



SILVER BLADES

Many years ago two small boys stood in front of a display case in the Stratford, Ontario, hockey arena – a local shrine familiar to many U of T grads. Peering intently into this treasure chest of silver trays and ‘loving cups,’ one boy turned to the other and asked, “Who uses all these big dishes?” His friend matter-of-factly replied, “Giants. BIG giants.”

U of T has produced more than its fair share of giants but there are some athletic stars who, simply by being touched by the magic of the Olympics, are a breed apart. Eighty-one years ago, that special breed was the men’s Olympic ice hockey team.

In those days, the team that took the Olympic gold was automatically declared world ice champion but in this case, the 1928 champions were already recognized before they played a single game. In fact, so amazing was the U of T team that special rules were written to level the playing field.

That year, Canada was represented by university men who didn’t let a little thing like convocation disband them; hence their nickname – The Varsity Grads. Ten days before they were to play at the Olympic Games in Switzerland, officials realized – after seeing them practise – that the other teams would be obliterated by these mighty Canucks.

In the spirit of fair play, a new format would see the other nations divided into three pools and only then were the winners of these matches offered up to the Canadians (Charlie Delahey, Frank Fisher, Grant Gordon, Louis Hudson, Norbert Mueller, John Porter, Frank Sullivan, Joseph Sullivan, Ross Taylor, Dave Trottier, and the Plaxton boys: Bert, Hugh and Rogers).

The Varsity Grads advanced to the final Olympic round without shooting a puck – and a good thing, too, as Canada rolled over Sweden 11-0, Britain 14-0 and Switzerland 13-0.

This stirring silver cup was presented to the Varsity Grads in France after their resounding victories at the 1928 Olympics. The engraving reads, “CHAMPIONNAT DU MONDE DE HOCKEY SUR GLACE,” and that’s what they were – the best in the world. The trophy was displayed for almost 50 years in the athletic wing of Hart House and now is on view in the main lobby of the Athletic Centre. 