

Kings of the Ice: A History of World Hockey

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NDE Publishing (October 2002)

Unknown \$54.95 (1008pp)

978-1-55321-099-3

The contributors and editors of *Kings of the Ice* have done yeomen's work in compiling this (literally) heavy-duty volume about the history and personalities of world hockey.

This tome weighs in at over 1,000 pages, telling the whole history of the game, from its inception as a formal sport in the nineteenth century, to the epic Olympic battle in 1980, which put hockey in the international spotlight, to the stars of today.

Despite "importing" a few top-notch players from Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Russia, here in North America there is a chauvinistic tendency to think of ice hockey as essentially Canadian, and there is enough anecdotal history to back that up to a point. The face-off between Canada and Russia in the 1972 "Summit Series" brought recognition to the world-class athletes from the Soviet Union, such as Vladimir Vikulov, Alexander Yakushev and Valeri Vasiliev, who led their team into a classic battle royale. This, coupled with the improbable United States victory over the U.S.S.R. in the 1980 Olympic Games, helped bring international stars to worldwide attention.

Each chapter in the book is devoted to a discernable epoch of hockey history. Some tend to overlap, mainly to parallel the evolution of the game in North America and overseas. The writers, some of the most well-known hockey savants in the world, pay homage to the pioneers of the game, including Lester Patrick and Frederick Arthur, a.k.a. Lord Stanley of Preston (for whom the coveted trophy indicating the NHL's championship team is named), plus other overlooked early practitioners who codified the game and paved the way for the National Hockey League.

Kings of the Ice contains hundreds of color and black-and-white photographs, along with profiles of over 400 players. Some names will be instantly familiar, while others are of less renown, but played just as great a role in making hockey the international favorite that it is. All the greats are included: modern skaters such as Wayne Gretzky, Ray Bourque, Dominik Hasek, Patrick Roy, Mario Lemieux, and Jaromir Jagr, as well as the old guard, as epitomized by Bobby Hull, Bobby Orr, and Gordie Howe.

With its combination of history, player analysis, and statistics (for the numerically-minded), *Kings of the Ice* will no doubt become the reference source for hockey for years to come.

RON KAPLAN (November / December 2002)

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