HOCKEY

Legends draw a crowd

EDMONTON (CP) — What do you get when you put together the top players from two of the best hockey teams to ever play the game?

Throw them in a hockey rink with hockey fans in Edmonton, hand them microphones and you get true hockey bliss.

"This is incredible," remarked rock star Tom Cochrane, who dedicated his hockey song Big League to the former Montreal Canadiens and Edmonton Oilers greats gathered in Edmonton Friday.

"These guys are all big heroes to me and a big inspiration to all of us. Hockey is more than a sport for all of us in Canada."

"We love you, Gretzky," cried a voice at the back of the newly named Rexall Place.

"We love you, Guy," another cried.

"We love you, too, Mark," shouted a third, prompting New York Rangers star Mark Messier to rise in acknowledgement.

Paulina Gretzky, daughter of Wayne Gretzky, followed up on Cochrane's heels with I Will Remember You as the crowd roared in approval.

"Who would have thought we would see anoth-er Gretzky with 60 records," quipped host Ron MacLean.

MacLean, CBC's Hockey Night in Canada host, opened the show and introduced the players to the stage as fireworks sparkled and trumpets bellowed.

The players filed up onto the stage in their original jerseys and took their seats in two separate dressing rooms constructed on stage.

A video show first highlighted the Habs dynasty and then the Oilers, focusing on the 1981 playoff series between the two teams that was the foundation of the Oilers five Stanley Cups. Their combined stats were amazing; 27,279 points. They shared a joy for offence and spectacular goaltending.

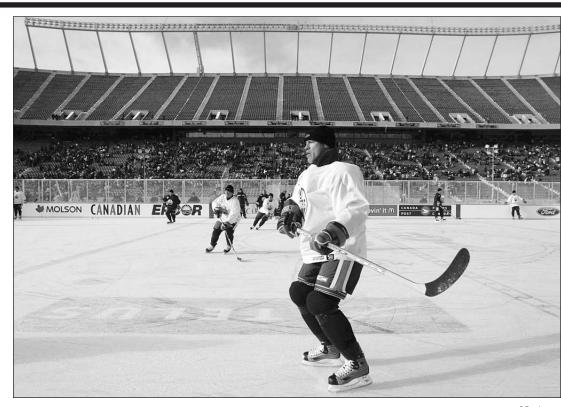
Richard Sevigny threw a dart at Habs goaltender Patrick Roy, who declined an invitation to play.

"He didn't want to come and that's too bad because he missed something special," said Sevigny, who was recruited to fill his spot in Saturday's oldtimers game. "Thank you very much."

The crowd roared at a video of the Oilers tough guys, bursting into applause at scenes of Dave Semenko and Marty McSorley pounding on Calgary Flames players.

There was an emotional moment when former Oilers player Lee Fogolin paid tribute to his father, an Italian immigrant, who played in the NHL before him.

"How hard he must have worked to play in the six team NHL," the former Oilers captain said. "He taught me how to work hard."



CP photo

New York Rangers centre Mark Messier, a former Edmonton Oiler, practices for the Oilers-Montreal Canadiens Mega-Stars game on the outdoor rink Friday at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton.

Cold weather could give goalies nightmares

EDMONTON (CP) — Expect more than the usual number of rebounds, which might mean a high-scoring Heritage Classic game.

The Montreal Canadiens and Edmonton Oilers skated Friday afternoon on the temporary rink in Commonwealth Stadium to get used to the unique setting for the first regular-season outdoor game in NHL history Saturday (CBC, 7 p.m. EST). More than 56,000 spectators are expected.

With the wind chill, it felt about minus-17 C during the practices. Players were on the ice

for nearly an hour. "I thought my hands and feet would be the problem," said Canadiens goalie Jose Theodore.

No, the problem was his catching mitt. The leather stiffened in the bitter cold and some pucks dropped to the ice instead of lodging in the mitt.

"The leather of the glove gets so tight it's like cement," said Theodore. "There's going to be a lot of rebounds."

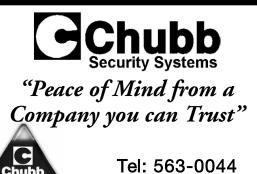
The spittle that dripped from his water bot-

tle formed ice on his sweater.

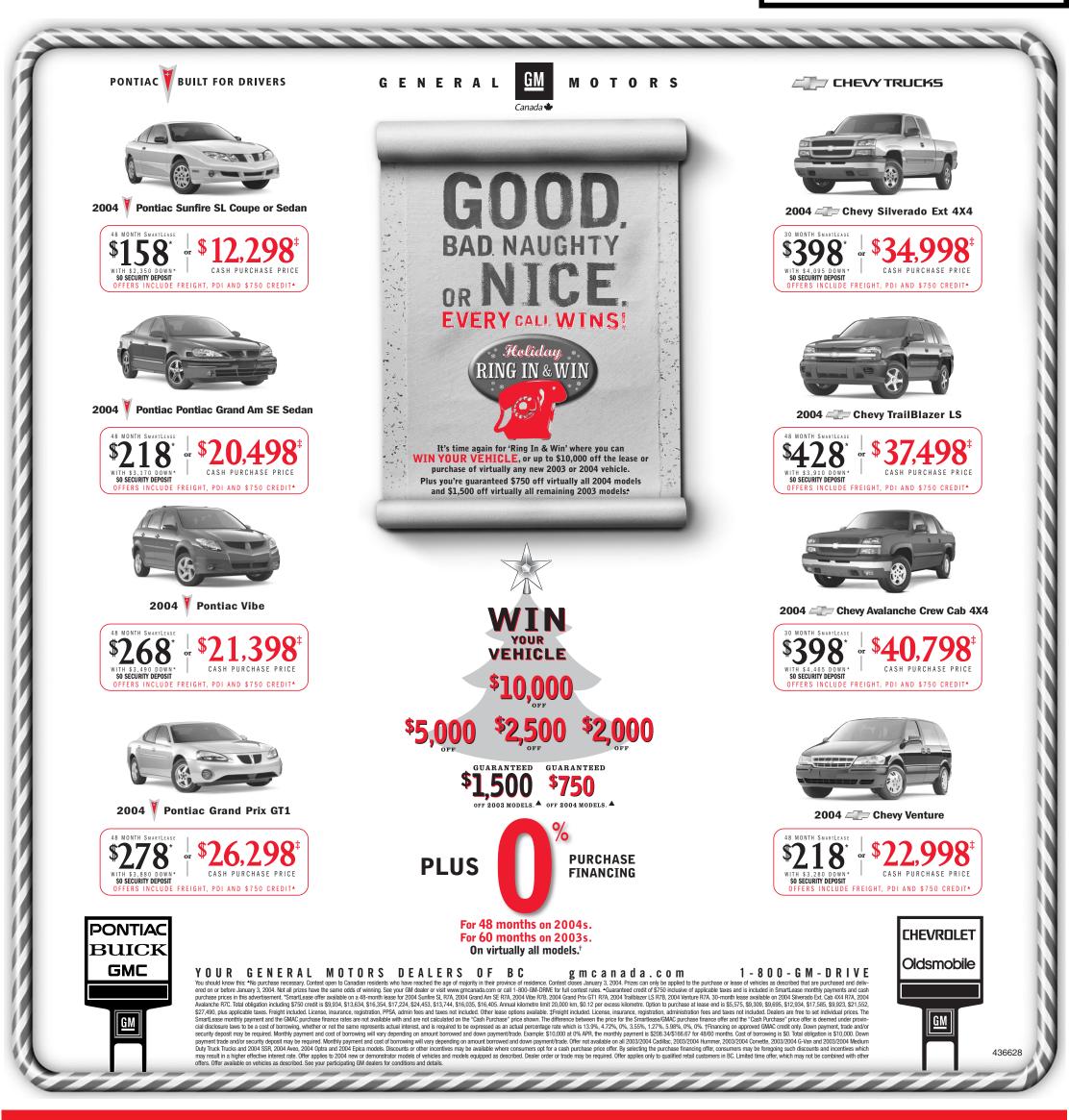
"Overall, if you keep moving between whistles and do a lot of skating it's going to be fine," Theodore said. "It's a fun experience to be part of.

"It's something I'll remember all my life."

Not being used to the stands being so wide and far away from the rink, Theodore had some difficulty deciding what angles to cut on shots "but like the world championships or Olympics you just need one practice to get used to it.'



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