

2004 CIS WOMEN'S HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP OUTLOOK MCGILL UNIVERSITY

McGILL SET TO HOST CIS WOMEN'S HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNEY

MONTREAL -- McGill University is hosting the CIS women's hockey championship tourney at McConnell Arena (3883 University Street) in Montreal, March 11-14.

The Martlets head into the CIS championships, March 11-14, with a 17-10-7 record overall, having outscored opponents 106-77. McGill finished second in the Quebec Student Sports Federation standings with an 11-3-3 record, outscoring opponents by a 65-29 margin. It marked the fifth time in six years that McGill had completed their league schedule over the .500 mark (after achieving only one season over .500 in the previous 26 years!).

However, McGill was upset by an upstart Ottawa team in two straight conference semifinal games, losing 3-1 at home (Feb. 20) and 4-2 on the road (Feb. 22), failing to reach the League Championship Series for the first time in seven years.

Nonetheless, McGill has qualified for the CIS national championship tournament for the fifth time in six seasons, as host team. The Martlets were nationally ranked in 16 of 17 ranking periods, including four weeks at a season-high position of No. 3. They are seeded fourth in this week's tournament and are bidding to become only the third national championship team from Quebec (the first since 1999 when Concordia won the second of back-to-back titles).

McGill owns a 6-5 lifetime record in five trips to the CIS tournament, winning one silver, three bronzes and outscoring opponents 28-19.

ROSTER RAP: The McGill roster features 22 players, including seven freshmen, seven sophomores, three juniors and five seniors. The bulk of this year's team, 13 players to be exact, are from Quebec, five come from Ontario, two from Alberta, one from British Columbia and one from Switzerland.

MARTLET ALL-STARS: McGill placed four players on the Quebec University Hockey League all-star squads (one on the first team, three on the second). Named to the QSSF first team was RW Véronique Lapierre, who earned the league's player-of-the-year honours (see more on her below). The four McGill players featured on the second dream team included rearguard Peggy Donohue of Toronto (for the second straight year). Centre Katherine Safka of Stoney Creek, Ont., and goaltender Kalie Townsend of Sangudo, Alta.

THE ROCK OF LAC MEGANTIC: RW Véronique Lapierre, a senior from Lac Mégantic, Que., has been voted by the league's coaches as most outstanding player. Lapierre (her name translated from French means "the stone"), has been a pillar of strength all season long, leading the Martlets in scoring with a 17-14-31 record in 34 games overall. During the regular season, she posted a 10-8-18 record in 17 games, tying for the league lead in goals and placing second in points. She was also honoured last month by the Club Médaille d'Or as the top university hockey player in Quebec.

GOLDEN GIRL: All-star goaltender Kim St-Pierre, is scheduled to make her official return to

the Martlets lineup on Friday. Her first game at the CIS Nationals will be the 101st of her career with the McGill women. The four-time All-Canadian, who spent most of the season with the Redmen hockey team, became the first woman goaltender in CIS history to be credited with winning a men's regular season game on Nov. 15, 2003. She dressed for 19 straight contests overall but only saw action in four games, posting a 1-2-0 record, a 4.97 GAA and a save percentage of .824. In two OUA regular season games, she was credited with a 1-1-0 record, a 3.02 GAA and an .889 save percentage. The fifth-year kinesiology student decided to rejoin the Martlets the week they began post-season play but a hip injury aggravated at the Team Canada training camp in January, kept her out of action until this week. In 100 career games with the women's team, St-Pierre has a 48-39-12 overall record, posting 26 shutouts and a 2.13 goals-against average. She is focussed on helping McGill win its first-ever national hockey title, the only major championship that has eluded St-Pierre in a career that has garnered gold at every level, including Quebec provincial titles, Canadian senior titles, the world championships and the Olympics. St-Pierre became the first McGill woman ever to win an Olympic gold medal when she backstopped Canada to gold at the Salt Lake City Games. Next month, she will be travelling with Team Canada to the 2004 IIHF world hockey championship in Halifax.

LENDING A HELPING HADD: Team captain Audrey Hadd, a 21-year-old biology junior from St-Hyacinthe, Que., was overlooked on the QSSF all-star squad this season after earning second team honours last year. She enters the Nationals with an 11-16-27 record in 33 games overall. She owns a career record of 35-57-92 in 103 games with the Martlets, posting 16-16-32 in 38 games as a sophomore and 8-25-33 in 32 games as a freshman.

PETE TURNS ON THE HEAT: Peter Smith, a 50-year-old native of Lachine, Que., is in his fifth season at the helm of the McGill women's hockey program. He is the all-time winningest coach in team history and has compiled a career record of 101-57-19 overall (.624) behind the McGill bench, heading into the CIS tournament this week. Smith, a full-time employee at McGill, was voted CIS coach of the year last season. His two daughters (Natalie and Christina) both play on the current Martlets team. Last month, he served as an assistant coach with the Canadian under-22 women's team that won gold at the European Air Canada Cup tourney in Germany, Feb. 5-7, 2004. Smith previously served as a coach with Team Quebec at three Esso-Canadian women's senior hockey championships, winning gold as a head coach in 2002 after earning back-to-back silvers as an assistant coach.

HOCKEY HISTORY 101: According to Brian McFarlane's book on the history of women's hockey ³Proud Past, Bright Future², female students at McGill began playing the game on campus 109 years ago, in 1894, some 10 years after women were first admitted to McGill. They were granted four hours of ice time per week on an indoor rink, providing that three men were on duty to guard the entrances to the arena! No male students were allowed to become involved and the women had to be comfortably and warmly dressed. In time, the women objected to these conditions and when another arena was erected behind McGill's Royal Victoria College, they organized inter-class games in the new rink. The referee for these matches generally ignored any infractions and blew his whistle three times < to begin play, to signal halftime and to signal the end of the contest.

CINDERELLA NO LONGER: Despite being one of the first women's hockey programs in North America, dating back to 1894, the McGill Martlets were considered to be the Cinderella team of CIS women's hockey when they first appeared at the Nationals in the 1998-99... After

winning the Quebec championship in 1984-85, the McGill women went through a rough stretch, qualifying for the playoffs only once in the next 13 years... However, their fortunes changed with the formation of a Canadian university women's championship in 1997-98 and the arrival of goaltender Kim St-Pierre in 1998... Since then, McGill has made a greater commitment to improving its women's hockey team which had been operating under "club" status (i.e. no funding)... The team is now fully funded and has a full-time coach in Peter Smith... They have made the playoffs for seven straight seasons, including berths at the Nationals five times over the past six years...

McGILL MEMENTOS: McGill assisted in the founding of three other universities: Victoria, U.B.C. and Alberta... The University is named for the Hon. James McGill, a fur trader and leading Montreal merchant who died in 1813... He bequeathed his Burnside Palace estate and £10,000 towards the establishment of a ³Royal Institute for the Advancement of Learning²... In 1821 the institution received its first Royal Charter from King George IV and McGill College was founded... Classes began in 1829 when an existing medical college was incorporated into McGill... In 1872, McGill formed a football club which, two years later, met Harvard in the first ³North American-style² football game... In 1877, McGill students formed the world's first organized hockey club... In 1884, women were first admitted to McGill... In 1891, McGill graduate James Naismith invented the game of Basketball... In 1898, the men's intercollegiate soccer program began... In 1922-23, the women's Intercollegiate basketball program began... Some other notable McGill graduates include: Conrad Black, Leonard Cohen, Ken Dryden, Dick Irvin, Jr., Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Frank and Lester Patrick, Pierre Péladeau, Richard Pound, William Shatner, Michael Soles, Larry Smith, Randy Chevrier (Dallas Cowboys, Cincinnati Bengals, Edmonton Eskimos), J.P. Darche of the NFL's Seattle Seahawks and Mike Babcock, current coach of the NHL's Anaheim Ducks.

WHAT THE HECK'S A MARTLET?: The McGill University crest includes three Martlets which were part of the coat of arms in James McGill's family. A Martlet is a mythical bird which cannot land because it has no feet. Hence it is in a state of perpetual flight, always soaring higher in the pursuit of higher learning. The nickname ³Martlets² was adopted in 1976.

McGILL COAT OF ARMS: The University's coat of arms was derived from an armorial device assumed by James McGill. It include three red Martlets on a silver field. At the top of the shield is an open book < the heraldic symbol of an institution of learning. It bears the words In Domino Confido, James McGill's motto which translates into the phrase ³I trust in the Lord². Silver crowns on either side of the book refer to Montreal's royal name and the inclusion of a fleur-de-lys is a reminder of the city's French origin. Montreal's three peaks of Mt. Royal are represented by three peaks above the Martlets in the coat of arms... The patent was granted by England's College of Arms in 1922 and registered in 1956 with the Lord Lyon, King of Arms in Scotland. On June 12, 1992, the patent was registered with the Public Register of Arms, Flags and Badges of Canada.