

By P. J. Kennedy

The first "Varsity" men's hockey team to represent University of Saskatchewan was formed in 1910. Through the fund-raising efforts of several students, the team was established primarily to compete in the Saskatoon City League against the Hoo Hoos, the Strathconas, the Bankers, and Nutana. The 10 January 1910 *Saskatoon Daily Phoenix* reported that "Early in the season three university men, who were now on the team, went around and collected \$360. from the citizens for a Varsity hockey team." This certainly illustrated well the desire of these student-athletes to represent their University. This was done despite a dearth of hockey talent at a university which had only received its charter in 1907.

According to the *Keystone* which served as the University yearbook, the level of play was not very high: "The number of Canadian born students was very small during the first year so the number of hockey players was not large." "While Stanley Cup hockey was not indulged in, there was created amongst the men a strong hockey spirit." The team's initial plans to contend for the City League championship fell through although it did ultimately compete as a University team in early 1910. The 22 January 1910 edition of the *Saskatoon Phoenix* substantiates that the men's Varsity hockey team played "the Massey-Harris team in a practice [exhibition] game." Thus began the history of men's Varsity Hockey at University of Saskatchewan.

Beyond this University-senior league team contest, the university-wide contingent labelled "Varsity" saw action against teams representing specific colleges within the institution. As was the custom of the time, hockey teams had seven players per side; a goaltender, point, cover point, rover, left wing, centre, and right wing. By 1910, University of Saskatchewan consisted of a College of Arts and Science, Emmanuel College and a College of Agriculture as well as students studying for law. A reference to the University hockey team was made in the 26 February 1910 issue of the *Daily Phoenix* which noted how "the law students and Varsity sevens will again cross sticks at the Fourth Avenue Rink this afternoon at 5:30." This confirms that the first Varsity squad was playing as both an extramural and intramural team in 1910.

It was not until 27 February 1911 that University of Saskatchewan's Varsity pucksters would play their first inter-university game. On that day the team met University of Alberta at Saskatoon's Auditorium for what would be the first inter-university hockey game in Western Canada.

Thus the history of a Varsity men's hockey team extends back 100 years to 1910. It is a legacy which started with seven-man hockey with each of the players playing every minute of each game. Despite numerous rule changes, the transformation to six-man hockey, and the move to twenty-two men rosters, in the past century, the legacy of the spirit which characterized the early Varsity teams remains among the Huskie men's hockey team in 2010.

Congratulations to the centennial team of 2009-2010 as it represents 100 years of varsity hockey at University of Saskatchewan!

Dr. Michael P. J. Kennedy is the author and editor of [Dogs on Ice: A History of Hockey at University of Saskatchewan](#) (project co-ordinator Bill Seymour) and teaches "Reading Culture: Hockey in Canadian Literature for the Department of English. The book is available through b.seymour@sasktel.net, McNally Robinson, and the U. of S. Book Store.