

THE SUNDAY NIGHT ROYAL OAK SENIORS HOCKEY LEAGUE THE FIRST FOUR YEARS

By LEW BISHOP

I started playing hockey in 1976-77 when I was 35 years old and still smoking. I was awful but I was also determined to learn how to play. I got involved because my sons had joined a hockey league and needed coaches, for which Greg Carmouche and I volunteered. I bought a used pair of hockey skates from John George down the street which were better than my figure skates but were still not too good. They did last me for the year. At that time I had started playing pick-up with the Jack Guirey group on Sunday nights at Berkley.

The following year (1977-78) I started playing more. I bought a good pair of Bauer skates which improved my skating ability. We entered a team in the Berkley Slow Puck League which played a couple times a week, once on a week day and once on the week end. I also kept up with the Sunday night Guirey pickup group. The Slow Puck team was sponsored by Warren Mason's company called Computer Professionals Unlimited (CPU). I played defense that year with Joe Grazioli as my main partner. We were pretty *bad* and usually got beat badly. It was at this time that Harold Rogers and Clyde Baker joined our group. We also had Bob Murray and Tom Pannuto skating on our team.

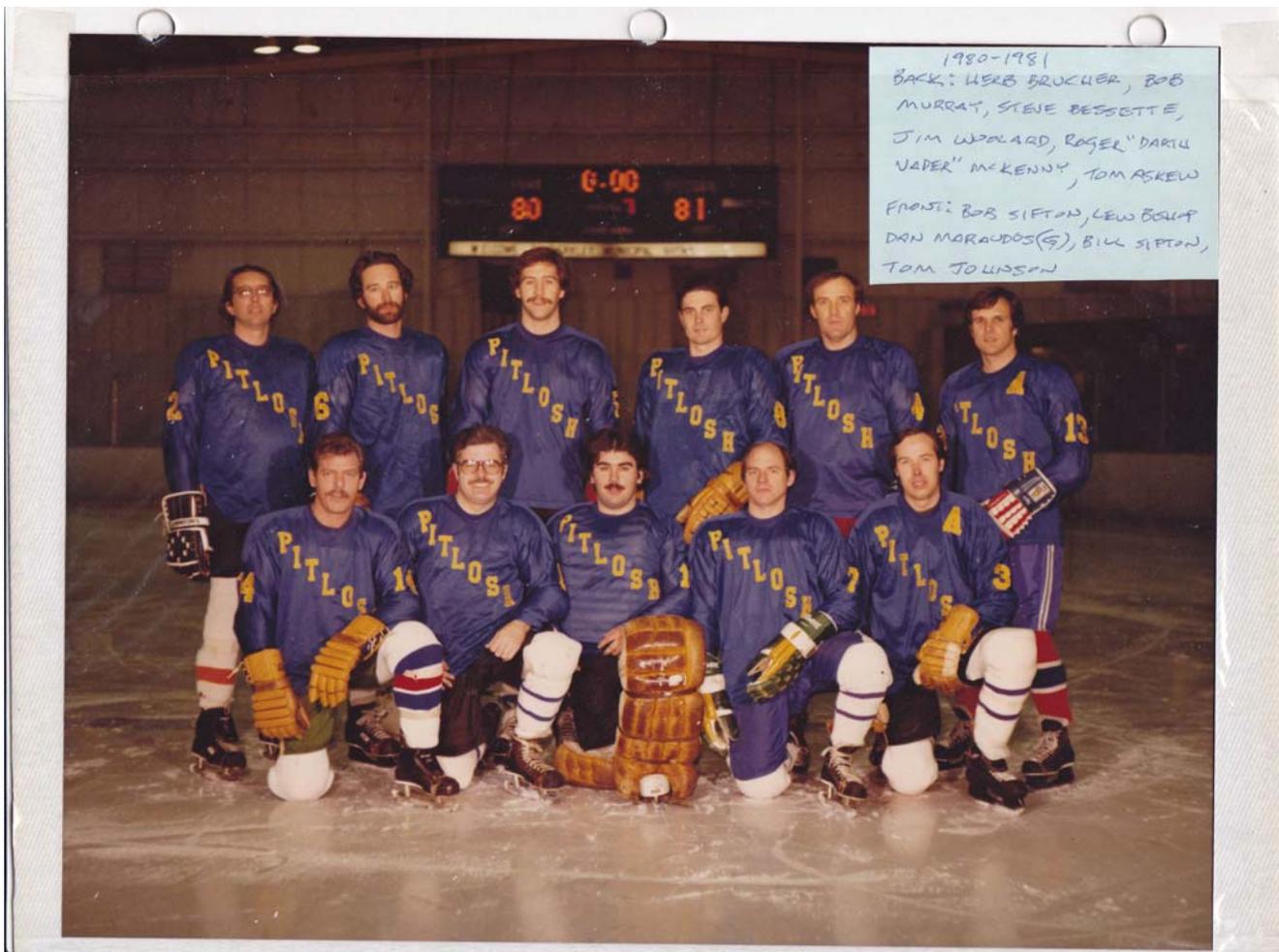
In 1978-79 we remained in the Berkley Slow Puck League and also continued with Sunday night pickup. In addition, Harold Rogers rented ice on Thursday nights at the Birmingham Ice Arena where we played another night of pickup hockey. In the Slow Puck League we picked up a pair of doctors that Greg Carmouche had gotten to know who had played at MSU who were very good. They made our team as least respectable. A problem arose when our goalie, Jim White, quit during the first part of the season. I volunteered to play goalie with equipment borrowed from Mark Hickok. I just used my regular hockey skates so I never did learn how to slide from side to side like most goalies do. However, I did do the job and also started playing goalie at both the Sunday and Thursday pickup skates. Near the end of the season in the Berkley Slow Puck league we had an ugly incident that took place when we played a team who were a bunch of jerks. It started with a pile up in our goal with one of their guys slashing me when I had the puck covered. He got knocked down by one of our guys and was kicking and punching me. Bob Murray grabbed the guy and as they were wrestling around the guy bit two of Bob's fingers to the point where they were bleeding so badly he had to wrap them with white hockey tape to stop the flow. We decided that we wouldn't play that team in the future and just didn't show up for the last two times we played them. During the playoffs the teams were divided into two groups of four teams with us being in the lower division. We ended up winning our division to become what I phrased "The First of the Worst." I also said we were able to attain that status because of the "pair a docs" who skated for us.



1979 – 80 Berkley Dominicos

For the 1979-80 season we decided to make a change. After the 78-79 season ended we all agreed that the Berkley Slow Puck League was not much fun and was too competitive and rough for our taste. Consequently, we decided to combine our Sunday night pickup group with the Slow Puck team and form our own league which Jack Guirey offered to organize. Jack obtained another hour of ice at Berkley so we were all set in the fall for a four team league. Jack ran the whole league that year all by himself. We did our own refereeing, with guys who played in the first game would ref the second game, etc. There were few statistics that survived from that year that I am aware of except that the Visual Arts team (white guys) won the playoffs with Dave Jack as their goalie. Dave Jack (who was nicknamed "Rogie" because he always wore a white Red Wing Rogie Vachon jersey), had recently married Jill Szczesny after their graduation from Berkley High School where they were attracted to each other by their love of music (Dave was a drummer, Jill a guitar player and singer). Thus Jill became Jill Jack, who is still performing at a number of venues around Detroit as I write this in 2011, although she and Dave have been divorced for many years. Dave dropped out of the league, never to be heard from again. I believe the scoring championship was won by Tom Pannuto with Steve Bessette the penalty leader, although statistics from this year are incomplete.

I was the goalie for the Red Guys for 79-80. In the last game of the year, I did the splits to make a save and pulled a groin muscle in my right leg. As I had never experienced anything like this, I just assumed it would get better and went on with my softball season. The more I ran the worse the muscle got. The last game I played in that year I tried to go from first to third on a right field single and fell flat on my face halfway between second and third when the muscle gave out. I then went to the doctor who told me that rest was the only cure and that I shouldn't play softball any more that season. Not wanting to be totally inactive for the rest of the summer, I bought a set of golf clubs from Larry Griffith's brother who owned a Pro Golf outlet and took up the game of golf for the first time. My dad gave me some pointers on how to swing the club and I played on Sunday mornings with some of the hockey guys. Normally it was Harold Rogers, Greg Carmouche, Wayne Fetterhoff and myself, however a number of others came sporadically. Occasionally we would have two or three foursomes. This was where I got to know Rich Lundberg well enough to ask him to help me coach Ted. I continued to play golf after this summer until I left Ford Tractor in 1988. I have kept copies of the final standings of the Ford Tractor Golf League for the years 1981 through 1986 which show all the players in the league, their handicaps, and the teams as well as the final standings.



1980-81 Pitlosh Lounge

For the 1980-81 season, Jack Guirey still ran the league, including handling all the finances. Jack got Neil Ross to act as secretary which resulted in the publishing of statistics for the first time. Neil and Jack also published a set of Rules and By-Laws for the league for the first time. The four captains were Tom Pannuto, Doug Jones, Bob Gagnon and Bill Sifton, who all had been captains the previous year also. This year Greg Carmouche, Clyde Baker and I were added as voting board members without assignment. The league was designated "Fun Nite Hockey" and was a 30 and over league. I played on the Blue Team that year and played defense. I had decided to give up playing goalie for several reasons; 1) I wanted to learn other aspects and skills of the game so that I could become a better coach. 2) I wanted to get more exercise. The scoring championship was again won by Tom Pannuto and Steve Bessette also repeated as the penalty leader. Dave Jack was the best goalie. The Visual Arts (white) team led by Tom Pannuto won the league championship as well as the playoff championship. Another thing that was started this year was a year end party which included wives/girlfriends at Roberto Italian Restaurant in Berkley. We had a good time.



1981-82 Visual Arts

For the 1981-82 season, Jack Guirey decided to drop out of the league due to work considerations. I volunteered to take over his duties and, during the first several months of the season, did the organizing, finances and statistics. In addition, we were still doing our own refereeing and I was one of the referees. After coming to the realization that this was too much work for one person (especially one with three active kids), I organized a meeting of the captains and others who were interesting in serving on the Board. I suggested that the duties be split up so that it wouldn't be too much work for any one person. As a result the Board was formed with a President (me), Vice-President (me), Referee-In-Chief (Harold Rogers), Treasurer (me), Secretary/Statistician (Clyde Baker) and the four Captains (Tom Pannuto, Doug Jones, Greg Carmouche, and Bob Gagnon). Tom Johnson and Joe Grazioli served as "at-large" members. Thus, there would be nine members for voting purposes and we also decided to match each captain with one non-captain board member in the future to help with the draft and to assure equal representation for each team on the Board. It was an organization that was to serve the league well for many years into the future and to make our league one that many players wanted to join.

Another first from this year was a formal warning letter sent from the Board to Neil Ross dated April 14, 1982 for conduct not in keeping with the spirit of the league. This letter was the first and wouldn't be the last, although there have been very few and none in recent years. The scoring champion this year was Bob Murray. Jon Fox was the penalty leader, thus giving rise to the expression "**sent to the Fox box.**" John Haine was the best goalie. This was the year that Roger McKenney joined the league as a substitute. He had a homemade combination helmet and face mask that made him look like Darth Vader (Star Wars was just out then). He was known as Darth Vader the entire time he played in the league. Hardees (Orange) led by Doug Jones won the regular season championship. My team, the White team won the Playoffs, even with only seven players playing. Greg Carmouche and I had both broken ribs playing several weeks before the finals and couldn't play. We had another year end party at Roberto's again this year.

An interesting story grew out of my rib injury. I got hurt when the puck was on the boards in my zone. While fighting for the puck, I fell to the ice. Neil Ross, who was about 250 pounds, fell on me butt first while I was laying face down on the ice, compressing my chest to the point where my rib either broke or was seriously bruised. I felt that Neil had done it on purpose because it wasn't long before that the Board had written Neil a formal letter of censure that he didn't agree with. At any rate, I was very angry at Neil for a long time after. About two years later in August, I was reading the Sunday newspaper and read an article about forgiveness and how holding a grudge affects the holder much more than the object. Reflecting on this made me think of Neil as he was the only person I had a grudge against. I decided it was time to forget the grudge and move on. About an hour after reaching this conclusion the phone rang. I picked it up and the voice on the other end said: "Hi Lew, this is Neil Ross. I wanted to know when hockey will start next month." You could have knocked me over with a feather at that time as I don't ever recall Neil calling me on the phone. I told Marieda that, if this wasn't a sign from God about the virtue of forgiveness, then there would never be one. It was just too much of a coincidence to be just random. It is something I will never forget.



1982 - 83 Ram's Horn

The 1982-83 season saw a number of changes to the league. The Board consisted of Tom Johnson - President, Joe Grazioli - Treasurer, Greg Carmouche - Vice President, Clyde Baker - Secretary/Statistician, Harold Rogers - Referee-In-Chief, with Doug Jones, Bob Murray, Tom Pannuto and Lew Bishop as captains. It was in this year that it was decided that substitutes had to be approved by the opposing captain and we also started having paid referees. Tom Johnson updated the By-Laws and made them much more understandable. Mark Hickok became one of our first non-playing referees. That year my Ram's Horn (blue) team won the regular season championship, largely due to the fact that we had selected Dave Piche as our goalie in the first round and he was outstanding all year long. Incidentally, I picked Neil Ross on my team this year so I didn't have to worry about breaking another rib. This year Joe Fagin, the nephew of "Uncle Dave" Farrington, was our big scorer, which wasn't a lot. We told Dave Piche that he got 2 goals per game and the rest was up to him. He came through admirably. Our team also featured Tom "No Pants" Close, who got his nickname because he only wore

sweatpants instead of hockey pants. The playoffs were won that year by Baker Photography (red), sponsored by Clyde Baker with Bob Murray as captain. This was also the year that Jon Fox wrote an article about our league in the Michigan Hockey magazine entitled "Fun Night Hockey" which was hilarious! I still have a copy in my book. Dan Maroudis edged John Haine as the best goalie while Tom Pannuto won another scoring title. Doug Jones was the penalty leader that year.

Here is a copy of Jon Fox's article.

ARTICLE WRITTEN BY JON FOX
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MICHIGAN H

FUN NIGHT HOCKEY

They start rolling in a half hour before game time. Not so they can be ready for a chalk talk but so they will have time to secure knee braces and tape ankles. The exception is "Zamboni" Mike who always arrives while the ice is being resurfaced. So far he has never missed a shift. For most of these aging warriors whose muscular ripples have turned into mid-section rolls, Sunday night is the best evening of the week. The kids are down, mom is watching the movie, and for dad, it's hockey night.

The Sunday Fun Nite Hockey League has been around a long time. But the league has only been organized for about four years. Each year improvements have been made to improve the league. It now stands as one of the best organized leagues anywhere.

The league consists of four teams of eleven players each. In the early days, the referees were players on the other teams who were not skating that hour. That worked pretty good. If you wanted to argue over a call, the ref just gave you the striped shirt for the next game. Now we have two refs who do both games each week. One is a former player in the league and the other is a fine open hockey player in the junior division. Both of these guys are like real referees. They're bad! You talk about missed calls. Then the slightest little thing and it's off to the "Fox Box" for two minutes. (So named for its foremost occupant.) Most unwarranted too. Just ask him. All the guys know Mark Hickock and for sure the games wouldn't be the same without Mark making the calls.

This year the "over the hill gang" Rams Horn team won the league title. This geritol bunch boast of having the most players over forty, which proves that there is no substitute for experience. There are some great players on that team. There's a league philosopher and team captain, Lew "the storyteller" Bishop who made life miserable in the corners for attacking wingers. If he couldn't crush you in the corners, he slayed you with one liners later. Then they had Hal "the enforcer" Jasch who is 9'3" tall and 3'9" wide. He demands his space and....he gets it. Anywhere he wants. Hal is really the guy who cut the timber in the great Sahara forest. Probably the best two-way player in the league is "Mean Joe Fagan". Mean Joe and Greg "the undestructible" Carmouche who has unbelievable endurance,

provided much of the scoring punch for the team. Other key players on this team were Wayne "Kamikaze" Fetterhoff who attacked goalies like a World War II dive bomber pilot. In fact, old "Kamikaze" did a number on anyone who got in his way. You don't get in Wayne's way even when walking to the locker room. When they needed to get the puck out of harm's way, Tom Close, Neal "pass the biscuits" Ross and Jerry "don't touch my stick" Kauffman did the job. Tom "don't call me hack" Askick, "Sneak Attack Timsley" and Dave "the stopper" Piche rounded out the league champions team.

Runners-up this season was Bakers Photography. This team had Danny Maroudis in the nets. Danny finished the season with a fine 2.15 goals against average. Best in the league. This team also had the great "Devo Dave Zuhlke" on defense. Dave is a wrecking crew by himself. Sometimes he wears this "smurf helmet". Then he really gets cranked up. As one of the most popular players in the league, Dave has only one problem. He likes this weird rock group named DEVO.

Just missing second place was Visual Arts. Captain "Mr. Destructo" Tom Pannuto fired his troops to a great second half rally which saw the white team fall just short on the final game of the season.

Tom will win the scoring race. He always wins the scoring race. One goal a game is a slow night for Tom. He can score from anywhere inside the center red line. The Visual Arts team also had "Mad Dog" Neuman on the team. Old "Mad Dog" was a pussy cat on the ice but he always had Mad Dog 20/20 in the locker room for the guys after the game. Win or lose. Way to go "Mad Dog". Maybe that's why he is first pick in the draft every year.

In last place was Hardees. Captain Doug Jones survived the mutiny and led his team to new lows. Even with "Darf Bader" McKenney and all his force, the orange men couldn't climb off the bottom. No big deal. You guys can still come to the banquet as long as you sit i the back of the room. Don't think of it as finishing last. Just tell your wives you came in fourth place.

Come September, there will be a draft and new teams will be picked. Those guys you played against all year may now be on your team. Have a great summer "Mad Dog", "Devo", "Kamikaze" and everybody. I wish it was September.