McLEAN DENIES HE IS LEAVING

NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C. (CP) — Ernie Punch McLean, the flamboyant coach of New Westminster Bruins, said Tuesday he had not yet decided to leave the Western Hockey League club, contrary to an earlier report that he had chosen to hit the road.

McLean, who built a hockey dynasty here in the 1970s, said his future is still uncertain.

General Manager Bill Shinske and McLean are co-owners of the Bruins and have put the team up for sale, but McLean said he could be staying even if a buyer is found.

"If somebody buys the hockey club and they want me to stay on, then that would be up to them," said McLean.

"But if the hockey club is not sold and is still owned by (Shinske and McLean), then certainly we will still be here running it."

Asked about the report that he is leaving, McLean said it was a "ruse" he started while associates were gathered in his office following New Westminster's 8-3 loss to Medicine Hat Tigers.

The controversial coach has been the centre of much speculation following the collapse of his hockey empire this season. The Bruins had the worst record in the WHL, setting a league record with 61 losses.

McLean's record, the most successful in Canadian junior hockey, included four WHL titles and two Memorial Cups in 1977 and 1978.

ON HOME ICE

Canucks keep losing

VANCOUVER (CP) — Pittsburgh Penguins are the latest National Hockey League vultures to come in off the road and pick dry the bones of the stranded Vancouver Canucks.

The Penguins got early power-play goals from Pat Hughes and Ron Stackhouse and skated away with a 4-2 decision Tuesday night over the Canucks, who have won only two of their last 18 games at the Pacific Coliseum.

"Clubs come in here knowing that Vancouver is struggling and get all psyched up for them," said Pittsburgh coach Johnny Wilson. "We certainly were aware of the local problems and our guys were ready to play.

"We got a couple of breaks early in the game, a couple of power-play goals, and sort of coasted after that. The game gave us a real shot in the arm because it put us a point ahead of Hartford and six in front of Edmonton."

Pittsburgh now has 68 points and is in 13th place in the overall NHL standings with six games remaining on the Penguins' schedule. It was the second straight win on the road, coming on the heels of another 4-2 decision Sunday in Winnipeg over the Jets.

HARRY NEALE
... frustrated

Rookie Paul Marshall and Rod Schutt got the other Pittsburgh goals, while Dave Williams and Kevin McCarthy scored for the Canucks, now 18th over-all after losing their third straight game at home.

GAMES FRUSTRATING

"If I hadn't seen this team perform at a respectful level this season," said coach Harry Neale of the Canucks, "these kind of games wouldn't be so frustrating.

"It was a replay of our last two games (losses to Detroit and Quebec) and, if you want to commit suicide, this is the fastest way to do it.

"We needed a goal early in the game and just didn't get it despite all the chances I don't know what it is, but we certainly lack poise when it comes to converting our scoring chances."

What the Canucks have, in reality, is a group of players who work hard but don't have the necessary scoring skills of other teams. They outshoot other teams consistently at home, but rarely take advantage of their opportunities.

Vancouver had five power-play chances against Pittsburgh and failed to convert any of them, while the Penguins were good on half of their four chances with the man advantage.

EASED PAIN

"That fourth goal (by Schutt) sort of eased the pain a big after Vancouver scored those two goals in the last period," added Wilson. "We sat back a little too much in the last period and weren't alert like we should have been.

"We sort of got things going our way again by skating off that penalty (to Bob Stewart) and Schutt got the goal that really counted."

Netminder Greg Millen played a strong game for the Penguins as Vancouver outshot Pittsburgh 29-24. He made two excellent saves on Darcy Rota in the third period just moments after McCarthy's goal cut Pittsburgh's margin to 3-2.

Glen Hanlon of the Canucks didn't fair in any soft goals, but lost for the 29th time this season just the same.

One bright light for Vancouver was defenceman Bob Manno, who returned to the lineup after missing 34 games with a serious thumb injury. He worked hard and was one of the few dangerous shooters on the power play.

In other games, Philadelphia Flyers lost 5-3 to New York Islanders, Buffalo Sabres tied New York Rangers 3-3, Montreal Canadiens topped Chicago Black Hawkes 8-4, Minnesota North Stars whipped Toronto Maple Leafs 7-2, Edmonton Oilers nipped Atlanta Flames 6-4 and Los Angeles Kings beat Colorado Rockies 5-2.

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Thatcher puts her foot down

LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher put her foot down Tuesday night with rebellious British athletes after they voted overwhelmingly to compete in the Moscow Olympics this summer despite her call for a boycott.

The British Olympic Association announced Tuesday after a meeting in London of 26 national sports federations that delegates voted 3-1 to compete in Moscow.

"The government seriously regrets the decision to accept the invitation to participate in the Summer Games in Soviet Union, but this is not the end of the matter," a government statement said.

However, it did not spell out what measures Thatcher's Conservative government will take to block British participation in Moscow.

She is a staunch supporter of President Carter's effort to boycott the Moscow Games to protest Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.

Parliament voted overwhelmingly last week to support her foot down Tuesday night with rebellious British athletes after they voted overwhelmingly to compete in the Moscow Olympics this summer despite her call for a boycott.

The government might block funds to the BOA, still $920,000 short of the $2.3-million target needed to send a full British team.

Officials said 16 of the 21 summer sports represented at the BOA parley voted to go. Of the others, equestrian, fencing, swimming and yachting representatives wanted the decision deferred. The hockey federation had already decided not to go and the soccer group did not vote.

"The decision has been taken in the interests of the competitors, who, during these past anxious weeks, have had to maintain their hard training without knowing whether Britain would be participating," said Sir Denis Follows, BOA chairman.

Carter hoping for great year

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (CP) — Montreal Expos' most successful baseball season provided the biggest disappointment in the five-year career of catcher Gary Carter.

The Expos, for the first time in their 11 National League years, played better than .500 ball in 1979, battling Pittsburgh Pirates to the final day before settling for second place in the East Division.

But Carter, who batted .283 with 22 home runs and 75 runs brought in and contributed hugely to the title drive, missed the final five games after tearing a muscle in the thumb of his throwing hand.

"It had to be my biggest disappointment in baseball," he said during spring training.

But, Carter, 25, prefers to discuss the future. "I really believe our success last year is going to carry over into the new season."

"The camp this year is such a positive one. Everybody's optimistic, and I sincerely believe that we're going to be the East Division champs, if not the World Series champs."

And Carter's thumb has all but mended.

Before he was knocked out of action, Carter caught in 141 games and refused to sit out even when doubleheaders began to pile up in September. In the two seasons before 1979, he called the signals in 154 and 157 games respectively.

GARY CARTER
... positive camp

"I just want to be out there all the time," he said. "If I miss two or three games in a row, I start to go crazy."

Carter's 75 RBIs in 1979 were only nine short of the personal best he recorded in 1977 when he cracked a club record 31 homers.

Brooks offered post with Kings

TORONTO (CP) — The Globe and Mail says Herb Brooks, who coached the United States Olympic hockey team to a gold medal at the Winter Games last month at Lake Placid, N.Y., has been offered the coaching job with Los Angeles Kings for the 1980-81 National Hockey League season.

The newspaper says Brooks met Kings owner Dr. Jerry Buss in Indianapolis on Monday before both attended the National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball championship and Buss agreed to discuss a contract with Brooks at the end of the current season.

Arthur Kaminsky, Brooks's New York-based lawyer, said Tuesday he would not comment on any negotiations he may have had with the Kings or any other NHL team until after the season.

"Everything right now is exploratory," Kaminsky said. "In fact, I'm sure at the end of this season a few NHL teams will be interested in discussing their futures as it relates to Herb Brooks."

Prior to his duties with the U.S. Olympic squad, Brooks, 42, coached University of Minnesota Gophers for seven seasons. During that period, Minnesota posted a 175-100-20 record and won three NCAA titles.

Brooks was offered the coaching job with the NHL's Minnesota North Stars two years ago, but had a prior commitment with the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Knights trounce Clippers

PENTICTON, B.C. (CP) — Rob Proudfoot and Barry Huber scored two goals each to lead Penticton Knights to a 10-4 win over Nanaimo Clippers Tuesday night in the first game of their best-of-seven British Columbia Junior Hockey League final.

The teams meet here again tonight.

Craig Cooke, Mark Centrone, Lance Johnston, Terry Houle, Gregg Wilson and Doug Westerling added singles for the winners, who led 2-0 at the end of the first period and 4-1 after 40 minutes.

Mike Johnson, Tom Irving, Kris Kjolberg and John Newberry replied for the Clippers, who were outshot 40-29.

MEN'S CURLING

Canadian foursome remains undefeated

MONCTON, N.B. (CP) — Skip Jurg Tanner of Switzerland took a pain-killing drug and had his left hip frozen before the fourth round of the men's world curling championship Tuesday night and it paid off.

So did a ninth-end gamble of an angle raise by Canada's Rick Folk in a 7-4 win over Barton Henderson of Scotland that gave Folk sole possession of first place in the 10-country competition.

However, a team meeting by Ragnar Kamp and his Swedish rink midway through their fourth-draw game was fruitless and they went down to a 10-2 defeat to defending champion Kristian Soerum of Norway.

Tanner, replaced by a substitute in the third round Tuesday afternoon, guided Switzerland to a 10-3 win over Giuseppe Dal Molin of Italy in the evening draw — thanks to a five-ender in the fifth end. Despite the medical help he received, Tanner said the hip, which was injured several months ago and reinjured Monday in a 7-6 loss to Canada, was bothering him.

Folk had a struggle against a stubborn Scottish team but counted two points in the ninth end for the victory with a brilliant angle raise.

Folk said it was a "super feeling" knowing his Saskatoon rink held first place in the round-robin portion of the 13th annual Air Canada Silver Broom competition.

In a third-round game earlier in the day, Canada whipped Denmark 10-2 when Folk scored two in each of the fourth and fifth ends, and then counted four in the seventh.

CANADA 4-0

The win over Scotland raised Canada's record to 4-0, with games scheduled today against West Germany and the United States.

Meanwhile, Kamp, winner of the 1977 world title, and third Hakan Stahlbro appeared to have minor differences while playing against Norway.

Kamp, who wouldn't comment on the meeting with his team-mates, said the rink made some changes in tactics but they turned out wrong.

Soerum, competing in his fifth consecutive world championship, led 3-0 after two ends and made it 4-0 in the third before Kamp came back with one.

In second place with 3-1 records were Paul Pustovar, skip of the U.S. rink from Hibbing, Minn., West Germany's Franz Engler, Italy and Norway.

At 2-2 were Switzerland and Sweden, while Henri Muller of France, Demark and Scotland were 0-4.

In other fourth-round games before 4,925 fans at the Moncton Coliseum, West Germany shaded Denmark 5-4 and the U.S. beat France 8-3 when Pustovar scored six in the eighth end.

Sweden counted six in the fourth end of the third round and went on to whip France 15-3. Italy took a 8-5 extra-end win over Scotland, Norway beat West Germany 10-4 and the U.S. topped Switzerland 7-1 in other third-round games.

Jurg Hornisberg skipped the Swiss rink against the U.S., with substitute Mans-Ueli Sommer playing second, where he will likely be today unless Tanner's hip improves.

Hart crowned as new champion

MONTREAL (CP) — Gaetan Hart and Nicky Furlano stood toe-to-toe for 12 rounds of boxing Tuesday night battling for the Canadian lightweight title. When the split decision was announced, Hart was crowned the new champion.

The crowd of 4,992 at Paul Sauve Arena went delirious but none were as excited as the 31-year-old gas station attendant from Buckingham, Que.

Hart had held the title before Furlano, of Toronto, stripped him of it last October and it was a titanic struggle for Hart to regain the championship.

Standing ovations were accorded the fighters after each of the final three rounds. Rarely were they separated by more than two feet and each levied blows that had the crowd believing the end was near.

"I'm still the best," hollered Hart as he strode into his crowded dressing room afterwards.

"I have tremendous respect for Furlano. He hits extremely hard, but I never really thought I was in trouble despite the cut over my eye."

Hart suffered the gash near his right eye in the ninth round when Furlano unleashed a flurry of punches that seemed to catch him off guard.

Furlano was far more aggressive in the early rounds and he scored well with a series of jabs and uppercuts before Hart began to take control in the third round.

ATTACKS FURLANO

He bolted from his corner like a man possessed in that round and attacked Furlano with a vicious flurry of right crosses and punishing left jabs.

"We knew that Gaetan is a slow starter so we told him to play strong defence until he got it together and that happened in the third," said Hart's trainer Ralph Citro.

"When Gaetan lost the title last year it was because he waited too long to go after Furlano."

While Hart did his share of attacking from the third round on, Furlano was not protecting himself the entire time. Hart would unleash his best shot, Furlano would reply with a barrage of his own.

"I thought I really had him at more than one point in the fight," Furlano said. "I tried I don't know how many times to finish him off but he just wouldn't go down."

The 21-year-old said a pinched nerve in his right shoulder suffered while sparring recently did not affect his performance.

WIHL series is tied

CRANBROOK, B.C. (CP) — Peter Morris scored two goals to lead Cranbrook Royals to a 7-2 win over Spokane Flyers Tuesday night and tie their Western International Hockey League final series 2-2.

The best-of-seven series continues in Spokane Friday night.

Backing Morris's performance with singles were Brian Dickie, Dale McMullin, Rod Guimont, Jim Miller and Ken Gassoff. Garth Morgan and Jim Stuart counted for Spokane, which trailed 3-0 after the first period and 6-2 after 40 minutes.

Ron Lefebvre and Frank Turnbull teamed up for 27 saves in Spokane net while Ray Martyniuk and Leo Karchie made 23 stops for Cranbrook.

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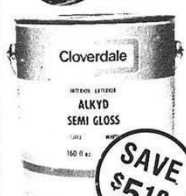
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