.

Who would have thought of such a scenario?

The Islanders were expected to offer little resistance to the defending Stanley Cup champions without leading scorer Pierre Turgeon, who was injured in the first-round victory over Washington.

But other players have come to the forefront, particularly Ray Ferraro and Steve Thomas. Ferraro scored his playoff-leading 12th goal Wednesday night, and Thomas had two goals and two assists.

"We're just a bunch of guys with a lot of heart and courage and I know we can beat this team," Thomas said. "We've been patient and gotten our chances and we've capitalized on those chances."

"The checking line has done a tremendous job throughout the series. It's going to be a gut-wrenching Game 7."

On Wednesday night, the Islanders did some things that didn't show up on the stat sheet — like the work pesky Darius Kasparaitis did on superstar Mario Lemieux, the league's leading scorer.

Lemieux did score one goal, but was hardly the dominating figure that controlled so many of the Penguins' games this season. At one point, Kasparaitis upset the

Pittsburgh star when he roughed him up in the second period.

"I told Kasparaitis we were together for a reason," said Rich Pilon, Kasparaitis's defensive linemate. "With Lemieux and Stevens, if you bang them enough, you can throw them off their game."

The Islanders, who finished in third place, 32 points behind the Penguins during the regular season, also won a shootout over Pittsburgh 6-5 Saturday night in Game 4.

Wednesday night's game was more of the same, except this one started early.

Brad Dalgarno and Derek King scored first-period goals for New York and Martin Straka had his first of two for Pittsburgh as the Islanders took a 2-1 lead. When Dalgarno scored 25 seconds into the game on the rebound of a shot by Kasparaitis, it marked the first time in the series New York scored first.

Lemieux tied the game at 1:16 of the second period on a wrist shot from the left circle before Ferraro came back with a goal in the midst of a five-minute power play handed the Islanders as the result of a high-sticking penalty to Ron Francis.

Twenty-four seconds later, the Islanders got another two-minute power play. While the Islanders didn't score, the Penguins lost momentum trying to kill all that penalty time.

Thomas gave the Islanders a 4-2 lead with another power-play goal, scoring on a wraparound at 11:20.

The Penguins came back to tie before the period ended on goals by Straka and Stevens. But the Islanders went ahead for good 5-4 at 5:42 of the third when Mullen scored from in front on pass from Thomas. Stevens scored for Pittsburgh before Uwe Krupp wrapped it up with an empty-netter with 18 seconds left.

Game 7 begins at 4:30 p.m. Friday on CKPG (channel 2, cable 3) and CBC French (channel 4, cable 5).

Barracudas replacing head coach

by DON SCHAFFER
Sports Editor

The Prince George Barracudas are pleased with their hiring of new head coach Jerzy Partyka, a Polish native with several years of international experience.

Ousted head coach Dave Parker says this is an exciting time for him and his family — he gets to look for another job after being informed Tuesday night his contract won't be renewed after its five-year term ends in August.

But the swimmers Parker's worked with for the past five years aren't trying to put a happy face on their coach's release.

"We were kinda shocked," Ryan Heffner said Wednesday. "We all thought he'd be staying here for a couple more years."



PARKER

"He's a good coach. We just couldn't believe it."

Barracuda president Harold Dawes said Wednesday the club's executive told Parker his contract hadn't been renewed and have hired Partyka, who is leaving the St. Thomas, Ont., Jumbo Jets club after three years as head coach.

"The club made an executive decision to hold a competition (for head coach) after the end of Dave's current contract," Dawes said. "That was the route we decided to take."

"Dave has certainly been an important person in the development of the club, but we're looking at an opportunity to take the club to another level. This new man has a lot of experience — he's had experience with Russian and East German techniques and he's coached in Poland and West Germany."

Partyka couldn't be reached in St. Thomas this morning, but Dawes said the new coach decided to make the move because his present club, a 70-member organization operating out

of a small pool, didn't offer him the potential the Barracudas did.

Parker said he wasn't surprised at the announcement.

"I think the writing was on the wall in December when they said there was going to be a competition," said Parker, an Alberta native who left the Canadian Dolphins program to become Barracuda coach in 1988. "They've basically said the program isn't good enough, but there has never been a formal staff evaluation of the people they have here."

"I don't know what happened, but if you look around you see coaches don't get fired because of what they don't know. . . . They get fired because someone doesn't like them."

Dawes denied rumors of pressure from parents to replace Parker.

"I think in any organization you have people who have a different opinion on the calibre of coaching," he said. "But we selected a com-

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