

NEWS



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10 YEARS LATER: REVISITING SAINT JOHN '97

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. ... Exactly 10 years ago, the stars were coming out in Saint John, N.B., for the 1997 AHL All-Star Classic, the first AHL All-Star event ever held in Canada and arguably one of the best AHL All-Star Games ever played.



The AHL introduced a new format for the 1997 Classic, pitting Canadian-born players against a team of World All-Stars, those born outside Canada. That format is still in use today, with the World team having been renamed PlanetUSA in 1998.

The World team cruised to an 18-9 victory in the Skills Competition, setting the stage for a most competitive All-Star Game. A sold-out Harbour Station welcomed the AHL's brightest stars, and it was the goaltenders who outshined everyone else. The six netminders combined to stop 84 of 88 shots as the teams skated to a 2-2 tie through 60 minutes of regulation and a five-minute overtime period. Canadian captain **Rob Murray**, one of six players in AHL history to skate in more than 1,000 career games, forced the deadlock by scoring with just 4:44 left in regulation.

The AHL borrowed a page from international competition and went to a shootout to determine a winner, nearly a decade before the tiebreaker was adopted for use in the AHL regular season. A 20-year-old **Tomas Vokoun**, now of the Nashville Predators, followed up his 19-save effort in regular play by stopping four of five shootout attempts to send the World team to a 3-2 victory. Vokoun was named the game's most valuable player.

Other notable AHL All-Stars on display in 1997 included two-time Stanley Cup champion and two-time NHL All-Star **Patrik Elias**, **Andrew Brunette**, **Anson Carter**, **Greg de Vries** and **Vaclav Prospal**, all veterans of more than 600 National Hockey League games each. There were four future NHL head coaches on display as well, two on the ice in Canadian defenseman **John Stevens** and World captain **Peter Laviolette**, and two behind the bench in **John Tortorella** and current Toronto Marlies head coach **Greg Gilbert**.

The tradition of the AHL's mid-season showcase carries on in two weeks, when the **2007 Rbk Hockey AHL All-Star Classic** takes place at Ricoh Coliseum in Toronto, Jan. 28-29.

(more)

NIELSEN, FUKUFUJI MAKE HISTORY ... Forward **Frans Nielsen** of the Bridgeport Sound Tigers and goaltender **Yutaka Fukufuji** of the Manchester Monarchs both made history during following their recent NHL recalls.

On Jan. 6, Nielsen became the first player born and trained in Denmark to play in the National Hockey League when he debuted for the New York Islanders against Carolina. On Jan. 13, Fukufuji made a relief appearance for the Los Angeles Kings against St. Louis and became the first Japanese-born and -trained player in the NHL.

HALFWAY HOME ... With 548 games in the books through Monday, the AHL is just past the midpoint of the 2006-07 regular season. Five players are on pace to record at least 100 points each, with Chicago teammates **Darren Haydar** (55a, 80pts.) and **Brett Sterling** (35g) eyeing the league's all-time records of 70 goals, 89 assists and 138 points in a season.

Other league leaders at the turn (through Monday's games):

<i>Points</i>	80	Darren Haydar, CHI	<i>Game-Winning Goals</i>	6	Jason Jaffray, MTB
<i>Goals</i>	35	Brett Sterling, CHI	<i>Plus/Minus</i>	+21	Alexandre Giroux, HER
<i>Assists</i>	55	Darren Haydar, CHI	<i>Penalty Minutes</i>	158	Brian Sipotz, CHI
<i>Points (rookie)</i>	56	Brett Sterling, CHI	<i>GAA</i>	1.87	Zack Stortini, HAM
<i>Goals (rookie)</i>	35	Brett Sterling, CHI	<i>Save Percentage</i>	.938	Jaroslav Halak, HAM
<i>Assists (rookie)</i>	26	Janis Sprukts, ROC	<i>Wins</i>	24	Jaroslav Halak, HAM
<i>Points (defenseman)</i>	28	Sheldon Brookbank, MIL	<i>Shutouts</i>	5	Corey Crawford, NOR
		Lawrence Nycholat, HER	<i>Power Play %</i>	23.9	Jaroslav Halak, HAM
<i>Goals (defenseman)</i>	11	Andy Delmore, SPR	<i>Penalty Killing %</i>	89.8	Wilkes-Barre/Scranton
<i>Assists (defenseman)</i>	25	Lawrence Nycholat, HER	<i>Goals For/Game</i>	4.36	Bridgeport
<i>Power Play Goals</i>	16	Brandon Bochenski, NOR	<i>Goals Against/Game</i>	2.48	Chicago
<i>Shorthanded Goals</i>	4	Alexandre Giroux, HER	<i>Average Attendance</i>	8,437	Manchester
		David Van der Gulik, OMA			Hershey
		Rich Peverley, MIL			

ETC. ... Albany forward **Ben Guite**, who scored his first career NHL goal for Colorado on Jan. 9, has points in 14 of his last 15 AHL games (6g, 14a)... Hershey beat the River Rats for the 18th straight time on Sunday, 6-3... **Frans Nielsen** has points in 12 straight games for Bridgeport, tied for the longest scoring streak in Sound Tigers history... Portland went 205:39 without scoring against Hartford goaltending before **Tim Brent**'s goal with 48 seconds left in an eventual 2-1 shootout loss to the Wolf Pack on Saturday... Hartford woke up on New Year's Eve alone in last place in the seven-team Atlantic Division; 14 days later, they were alone in second... Philadelphia's **Darren Reid** scored seven goals in 51 games during calendar year 2006; he has seven goals in six games to start 2007... **Jason Jaffray** has scored a goal in seven straight games for Manitoba... The Chicago Wolves welcomed the franchise's 5-millionth fan on Friday night, **Stephanie Pappas** from Glenview, Ill... Syracuse has earned points in eight of its last 10 games (5-2-0-3)... Toronto scored two goals in the final 88 seconds of regulation, both with the goalie pulled for an extra attacker, before defeating Iowa in overtime on Saturday night, 5-4... A total of 35 AHL alumni have been named to play in the NHL's All-Star festivities in Dallas next week, including 15 in the YoungStars Game on Jan. 23 and 20 in the All-Star Game on Jan. 24.

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