CANADIAN BLIND HOCKEY | HOCKEY SONORE CANADA

Team Canada Wins First Ever International Blind Hockey Championship!

Players and Coaches from Five Provinces Defeat Team USA to Win Inaugural Trophy.

(October 19, 2018) The first ever Canadian National Blind Hockey Team has won the very first ever international competition for the parasport of Blind Hockey. Team Canada defeated Team USA two games to zero, by scores of 8 to 2 and 12 to 3, to win the inaugural championship in their best-of-three International Blind Hockey Series. Canada then completed the sweep, by winning Sunday's exhibition game by a score of 6 to 2.

The series was part of the fifth annual USA Hockey – Blind Hockey Summit, which took place from October 12 to 14 in Pittsburgh, PA. The event also featured children, youth, and adult intermediate divisions, and marked the first time that two nations had ever competed against each other in the fast-growing parasport of Blind Hockey.

Blind Hockey is played across Canada by athletes who are blind or partially sighted who have approximately 10% vision or less. The sport uses an adapted puck that makes noise and is larger than a traditional puck. The Canadian National Team is made up of players and coaches from five different provinces, who were selected based on their outstanding performance history at the Canadian National Blind Hockey Tournament, which takes place annually in Toronto, ON. (Complete roster with hometowns below).

The Canadian Team's strong effort got off to a fitting start, as forward Mark DeMontis (Toronto, ON) scored the very first goal in international Blind Hockey history. DeMontis has been a leading volunteer integral to growing the parasport of Blind Hockey since 2009, when he founded the pre-cursor to the Canadian Blind Hockey Association, then called Courage Canada Hockey for the Blind. For the first goal DeMontis took a feed from his Toronto Ice Owls teammate Wyatt Harvey (Peterborough, ON), and mimicked one of his childhood hero's most famous goals, by pulling a Doug Gilmore-esque double reverse behind the net before completing the wrap-around.

"It was a special moment for our entire family to see him rewarded after all the hard work he's put in," said Team Canada GM Luca DeMontis, who is also a long-time volunteer, as well as Mark's older brother. "It was a fitting start to a great weekend. Our entire team and staff were great both on and off the ice, they carried themselves with class and showed tremendous respect for their opponents and the sport of Blind Hockey. We may have named a team in March, but over the last six months we grew into a family."

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Team Canada Assistant Captain Jason Yuha (Rosalind, Alberta) led the way on the ice with a dominating performance, ultimately scoring at least a hat-trick in both games. Yuha finished with seven goals, including several highlight reel finishes, while line mate Anthony Ciulla (Langley, BC) led the event in points with two goals, eight assists, for ten points in two games. Canadian Blind Hockey President Gary Steeves (Vancouver, BC), was named the starting goaltender for Team Canada, and earned both tournament wins. Back-up goaltenders Joey Cabral (Toronto, ON) and Lorne Webber (Edmonton, AB), shared the crease to earn the victory in the final exhibition game.

"We were fortunate to have a team full of leaders," said Head Coach Paul Kerins (Toronto, ON). "The entire team led in different ways, but I believe with his performance this weekend certainly Jason Yuha has established himself as the top player in Blind Hockey. Off the ice, Captain Kelly Serbu's experience was irreplaceable, having played junior with the Halifax Mooseheads, and he showed why he's also one of the top players in the game."

Yuha and Serbu have combined to win the past three Most Valuable Forward Awards at the annual Canadian National Blind Hockey Tournament, and centered the top two scoring lines. Serbu finished with two goals and two assists for four points in two games.

"It was an honour to be the Captain of Team Canada," said Serbu (Cole Harbour, NS / Ottawa, ON). "My ultimate goal now is to help promote the game and spread the word, so that as many kids as possible who are blind or partially sighted know that they can play too: after all hockey is for everyone. We want to propel the sport to the next level, be role models for the younger generation, and grow international competition to someday get the sport into the Paralympic games."

Currently Canada and USA have the only two Blind Hockey programs in the world, however Canadian Blind Hockey is leading the charge to grow the sport internationally, and recently hosted players from Finland and England at its Summer Development Camp. One of Canadian Blind Hockey's goals is to export the sport around the world to create opportunities for Canadian hockey players who are blind or partially sighted to wear the Team Canada jersey. Future plans include a four nations cup in 2020, a World Championships in 2022, and applying for inclusion in the 2026 Paralympic Games.

All three games of the inaugural USA vs Canada International Blind Hockey Series are available for viewing with play-by-play on **Canadian Blind Hockey's YouTube Channel**.

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Team Canada is supported by Canadian Blind Hockey, a national registered charity that changes the lives of children, youth, and adults who are blind or partially sighted, through learn to skate and Try Blind Hockey programming, regional and national tournaments and camps. Canadian Blind Hockey programming is made possible by presenting partner AMI – Accessible Media Inc., national program partners the CNIB, as well as generous donors and sponsors coast-to-coast.

The next major Blind Hockey competition is the third annual Canadian Blind Hockey Western Regional Tournament which take place from November 23 – 25, 2018, at the Bill Copeland Centre in Burnaby, BC. The season culminates with the seventh annual Canadian National Blind Hockey Tournament, which takes place at Ryerson University's Mattamy Athletic Centre in Toronto, ON, from March 22 – 24, 2019.

2018 Canadian National Blind Hockey Team

- Francois Beauregard (Montreal, QC)
- Anthony Ciulla (Langley, BC)
- Shawn Dale (Brantford, ON)
- Joseph Del Grande (Toronto, ON)
- Mark DeMontis (Toronto, ON)
- Bruno Haché (Montreal, QC)
- Wyatt Harvey (Peterborough, ON)
- Alex Angus MacEachen (Mabou, NS)
- Gilles Ouellet (Montreal, QC)
- Simon Richard (Dieppe, NB)
- Scott Roberts (Richmond, BC)
- Kelly Serbu (Cole Harbour, NS / Ottawa, ON)
- Jason Yuha (Rosalind, AB)

Goaltenders

- Joey Cabral (Toronto, ON)
- Gary Steeves (New Westminster, BC)
- Lorne Webber (Edmonton, AB)

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Team Staff

- General Manager – Luca DeMontis (Toronto, ON)
- Assistant General Manager – Robert Gignac (Montreal, QC)
- Head Coach – Paul Kerins (Toronto, ON)
- Assistant Coach – Jeff Street (Toronto, ON)
- Goalie Coach – Joey Ali (Langley, BC)
- Therapist – Mark Bentz (North Vancouver, BC)

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