Hats off to the Hounds — and Pere

"Somewhere out there, and my guess is the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, there is a team that depends solely on strict discipline to determine the outcome of its games. My guess right now is that it's probably the Notre Dame Hounds out of Wilcox, Sask."

Judd's Journal, March 22, 1988

The Canadian Junior Hockey season concluded Saturday night in Pembroke, Ont. with a new name added to the history books and a new chapter in success added to the junior hockey textbook.

Besides the residents of Wilcox, the coaching staff and players of the Notre Dame team, and the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, at least two other people are nodding their heads in confirmation at the outcome of the Centennial Cup Championship.

One of them is myself, qualified by the above excerpt from a column written this spring. The other is an immortal fellow who resides in the spiritual world.

His name is Father ("call me Pere") Athol Murray, founder of both the College of Notre Dame in Wilcox, and the hockey Hounds who reside there.

The Hounds defeated the Halifax Lions 3-2 Saturday night to win the emblem of Junior A hockey supremacy in Canada. In doing so they became the youngest team in the history of the national championship to do so. The team is so young, in fact, that they could have competed, virtually intact, in the Air Canada Midget Championship this year.

As it is, the midget Hounds came away with that prestigious midget hockey honor as well.

Notre Dame, you see, is only a small private high school out in the bare prairies of Southern Saskatchewan. The entire SJHL Hounds team was composed of players of high school age. Of their 20-man roster, 14 are still of midget age. None are yet out of high school and none are over the age of 18 years.



by
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Daily News
Sports Editor

To put it mildly, the Hounds accomplished a feat of unbelievable magnitude and of unprecedented scope. They are not only the youngest Junior A team to win the Canadian title, they also did it in only their first season as a Junior A team.

Their success will render obsolete the long-held theory that age and experience are the prime factors to consider when attempting to put together a contending team for the national championship each spring.

Having known of the Hounds' success, a good number of teams might have saved themselves a lot of cold, hard cash in recent years — particularly the Richmond Sockeyes who literally bought enough skilled, experienced players in 1987 to win the Centennial Cup.

However, just because the Hounds were young and inexperienced, don't get the impression that they weren't talented. The Notre Dame junior squad had their entire graduating midget national championship team from which to draw from. In addition, they can also draw many of the top-ranked midget aged players in the country to surround their nucleus of players with.

Nevertheless, none of the Hounds won the SJHL scoring championship this season and only one, Rod Brind'Amour, managed to collect more than 100 points over their 60-game regular season campaign.

During that campaign, the Hounds lost just six games and won 22 others by a single goal. Obviously they weren't capable of blowing their opposition out of the rink but on any given night they were virtually impossible to defeat.

The reason for their enormous success was quite simply their discipline, and also, to a great extent, their coaching.

"A lot of credit for this win has to go to (coach) Barry MacKenzie," said Brind'Amour, who collected dual honors as the tournament's most valuable player and as its best forward.

"He told us not to panic, stick to our system and work hard, and it would all work out for us."

Obviously the system was effective and obviously their discipline paid off. In the Western Canadian final series, the Hounds fell 3-1 to the powerful Calgary Canucks of the Alberta Junior Hockey League, before they stormed back to win three straight games and take the series 4-3. That victory earned them the right to advance to the Centennial Cup playoff in Pembroke. It also rewarded them with the Father Athol Murray (memorial) Trophy.

The dramatic irony of winning their founder's namesake award, for the first time in the history of the school, must have served as the last inspirational ingredient the club needed to win all the marbles.

Somewhere, Saturday night, Pere breathed a sigh of relief after watching his beloved Hounds earn yet another championship title. He probably took a pull on a bottle of cheap whiskey and muttered a silent prayer in hopes of keeping his team successful in future. He also muttered another to ensure his little high school might continue operating for many years to come.

And if he had the chance, Saturday night, he would have said: "I'm proud of ya boys . . . now don't forget to fill your pockets with coal for the school furnace before we start home."

Hats off to the famous Hounds for a job well done.

And hats off to Pere Murray . . . wherever he may be.

CENTENNIAL CUP

PEMBROKE, Ont. (CP) — Centennial Cup final Saturday night:

SUMMARY

First Period

1. Halifax, Keeler (MacTavish, Power) 10:23 (pp)

2. Notre Dame, Schriner (Stevens, McWana) 15:03 (pp)

Penalties — Saulinier Hfx (interference) 4:38, O'Rourke ND (high-sticking) 6:48, Sanderson ND (high-sticking) 8:44, Widmeyer ND (delay of game) 9:53, Miller Hfx (hooking) 13:24, MacDonald Hfx (holding) 14:28, Pellerin ND, Keeler Hfx (roughing) 15:18, Leger Hfx (cross-checking) 18:50.

Second Period

3. Halifax, Power (Kinch, Saulinier) 5:39 (pp)

Penalties — Pellerin ND (high-sticking) 4:11, Chisholm Hfx (charging) 11:22, MacDonald Hfx, Sanderson ND (high-sticking), King Hfx, Pellerin (unsportsmanlike conduct) 15:59.

Third Period

4. Notre Dame, Messier (MacKay, Schriner) 9:54

5. Notre Dame, Norris (Brind, Amour) 12:47

Penalties — None.

Shots on goal by

Notre Dame	20	16	16—52
Halifax	12	12	12—36

Goal — Notre Dame: Joseph; Halifax: Baker.

Power plays (goals-chances) — Notre Dame: 1-5; Halifax: 2-4.

Referee — Borden;. Linesmen — Hughes, Hendricks.

Attendance — 1,612.