



Rand Zacharias

we won

Obviously, there is some unified skill and power in our hometown hockey team, the one with the name of Rockets, with the mascot that is a raccoon, and jerseys bearing ferocious-looking, horned Ogopegos.

Okanagan Life was there, witnessing not only the money shot but also keeping a lens on Rockets fans and friends.

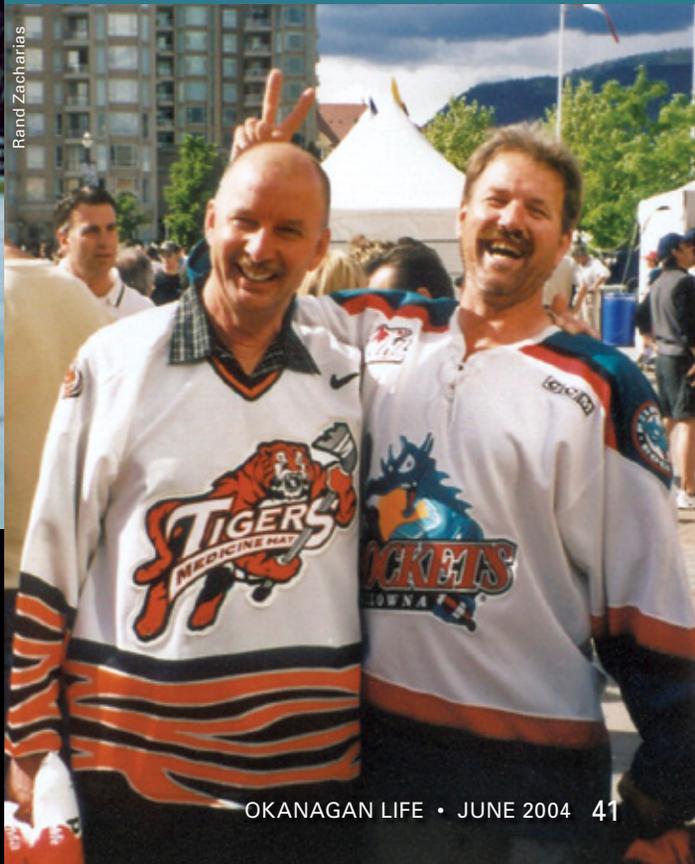


Thanks *for* the Memorial!

by Rand Zacharias



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Shannon Thomas



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courtesy of the Kelowna Rockets

Tim Swanky

Justin Keller

Keller scored the biggest goal of his career as the third period of the Mastercard's Memorial Cup Championship Game raged to a fiery end for the talented Gatineau Olympiques.

The Memorial Cup couldn't have happened on a more appropriate weekend for the Western Hockey League's Kelowna Rockets. It was a victory to match all victories in the team's history – a perfect tribute to the revered Queen on the annual weekend to which she is dedicated. Her Majesty's name was Victoria and the Rockets were victorious.

Josh Gorges, Kelly Guard, Randall Gellech were familiar heroes, but arguably the player with the biggest smile on his face when he awoke on Victoria Day was Justin Keller...a Summerland 18-year-old. Keller scored the biggest goal of his career as the third period of the Mastercard's Memorial Cup Championship Game raged to a fiery end for the talented Gatineau Olympiques.

For those attending each and every game of the tournament, there was no end to the excitement. As the Guelph Storm (a favourite to win at the outset) lost three games in a row to go home early, the host team Rockets remained stingy on defense, as Guard stood his ground for the amazing achievement of allowing only three goals in four games.

The Gatineau Olympiques and the Medicine Hat Tigers faced off early in the afternoon in the Saturday semi-final. The Olympiques seemed to have the game in hand leading 5-1 until the third period, when the Tigers roared back with three unanswered goals. With a one goal difference the Olympiques finally answered the hard-charging Tigers who seemed to be stalking the Olympiques' flame, hoping to extinguish it. The 6-4 score seemed to conclude the outcome but the Tigers roared again with under 11 seconds left in the game, again closing the gap to one goal. The Medicine Hat Tigers only succumbed when time ran out, losing 6-5.

The Olympiques went back to the Best Western Inn. They hoped for a quiet evening. It didn't happen, as a fire alarm went off at 1:30 am to once again disrupt the burning Olympiques, and perhaps, a sign of the



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alarming events that would not bring them the Cup for the second year in a row. It had been a difficult year.

Gatineau's season was dedicated to a fallen friend and teammate, Jeff Smith, who died in an unfortunate fall from the roof of a school in his Nova Scotian hometown. Smith, who played defense with the Olympiques in last year's tournament assisted on two goals. After his memory, the organization and players kept him in their thoughts. The Olympiques wanted to play without mentioning Smith's memory during the tournament...once again, confirming the class of the Gatineau organization.

The final game confirmed the dominant play of the Rockets even in the first two periods, as the three lines in Ogoopogo red jerseys kept charging the Olympiques net minder, David Tremblay, vexing him once with a goal that was rescinded after instant replay revealed a suspicious skate touching the puck and sending it into the Gatineau net.

Kelly Guard and David Tremblay continued to hold tight until finally the Olympiques torched the Rockets' glaring-in-red goaltender with a power play goal, fuelling even more the loud crowd's fiery cheers.

Three minutes later, Randall Gelech scored off a rebound from a shot by Brett Palin, making the game a dead heat once again.

Enter Justin Keller who flew down his offwing three minutes after Gelech's mark to slide a sly backhand off Tremblay's left pad against his right and decidedly into the back of the net.

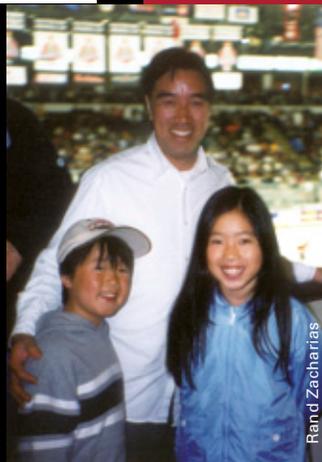
Prospera Place erupted in what proved to be the game and championship-winning goal for the hosting Rockets. Keller has propelled himself into Rocket history, along with the rest of the disciplined ensemble, with the most important win in the Hamilton family-owned franchise's history.

Viva Victoria!

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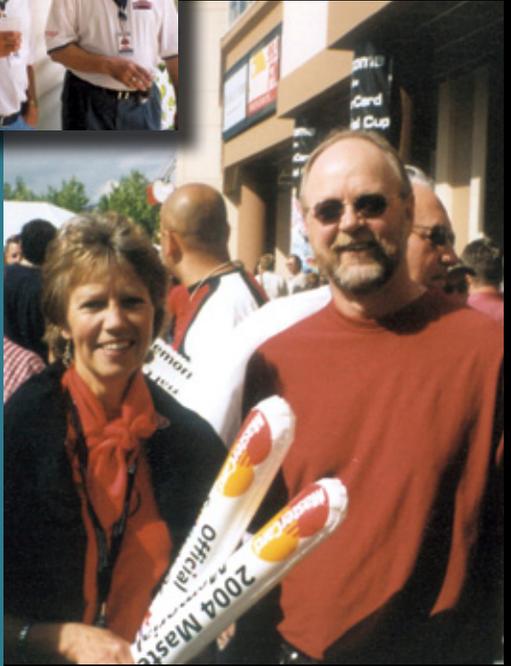
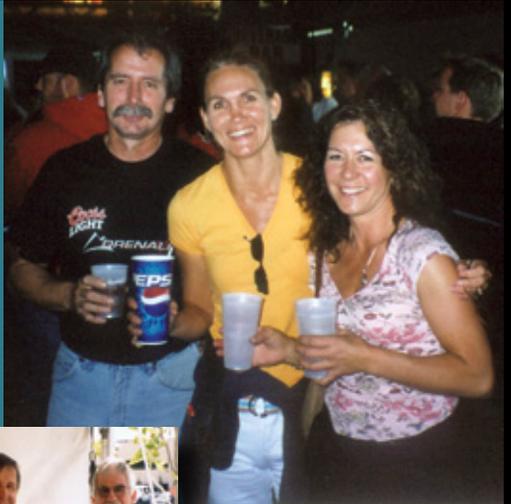




All photos by Rand Zacharias



friends & fans









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Congratulations Rockets!

