

Galt Hornets 1970-71

Allan Cup Champions



Members of the Galt Hornets Allan Cup championship club from 1970-71 include, front row, left to right: Norm Defelice (coach), Bob Maxwell, Wes Lillie (manager), Vance Millar (captain), Gord Renwick (president), Steve Hunt, Bill "Wiggie" Wylie (coach). Second row, left to right: Harold "Boat" Hurley, Tom Hewitt, Fern Belanger, Peter Brennan, Pete Bettiol, John Beechey, Bill Hway, Ron Hergott, Pete Panagabko, Ed Heather (trainer), Ken Broderick. Third row, left to right: John Nickerson, Howie Dietrich, Doug Kelcher, Ron Smith, Ron Boomer, Mike Doersam, Dave Cressman, Cec Hoekstra. Back row, left to right: Bruce Reier, Tom McCarthy, Moe Galand.

When the Galt Hornets defeated Calgary in four straight games to win the coveted 1971 Allan Cup Championship, it had only been two years since they had last won the same trophy, symbolic of senior hockey supremacy.

Many of the players were the same, as was the manager, Wes Lillie, but there were some notable names missing, like former captain Joe Hogan, who had retired the year before.

Everyone knew going in to the 1970-71 season that the Hornets would be a strong team, but no one knew they were destined to win the Allan Cup.

Not only was it a testament to coaches Norm Defelice and Wig Wylie - Defelice suffered a heart attack late in the season and Wylie was behind the bench at season's end and during the playoffs - and a cast of extremely talented players, but also to their hard-working executive whose "share-the-wealth" system meant all players shared in the profits. Because of the share-the-wealth system, no one was getting paid under the table.

"The players came to trust the organization," recalled one of the club's founders, John Pinchin.

Behind the all-world goaltending of Harold "Boat" Hurley and Ken Broderick, a pickup for the playoffs, and with a stellar cast of senior players, the Hornets swept the western Canadian champion Calgary squad before sellout crowds at Galt Arena Gardens.

It was the same Calgary Stampeder squad the Hornets had beaten two years earlier to win the Cup.

Dave Cressman, a former Kitchener Ranger Jr. A star playing in his first season with the Hornets, scored the winning goal in Game Four.

Interestingly, Cressman was drafted 48th overall in 1970 by the Minnesota North Stars and scored a goal on his first shift in the NHL in 1975 against the New York Islanders.

Although the Hornets swept Calgary, it was an arduous road just to get to the finals. "The hard part was just getting out of our league," recalled trainer Ed Heather. "There were some tough teams here, like Barrie and Orillia, and then it didn't get any easier when we played against the northern Ontario teams like Sault Ste. Marie or Thunder Bay."

In the spring of 1971, the road to the Cup meant the Hornets had to successively beat Orillia for the league championship, and then Thunder Bay, Grand Falls, Newfoundland, and finally Calgary.

Both the 68-69 team and the 70-71 team were great squads and played with lots of heart, but the 70-71 team probably had a slight edge in talent over their predecessors.

As winners of the Allan Cup in 1971, the Hornets were Canada's representative at the Ahearn Cup international tournament in Stockholm, Sweden, which started on Christmas Day, 1971.

Boat Hurley was injured (broken leg) and didn't play in Sweden, but the Hornets took goalies Sonny Pennington and Gerry Powers. Both played well.

There they faced some world-class opposition, including the Russian national squad, a team that was to become famous during the Canada-Russia hockey summit series less than a year later.

Playing on that squad were all-stars like Alexander Maltsov and Alexander Yakushev.

The Hornets also faced the national team from Finland, and several Swedish teams. In their final game, a game that would determine the tournament champion, they lost 9-5 to the Russians before a sellout crowd of 15,000. They finished third, behind the Russians and Swedes.

It was an eye-opening experience. The Hornets were a good squad, and had played exhibition games against AHL teams earlier that season, but those teams