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Cover Photo / Sean Gulley

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This month features the draftees in the inaugural Western Hockey League’s U.S. Prospects Draft.

The draft was part of the WHL’s efforts to find up-and-coming hockey prospects in the U.S. Players were invited to a special May camp in Anaheim where teams scouted the players and selected the rights of five Arizona stars.

Name: Richard Coyne  Age: 15  
Team: DYHA Phoenix Firebirds AAA  
Position: Defenseman  
Big news: First Arizona player selected. He went No. 2 overall to Spokane. The draft featured many top-tier defensemen and Coyne could be the cream of the crop.

Name: Eric Ferber  Age: 15  
Team: DYHA Phoenix Firebirds AAA  
Position: Goalie  
Big news: Recently drafted No. 5 overall by the Swift Current Broncos. Becomes first goalie ever to be drafted out of Arizona. Other teams were hoping he would fall lower in the draft but the Broncos snatched Ferber early.

Name: Jacob Cole  Age: 15  
Team: DYHA Phoenix Firebirds AAA  
Position: Defenseman  
Big news: Selected No. 8 by Portland. Helped the Firebirds reach nationals this season and Portland hopes he develops well in its system.

Name: Aaron Ave  Age: 15  
Team: DYHA Phoenix Firebirds AAA  
Position: Defenseman  
Big news: Drafted 15th overall by Kootenay. Ave rounds out the list of tough defensemen from Arizona and should do well at the next level.

Name: Brad Frank  Age: 16  
Team: Peoria Roadrunners  
Position: Goalie  
Big news: Drafted by Calgary with the final selection of the first round. Quickly gave Arizona its second drafted goalie to keep pace with California’s three goal-tenders drafted.

In the ‘Zona is a monthly feature focusing on individuals making waves on the Arizona hockey scene. We want to hear about hockey success from people of all ages. Game-winning goals, league MVPs and great game performances are prime examples. Send your nominations to info@arizonarubber.com and include “In the ‘Zona” in the subject field. If possible, include a digital headshot picture of the nominee. ☞

Editor’s Column: Rubber hits the streets, Web

Welcome to the first of what we hope to be a long line of monthly issues of Arizona Rubber.

After our premiere issue, we received some good suggestions and hope Rubber reflects the kind of magazine you need.

In this issue we want to draw your attention to some specific features.

First of all, and most important, are our reader-driven features. Our letters to the editor, team of the month and In the ‘Zona features depend on your input.

Your letters are the way to let us hear your opinion and to also share your thoughts on hockey in Arizona. It’s a hockey forum like no other.

You can also use our team of the month feature to brag about a team in your association or one on which you play. We want to give the teams in Arizona a place to show off because, frankly, you deserve it.

The final new feature, In the ‘Zona, highlights individual performances and we think it’s going to be a great place for the best in Arizona to earn some exposure.

We added these features to make Rubber your magazine. With your help we can make these pages the home for hockey in Arizona.

The other announcement we’re proud to reveal is our investment in the Web by way of www.arizonarubber.com.

In addition to the monthly stories you’ll find in the magazine, we’ll have extra articles, bonus features and information available online. It will also be a home for breaking hockey news.

With the Web, we’ve increased our reach and given you a place to catch up on what’s happening on the hockey scene from your computer.

These developments are aimed at grabbing a foothold in the Grand Canyon State. But we need your help.

The reason hockey and lacrosse thrive here is because the people involved are investing the necessary time and effort. Rubber is here to add to that effort and we hope our forums and reader-driven features help.

Starting with this issue, we’ll be in your rinks and mailboxes on a monthly basis. Enjoy. ☞

Reach Eickmeyer at: cameron@arizonarubber.com

Team of the Month

The Harper’s Roof Rats of Summit Hockey’s Saturday Night League earned this month’s honor for winning the summer league championship.

The Rats topped the Rio Salado Lightning 9-0 in the championship game and wrapped up their first league crown.

The Rats finished the season 9-11-1 but knocked off the top-seeded Los Federales in the semifinals to set up the final showdown.

Pictured above: Kevin Marks, Greg Haggerty, Andy Bodganoff, Chris Campbell, Sian Proctor, Chris Harper, Dan Carroll, Jason Enright, Aaron Enright, Manny Lozano, Eric Allanson, Steve Dean, Jeff Sabato, Diana Connor, Kevin McBay, Ernie Burkholder, Patrick Bartshe and Thomas Tenkely.
Rubber Interview: Jim Johnson

It's been a busy year for Jim Johnson. Between accepting national coaching awards and helping pioneer the state's first corporate-sponsored Tier I program, the former Coyote continues to support Arizona's youth hockey development to its fullest. Arizona Rubber Magazine's Brian McDonough caught up with Johnson to talk chalkboards and chopsticks.

Arizona Rubber: What spurred you into your love for coaching?
Jim Johnson: I retired here as a player (in 1998) and was working in upper management with the Coyotes organization, trying to step on the ice and help with my son's (Derik) team and, at the local association, trying to educate the coaches and develop the fundamental skills of the players.

I then started coaching Derik's team - local kids who wanted to play and enjoyed the game - just working on their overall skill development and I just stayed with it. Since then I've been very involved in Arizona amateur development for both the coaches and the players.

AZR: How has the quality of coaching in Arizona progressed since you first got behind the bench?
JJ: It's improving, but we still have a ways to go. I think Arizona is putting out some pretty top-notch players and we don't get the (participation) numbers other communities get because of the cost associated with playing, and that's kind of my whole goal: to try to reduce the cost for kids while giving them a great opportunity to develop in the state of Arizona.

AZR: You climbed a major hurdle in that regard with the inception of the Phoenix P.F. Chang's Tier I hockey program. How did that relationship come about and what does it mean for Arizona's development?
JJ: We had the opportunity to sit down with (P.F. Chang's president) Rick Federico, and he's got a son (Matt) playing and he completely understands the objective of trying to keep these kids in town to stay with family, friends, keeping them in there local schools in their comfortable environment while giving the players the opportunity to continue their fundamental development playing the great game at a high level.

We've got many talented players right here if we can keep them from leaving, but the only way we're going to keep them here is if we reduce the cost of playing in the big-time national exposure tournaments. We're competing at the national level and the skill and development of our kids is as good as anybody in North America, so the next step is to keep them in town.

The whole idea is to open doors for these kids and get them exposed and show that the level of ability here in Arizona is getting as good as anywhere in the country. And the good thing is that junior teams and colleges are starting to recognize that, but the more we can do to at this level to keep the kids together, the more national recognition they'll get.

Letters continued / Page 22

Collins readies for final year at Northern

Gilbert's Dusty Collins ran front and center as Arizona Rubber's first-ever cover boy back in April. A testament to Arizona's development, Collins ascended all the way through the state's youth ranks to earn a roster spot at Northern Michigan University.

So what's in store for the gritty senior forward as he enters his last year of college hockey? Taking charge is tops on the list, according to his coach.

“Dusty will be relied upon to provide leadership both on and off the ice,” said NMU coach Walt Kyle. “His character and work ethic are exactly what we stand for in our program and we hope he can lead others by example.”

A fifth-round pick of the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2004, Collins totaled four goals for 10 points in 34 games with the Wildcats last season, but his contributions in the CCHA have traditionally come away from the puck.

“We expect Dusty to be one of the most difficult players in the country to play against next season,” Kyle added. “His value can’t be measured by goals and assists; a better indicator might be bruises-inflicted-on-opponents.”

Collins, 21, began his career in the Desert Youth Hockey Association before joining the Phoenix Polar Bears' Junior B team. From there, it was off to Michigan and USA Hockey's esteemed National Team Development Program before heading to Northern.

Letters to the Editor

Here is where we need your help to fill our pages. Long gone are the days your hockey opinions are confined to rink chatter and Glendale Arena concession lines.

When you have something to vent about or want to comment on articles in our pages, we want to hear from you.
Game On!

New season brings plenty of excitement, challenges

By Cameron Eickmeyer

To some, the start of a new hockey season is always something new to look forward to, smelly gear and all. To others, they hear the beat of that same old drum.

Rising costs for travel programs and equipment coupled with the state’s rapidly increasing player population makes planning a nightmare.

Then there are tournaments to organize and it’s understandable that some parents and coaches aren’t so thrilled to drop the puck.

Those issues, no matter which type of person you are, affect you each and every hockey season. Finding ways to manage these obstacles can make life easier for every association in the state.

How to fit the budget

A large portion of hockey’s expense is gear. Finding cheap equipment is a challenge for every skater from the youngster to the 50-year-old just entering the game.

There’s no shortage of stores in the state, starting with the five Behind The Mask locations in the Phoenix area. There’s also the Summit Hockey Shop located in Tempe’s Oceanside Arena and Coyotes Ice Sports inside the Alltel Ice Den in Scottsdale. To the south, Tucson Ice houses the Hockey Haven shop.

Secondhand shops, such as Play it Again Sports, offer discounted prices for used equipment. There is also the chance ex-rink rats have unloaded good gear to save garage space.

The best time to hit these stores is during the offseason when their stocks are overflowing and the demand is generally low. Players can also look to the Web for help. This goes both ways, to find equipment and make a little money on unwanted or extra gear.

Serge Kocharov, a goalie with the Hacker Hockey League, turned his old pads into profit by selling them on the Internet. He was planning to practically give the gear away before online bidding gave him enough cash to upgrade his pads.

Local organizations and associations often hold on to old equipment and are usually willing to either rent or lend a helmet or pair of gloves for a short time.

Costs aren’t limited to parents’ pocketbooks, though, as associations and travel teams face budget-line pressures as well. Mike De Angelis, of the Coyotes Amateur Hockey Association, said his parents don’t stand for expensive fees.

“There’s a cry from our customers, the travel customers, about trying to keep the expenses down,” he said.

In addition to giving coaches the option to negotiate travel schedules, thus allowing individual parents more input, associations can also work together to drop costs, De Angelis said.

“The best way is to make better intercity, interstate rivalries so you don’t have to travel out of state,” he said.

His theory is that if every association fields top-tier teams at each level, then teams within the state boundaries will find the exposure and competition they crave without adding frequent flyer miles.

This would also mean out-of-state teams would take a closer look at traveling to Arizona for games, thus making the state a destination for hockey.

When travel becomes the issue, coaches and presidents need to be in constant contact with parents. In short, hockey needs to make sense financially or the game will suffer.

Camie McCracken’s family, which lives in Flagstaff, takes travel to the extreme. The McCrackens will drive the 155 miles to Phoenix an average three times per week on top of a five-tournament travel schedule for her son to play hockey on a local travel team.

Overall, it costs the McCrackens one tank of gas each practice and a six-hour investment for a one-hour practice session.

“My son has dreams of playing in the NHL and I’m not willing to squash those dreams (over travel expenses),” McCracken said.

To save money, the family purchased a Honda Hybrid for better gas mileage.

“The money we would have put in the tank now we’re putting it on the car payment,” she added.
Growing pains

One indication the state’s player pool is overflowing like a Phoenix storm drain in a monsoon is the demand for more rinks.

New inline rinks and a new Polar Ice rink in Gilbert will become hockey hubs in the near future. Until then, the current rink setup has to accommodate the growing player population.

The growth makes rink costs skyrocket, as an hour of ice time becomes a finite need. Still, association heads report that rinks are willing to work to keep their fees low and comparable from rink to rink to keep kids on the ice.

For example, Alltel Ice Den costs for CAHA have not gone up so De Angelis can keep his house and travel teams on the ice.

“Getting the little guys interested in skating is very important,” he said.

There is also a need for the public to push for more rinks. If the sizable hockey community mobilizes its efforts, new rinks won’t be a last-second shot; they could become more like an empty-net heave.

New programs take hold of Valley scene
Mission Arizona, P.F. Chang’s hit the ice this season

The rapidly growing hockey community in Arizona has two new faces to add to its constantly expanding family.

The Mission Arizona ice association and the P.F. Chang’s Tier I organization take their baby steps this season and look toward bright futures in the Valley of the Sun.

Both programs draw on the top talent in the state and plan to work within the hockey community to schedule games, tournaments and develop the state’s talent level.

Hockey on the menu

With the P.F. Chang’s China Bistro backing the AAA team, the merger of the Desert Youth Hockey Association and the Valley of the Sun Hockey Association Mustangs clubs has become an interesting development.

Kurt Goar, of the DYHA Firebirds, and Jim Johnson, of VOSHA, combined their talented teams and this season could be a formidable force in youth hockey.

The Mustangs will jump in the fire early, heading to the Labor Day Kickoff Tournament in San Jose, Calif., where the top teams from the west will square off Sept. 1-4.

“This is a great opportunity for our organization to jump right in and compete in a highly-competitive tournament,” Johnson said. “We are looking forward to the experience, the opportunity and the challenge.” (see more on Johnson and the P.F. Chang’s program on Page 5).

Camaraderie is the Mission

The Mission Arizona ice program, which grew out of the Mission inline program, kicked off its inaugural season on Aug. 13 with a barbecue at Ozzie Ice in Phoenix.

Mission organizers, primarily coach Jeremy Goltz, started planning the association three years ago. The players are pooled from other associations and grew together as family members during travel seasons.

The result was the players and parents wanted to hang out more and starting a new program with that goal seemed like a good idea, said Felicia Perona, Mission Arizona’s manager.

Mission will send out Midget A and AA teams and a Bantam squad this year with the hope of expanding in the near future, Goltz said. However, the group doesn’t want the program’s goal to be solely growth.

“Of course we’d like to win nationals, that’s everybody’s goal,” Perona said, “but as far as enrollment goals and growing in that aspect, if it happens, it happens.”

Goltz added that he wants his players to be able to advance through the ranks, moving from novice to possibly jumping to juniors one day.

“My youngest group I have right now that I’m coaching, the ’93s, well I’m excited to be coaching because I’m going to have this core together for potentially five or six years,” he said.

— Cameron Eickmeyer
Over the course of two long weekends in May, 61 teams from all over the state converged on the Castle Sports Club in Phoenix to compete for the state championship trophy at the Arizona Inline Hockey Association (AIHA) finals.

With teams competing in 17 age divisions, from 8-and-under all the way up to 35-and-over, the tournament had plenty of incredible individual and team performances, as well as a fair share of great comebacks, upsets and close games with nine of the 14 championship games being decided by two goals or less.

The home team, Castle Excalibur, had a strong showing on its floor, winning six state championship trophies and being named the top program in the AIHA for the 2005-06 season.

“The state championship tournament was an exciting end to another successful AIHA season,” said Castle’s Dave Marmorstein. “As the host facility, it was a pleasure to have the best inline hockey players in Arizona participating for the right to be state champions.”

The AIHA is a unique inline hockey series in Arizona sanctioned by the AAU and dedicated to supporting youth and adult hockey.

The first weekend got off to a great start with an exciting first championship game in the 16-and-under A division, a battle down to the wire between Rollerplex Panthers Orange and Team Excalibur. Excalibur kept it close but Rollerplex pulled it out late on a goal by Long Duong with 17 seconds left. The other two champions in the 16-and-under division were Excalibur Bantam Bronze, the surprising underdog champions of the B1 division, and Prescott Storm, winners of the B2 championship trophy in an exciting 5-4 win over the Arizona Heartbreakers.

The 8-and-under division featured one of the more dominant individual performances as division MVP Bobby Curley scored five goals in leading his Casey’s Crushers to a title-clinching win over Crazy 8’s.

In one of the more intriguing championship matchups of the weekend, Excalibur 94 Black faced off with Excalibur 93’s in the 12-and-under A division final. Bobby Krafve scored five of the six goals for the 94’s in their 6-2 win to capture the championship trophy. In the 12-and-under B1 division, Casey’s Crushers pulled out a close one over the Rollerplex Panthers; in the 12-and-under B2 division, the Phantoms dominated, beating Yuma Blaze Red, 7-2, in the final.

In one of the least surprising outcomes of the tournament, the Rink Bandits, whose only loss all year was by forfeit, took home the 18-and-under state championship trophy, led by the play of MVP Long Duong.

In the Women’s division, Team Excalibur Black dominated the championship game, defeating the Arizona Heartbreakers, 3-0, while allowing only three shots on net to win the title. Team Excalibur also took the Adult division, beating the Rollerplex Panthers, 6-2, in the final.

Excalibur continued / Page 25
Arizona inline programs land national honors

By Alex Dodt

Arizona teams represented the state well this summer, playing for numerous championships at tournaments across the nation, from Regional Championships in Anaheim to Nationals in Detroit and Toronto.

In Anaheim, at the Tour Pacific Cup Finals, the premier tournament of the West Coast, Arizona teams battled for supremacy in five championship games.

Team Excalibur was the only team successful in their title game appearance as they captured the Bantam A Select Championship with a 4-3 win over the L.A. Knights.

At the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Jr. Olympic Games in Detroit, Team Excalibur had an incredible showing, bringing home two national championships as well as one silver and two bronze medals.

A.J. Huffman had a memorable tournament, earning the bronze medal in the 14-and-under AA division and bringing home the gold in the 16-and-under A-division while being named to the All-Tournament Team in both divisions.

In the 12-and-under AA-division, Excalibur 93 defeated Team Remax to win Excalibur’s second gold medal in Detroit. Three players on that Excalibur team, Austin Hale, Mike Ciambella and Greg Barnett were named to the All-Tournament Team.

During the international competition at the Jr. Olympics, Alex Karic of Tucson played for Team USA West in the 14-and-under division and won the silver medal in a surprising run to the title game that included a huge upset of the Team Canada 14-and-under squad.

At the North American Roller Hockey Championships (NARCh) in Toronto, the last and most prestigious stop on the national tournament circuit, the Rollerplex Panthers brought home Arizona’s lone national championship in the Bantam Silver division.

Rollerplex, a team composed almost entirely of 14- and 15-year-olds, had a dominant performance at NARCh, going 6-0 in Bantam as well as winning the bronze medal in the Midget Silver division.

Fourteen-year-old Nic Spinasanta capped the tournament by winning the Top Sniper competition in the Midget Silver division.

In another spectacular individual performance, Long Duong of the Rink Bandits won the Top Sniper competition in the Midget division, pulling off many mind-boggling moves.

The Mission Arizona Stars, runners-up in the Mite A Elite division at the Pacific Cup finals, made another championship game appearance at NARCh in the Mite Gold division, but fell just short of a gold medal.

The Stars were led by goaltender Anthony Ciurro, the Top Goalie in the Mite Gold skills competition, in their run to the national championship game.

Select ‘91s take gold at State Wars

By Alex Dodt

Just days after the end of NARCh finals brought an official end to the conventional travel hockey season, State Wars kicked off in Chicago for its second year.

State Wars was a tremendous success in its first year with its unique style of state versus state competition and, with another great year in Chicago, it has truly established itself as the final season ending tournament.

This year Arizona sent 10 teams to do battle for national supremacy. Players from all across the state and from rival travel teams came together to form the best team in their birth year or age group to play for state pride.

After winning three medals last year, none of which were gold, Team Arizona stepped it up in 2006 earning four medals, including a gold and two silver.

The Select 1991 team was the class of the group in Chicago, bringing home Arizona’s first AAA gold medal. The ’91 team went 3-0-1 in round robin and dominated all comers, looking much different from the team that fell in the bronze medal game in 2005.

In the playoffs, they continued to roll and knocked off Florida and California on their way to the gold medal game where they handily defeated Michigan 4-0 to win Arizona’s first State Wars national championship.

The team was led by the dominant goaltending of AAA Most Valuable Player Andrew Barletta and forwards Kevin Morgan, Nic Spinasanta and Broderick Andersson, who finished Nos. 1-2-3, respectively, in playoff scoring. Both Barletta and Morgan were named to the All-Star Team and Morgan also earned a spot on Team America, a select group of the top 10 skaters in the division.

If any team had the potential to repeat the accomplishments of the ’91 team, it was the 1990 Selects. The ’90 team finished highest amongst all Arizona teams in 2005, winning the bronze in the AAA division.

The club showed promise in round robin, going 3-0-1, but faltered in the semifinals, losing 5-3 to North Carolina. In the bronze medal game they ran into a hot goaltender and lost 1-0 to California, falling just short of repeating as AAA bronze medalists.

The ’90 team was led by Long Duong and Daniel Amimoto. Both were selected to Team America for the second consecutive year and Amimoto was named Best Defensive Player of the tournament.

They also received top goaltending from the MVP of the 1991 Division, Barletta, who was named to the All-Star Team in both divisions.

Read more of this article on www.arizonarubber.com
Mueller closer to NHL dream

Coyotes’ top pick can’t wait to get his chance

By Russell Brooks

When asked by reporters about Peter Mueller’s shot of making the main club out of training camp, Phoenix Coyotes GM Michael Barnett sounded doubtful.

“As high of a pick as he was, stranger things have happened than an 18-year-old breaking into your lineup,” Barnett said at the inaugural Rookie Conditioning Camp help in Peoria in July.

But if you ask Mueller his opinion about making the Coyotes out of training camp, you will get a more optimistic outlook from the Western Hockey League Rookie of the Year.

“I’m really hoping I can learn from this week and show the coaches what I have,” Mueller said. “Being an NHL player has always been my dream and I can’t wait to get a chance to make this team.”

Following an impressive rookie campaign playing for the Everett Silvertips, the eighth overall draft pick in 2006 capped off an impressive 58-point season, finishing tied for second among all WHL rookies in scoring. Mueller finished second on the team in goals with 26 markers and third in points leading the Silvertips to a division title.

“I really benefited playing in such a competitive league,” said the Bloomington, Minn., native. “I feel like I got a lot out of the season up there in Everett.”

Mueller’s large stature (6-foot-2, 205 pounds) and impressive speed makes him a visible presence at both ends of the ice. Considered a tremendous talent by the Coyotes, he is a prospect to whom Phoenix will look forward to for many years to come.

“There’s no question why we drafted him,” Barnett said. “His abilities speak for themselves and after watching him for years, we’re excited to have a player like him in the organization.”

After keeping a close eye on Mueller for the past couple seasons in the WHL and U.S. Development Camp, Barnett has liked everything he has seen from the teenager.

“He’s young - he’s going to get stronger, and he’s going to get quicker,” Barnett said. “His hockey sense and his ability to see the ice and utilize his teammates, you can’t teach.”

Mueller has close ties with one player already in the Coyotes organization. Blake Wheeler, who was drafted fifth overall by Phoenix in 2004, played with Mueller at Breck High School in Minneapolis in 2003.

“I was really exciting to see him drafted,” Wheeler said. “Everyone gets a little older, a little more mature with age, but he’s still the same guy I knew back then.”

The right-handed center is coming to the Coyotes with international experience. Mueller attended the past two World Junior Championships and collected a silver medal in the 2005 IIHF Under-18 World Championships.

Barnett knows one thing is for sure when it comes to Mueller’s future with this franchise.

“If it’s here in Phoenix or back in Everett, he’s going to keep improving,” said Barnett. “He has a future with this team.”

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Signs of Summer

May
5 - Signed left wing Patrick Fischer to a multiyear contract. Last season, Fischer played in the Swiss League.
12 - Signed left wing Kevin Cormier to an entry-level contract. Cormier played last season with the Halifax Mooseheads of the Quebec Major Junior League.

June
1 - Signed right wing Ever Morrison to a multiyear contract.
26 - Resigned goaltender Curtis Joseph to a one-year contract. Last season, his first as a Coyote, Joseph played in 60 games with Phoenix, posting a 32-21 record, 2.91 goals-against average and a .902 save percentage.
31 - Wayne Gretzky agreed to a new five-year contract to remain as head coach of the team.

July
1 - Signed defensemen Ed Jovanovski to a five-year contract. Jovanovski played the past seven seasons with Vancouver.
2 - Signed goaltender Mike Morrison to a one-year contract. Last season, his first in the NHL, Morrison played in 25 combined games with Edmonton and Ottawa.
4 - Signed center Jeremy Roenick to a one-year contract. Last season, Roenick played in only 58 games with Los Angeles due to injuries (see more on Roenick on Page 30).
5 - Signed right wing Georges Laraque to a two-year contract. Laraque played last season with Stanley Cup-finalist Edmonton.
10 - Resigned left wing Josh Gratton to a one-year contract. Last season, Gratton split time with the Peoria Rivermen of the International Hockey League.
Although this year will be a decade in the desert for the Phoenix Coyotes, the team pulled off a first this summer by hosting its inaugural Rookie Conditioning Camp in July.

Twenty-six individuals, whom the Coyotes have signed to a contract or hold their rights, attended a weeklong camp that included on- and off-ice workouts that showed participants what it’s like to be a part of an NHL club.

First-round draft picks Blake Wheeler, Martin Hanzal, Peter Mueller and Chris Summers were a part of the 26 players that attended the camp held at the Glendale Arena and Desert Schools Coyotes Center in Peoria.

According to Coyotes GM Michael Barnett, the purpose of this camp is to give the players an idea of what it is like to train and play at the NHL level.

“The most important thing is that the guys come away feeling as if they are a part of the Phoenix Coyotes organization,” Barnett said. “It also helps the prospects so they can get an understanding of what the expectations are and what they need to do to continue their development, so hopefully one day they can play at the NHL level.”

A group of coaches and trainers, led by Coyotes associate coach Barry Smith and San Antonio Rampage head coach Pat Conacher – San Antonio is Phoenix’s top affiliate – guided the players through rigorous on-ice workouts daily. The Coyotes’ strength-conditioning coordinator Mike Bahn headed the off-ice workouts in the weight room at the Glendale Arena.

This camp has given the Coyotes’ front office a gauge of where each individual prospect sits on their quest toward joining the professional ranks.

“It’s good because they can get on the ice with one or more of our coaches so we can get a bit of a read on them,” Barnett said. “It’s primarily a chance to get a read where they’re at individually.”

Besides this camp helping the front office get acclimated to their prospects, it has helped the players understand what it takes to play at the NHL level.

“We are really getting some good (off-ice) workouts in and some good (on-ice) skating sessions that have taught us a lot,” said defenseman Keith Yandle, who played last season with the Moncton Wildcats of the Quebec Major Junior League.

Barnett expects this camp to become a yearly event during the summer months.

“People in the community have always wanted to know what it’s like to train and play at the NHL level,” Barnett said. “It’s a great opportunity for them to see the players in action.”

CARAVAN: The Coyotes have pulled off a first this summer by hosting an inaugural Rookie Conditioning Camp in July.}

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According to Coyotes GM Michael Barnett, the purpose of this camp is to
give the players an idea of what it is like to train and play at the NHL level.

“The most important thing is that the guys come away feeling as if they are a part of the Phoenix Coyotes organization,” Barnett said. “It also helps the prospects so they can get an understanding of what the expectations are and what they need to do to continue their development, so hopefully one day they can play at the NHL level.”

A group of coaches and trainers, led by Coyotes associate coach Barry Smith and San Antonio Rampage head coach Pat Conacher – San Antonio is Phoenix’s top affiliate – guided the players through rigorous on-ice workouts daily. The Coyotes’ strength-conditioning coordinator Mike Bahn headed the off-ice workouts in the weight room at the Glendale Arena.

This camp has given the Coyotes’ front office a gauge of where each individual prospect sits on their quest toward joining the professional ranks.

“It’s good because they can get on the ice with one or more of our coaches so we can get a bit of a read on them,” Barnett said. “It’s primarily a chance to get a read where they’re at individually.”

 Besides this camp helping the front office get acclimated to their prospects, it has helped the players understand what it takes to play at the NHL level.

“We are really getting some good (off-ice) workouts in and some good (on-ice) skating sessions that have taught us a lot,” said defenseman Keith Yandle, who played last season with the Moncton Wildcats of the Quebec Major Junior League.

Barnett expects this camp to become a yearly event during the summer months.

“People in the community have always wanted to know what it’s like to train and play at the NHL level,” Barnett said. “It’s a great opportunity for them to see the players in action.”

CARAVAN: The Coyotes Caravan revved up its engines late last month. The two-week event pits the team’s front office relations and fan development departments, along with Howler, the club’s mascot, players and other Coyote notables as they travel across Arizona - from Tucson to Prescott to all over Greater Phoenix - to promote the state’s NHL entry.

COYOTES FEST: With the culmination of the Caravan comes the kickoff to CoyotesFest. On Saturday, Sept. 9, Glendale Arena is the place to be to ring in the new Coyotes season. The shindig includes plenty of fun for kids, as well as a chance for young and old alike to meet players, take tours of the locker room, hang with Howler, and much, much more.

LEADERS OF THE PACK: The Coyotes have brought a new dance team into the fold for the 2006-07 season. The “Pack” will be the first NHL dance squad to perform routines directly on the ice. The team will make its first official public appearance at CoyotesFest.

SCOUT’S HONOR: Get the sleeping bags ready! The Boy Scouts will hold the first annual Coyotes Scout Night Sleepover on Saturday, Dec. 9, where the Scouts will actually sleepover on the suite level of Glendale Arena after watching the Coyotes face off against the Dallas Stars that night.

ARIZONA’S FINEST: Law Enforcement Night is slated for Saturday, Dec. 16, with a number of in-game activities on the docket, as well as a broomball tournament prior to the Coyotes’ game against the Calgary Flames. Proceeds from each ticket purchased through the law enforcement officers will be given to the charity of their choice.

2004 draft pick Kevin Cornier was one of 26 prospects to skate at the Coyotes’ Rookie and Conditioning Camp over the summer.

Preseason Schedule
Sunday, Sept. 17: @ Edmonton, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 19: @ Edmonton, 6 p.m.
Wednesday, Sept. 20: vs. Dallas, 7 p.m.
Friday, Sept. 22: @ Dallas, 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Sept. 27: @ Anaheim, 7 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 28: vs. Edmonton, 7 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 30: vs. Anaheim, 7 p.m.

between Philadelphia and Phoenix playing in only 14 games due
to injuries.
12 - Named Keith Gretzky, the younger brother of Wayne, as the club’s director of amateur scouting. The Coyotes also hired Greg Malone as the team’s head eastern pro scout.
12 - Acquired a fourth-round draft choice in the 2007 NHL Entry Draft from Montreal in exchange for right wing Mike Johnson, who played in 80 games for the Coyotes last season.
13 - Resigned defenseman Dennis Seidenberg and forward Fredrik Sjostrom to two-year contracts.
16 - Goaltender Mathieu Spiller, defenseman Matthew Spill and left wing Oleg Saprykin accepted their qualifying offers with the team and signed one-year contracts.
17 - Signed center Don MacLean to a two-year contract. MacLean earned the Les Cunningham Award as the AHL’s most valuable player last season with the Grand Rapids Griffins.
19 - Signed defenseeman Bryan Helmer to a two-year contract.
20 - Signed defenseeman Travis Roche to a two-year contract.
21 - Resigned goaltender David LeNeveu to a one-year contract.
21 - Resigned center Mike Comrie to a one-year contract.
21 - Signed center Mike Zigomanis to a two-year contract. In his third NHL season, Zigomanis played in 23 NHL games in 2005-06 season split between Carolina and St. Louis.
August
4 - Resigned center Mike Comrie to a one-year contract.
Terms were agreed upon prior to an arbitration hearing. Comrie registered 30 goals for 60 points in 80 games with the Coyotes last season.
7 - Left wing Ladislav Nagy was awarded a one-year, $3 million contract by Arbitrator Edwin H. Benn. Nagy led the Coyotes with 41 assists in 2005-06 despite missing the final 29 games of the season with a knee injury.
8 - Reached a one-year ECHL affiliation agreement with the Phoenix RoadRunners for the 2006-07 season.
16 - Signed right wing Owen Nolan to a one-year contract. Most recently, Nolan scored 19 goals in 2003-04 with Toronto.
The prospect of exciting challenges with a new team and a deep-seeded love of hockey brought brothers Kyle and Doug Orr to Prescott Valley’s Arizona Sundogs for the inaugural season. Each said they had a very positive experience during their first visit to the area.

“They brought a class act and treated us like an NHL organization would,” Doug said. “We were very excited at the opportunity to play with a fresh new team.”

Kyle and Doug took different routes to the Sundogs. Kyle, 21, cut his teeth in the Central Ontario Junior Hockey League before getting the call from Head Coach Marco Pietroniro, and brother Doug, 25, was a leader in the COJHL before honing his skills at McGill University in Montreal.

Pietroniro said each man brings a different style to the game and it’s what makes them such a valuable asset to the club.

“Doug played at McGill for five years and was a leading scorer and all-star. He is a great all-around player,” he said. “His talent is one you will admire on the ice. He is a very competitive guy from a very competitive family.”

The average hockey fan will recognize the legendary last name as Doug and Kyle are the nephews of hockey icon Bobby Orr. Uncle Bobby redefined the game while making the Boston Bruins a dynasty in the late 60s and early 70s.

Doug said he learned a lot in his college career and plans to use those lessons to make the Sundogs a winning team.

“There are a lot of smart people there,” he said. “We did a lot of study. We played fewer games and did more practice. I’m more of a technical player.”

Each of the brothers brings a different skill set and mind set to the Sundogs roster. Doug said he is much more the offensive player.

“Kyle is bigger. So, I have to use my size differently,” he said. “I use my speed to score goals when needed.”

Pietroniro said as a team Captain in the COJHL, Kyle also showed the skills he was seeking for his team.

“Even though he comes to our dressing room at a very young age, we count on his skills both on and off the ice to bring some great leadership,” he said. “He’s a tough player who likes to make the first pass.”

Kyle said he is also very excited to be part of the Sundogs organization.

“I had to decide between college and the CHL,” he said. “I talked to another team and decided on the Sundogs because I liked the place, the people and the ownership. We thought it would be good to go to a new franchise.”

Kyle said he likes to stretch the boundaries of his position.

“I think defensive players are underrated. I have always had to step up a level and this will be a jump, but I’m sure I can meet the challenge,” he said. “I also fit into new situations well. I like to get things going and make the first pass out of our end.”

The pair said they suffered a little culture/weather shock during their first visit in late June. “It was a great four days,” Kyle said. “The weather here is unbelievable. You are so used to seeing snow banks when you come out after practice. This will be a little different.”

The Sundogs will begin regular season play in the Central Hockey League on the road as construction at the Prescott Valley Convention and Events Center winds down. The club will spend the first three weeks away from home, opening play Friday, October 20 and Saturday, October 21 against the Southeast Division Rio Grande Valley Killer Bees. Both games are 5:35 p.m. start times (Arizona time). The first home game is scheduled for Nov. 10. For more information on the Arizona Sundogs call (928) 775-5555 or check out arizonasundogs.com.

Read more of this article on www.arizonarubber.com
Mole turns setback into comeback

Michael Mole's promising goalie career was almost over before it started.

Living in Ontario, Janice Mole did what the majority of Canadian parents do for their kids when they are of age. She brought her son to power skating tryouts. However, once they arrived at the rink, Mole had second thoughts.

"We got to the rink and I didn't really like it there, I started crying, and told her I didn't want to play hockey."

Needless to say, Mole's hockey career was put on hold. Two years later, Mole's young career was back on track again. His friend Dave Alexander's father played goalie in a men's league and gave Mole a chance to develop a love of goalie equipment, rekindling his love for the game.

"The reason I became a goalie was the equipment, I was always in love with the equipment, the masks and pads and stuff always looked really cool to me when I was younger," Mole said.

Mole's goalie career began to blossom and he went on to play major junior hockey in Canada in the Ontario Hockey League. Mole honed his craft with the Mississauga Ice Dogs and it certainly helped that he was surrounded by future NHL players like Jason Spezza and Patrick O'Sullivan. Three years into his junior career, Mole was traded from Mississauga to Belleville. Mole put up career numbers with Belleville, as he won 45 games against only 27 losses. Unfortunately, Mole's strong play with the Bulls did not get him drafted by an NHL franchise.

Mole chose the road less traveled by most hockey players and enrolled at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. He helped St. Francis win its first ever Canadian Interuniversity Sport Championship (CIS) in 2004. Then came the opportunity of a lifetime.

"Making the Cut" a new reality TV show that was going to air in Canada was Mole's big break. Former NHL coaches Scotty Bowman and Mike Keenan would run a training camp and six winners would get the opportunity to attend an NHL training camp. Someone close to Mole felt this was right up his alley.

"My dad called me and told me about 'Making the Cut,'" Mole said. "I wasn't really sure about it but he took the liberty of signing me up so I went to the tryout."

Mole had his share of ups and downs on the show, but he played well enough to force his way into the final 18. On the final day, Mole shined brightly enough in the skills competition to be picked by his hometown Ottawa Senators. He subsequently attended Ottawa's training camp and learned many invaluable lessons from future hall of famer Dominik Hasek.

"I learned a lot of things watching Hasek, seeing how he reads and reacts to different situations, it was a great experience," Mole said.

Mole's exposure on the show eventually brought him to Phoenix to join the RoadRunners. Going into the RoadRunners' inaugural season, Mole was penciled in as the backup behind former first-round pick Mathieu Chouinard. Mole eventually wrestled the No. 1 job away from Chouinard and, in his first professional season, finished among the league leaders in saves and minutes played.

Mole was then traded to San Diego in one of many of coach Ron Filon's deadline moves but he recently signed a contract with the RoadRunners for the upcoming season.

Mole's expectations for the coming campaign are high and the team's recent affiliation agreement with the Phoenix Coyotes means more pressure to perform, and more opportunity.

Mike Mole

Runners, Yotes ink agreement

The RoadRunners signed a one-year affiliation agreement with the Coyotes and the San Antonio Rampage of the American Hockey League for the 2006-07 season.

"We look forward to working with the RoadRunners and see benefits to both organizations from this new relationship," said Coyotes GM Michael Barnett.

"With the convenience of being located in the same city, Phoenix hockey fans will now enjoy the pleasure of seeing both the NHL stars of today and tomorrow," said RoadRunners president and former Coyotes forward Claude Lemieux.

As part of the agreement, the RoadRunners will be afforded a select number of training camp spots that will allow players to compete on the Coyotes' rookie team at this month's rookie tournament in Los Angeles and San Antonio's training camp in October, and should receive both AHL and NHL prospects over the course of the season.
Nationals result leaves Ice Cats growling

Two overtime playoff losses to close out the University of Arizona Ice Cats’ 2005-06 season doesn’t appear to be a fitting reflection in the rearview mirror of a well-accomplished college club hockey program.

The pair of defeats were co-authored by No. 7-ranked Lindenwood University and No. 12 University of Oklahoma, respectively, at the American Collegiate Hockey Association championship on the campus of West Chester University (Pa.) this past March.

“We’ve been to nationals 21 of the last 23 times, which is a pretty good run,” said Ice Cats’ head coach, Leo Golembiewski. “We were a young team last season. Nine freshmen saw playing time, including our top goal-scorer.”

As a result of those setbacks, the Ice Cats put the wraps on the year that was with an overall record of 21-13. After starting the season unranked in the polls until mid-November, the Ice Cats finished the season slotted at No. 12 in the country.

The ACHA tournament berth was the club’s first since 2002-03 (only the top 16 teams in the country qualify for nationals).

“When you’re used to being in the top five or six the better part of the last 25 years or so, that doesn’t feel real good,” Golembiewski said. “We were certainly a top-eight team last year. We lost one of our games to the University of Rhode Island, the eventual national champions, by one goal.”

Last winter’s results were modest in comparison to some of the Ice Cats’ most celebrated achievements.

Over the past 27 seasons, the Ice Cats (est. 1979) have rolled up a record of 555-151-20 and Golembiewski has been at No. 12 in the country.

“Our winning is a tradition,” Golembiewski said. “The method to this madness is that nothing has been accomplished by accident. This is a serious hockey program. We’re pretty good at what we do here.”

– Eric Walsh

Sun Devils shooting up ACHA ranks

A ninth-place finish at nationals last season was a little too familiar for the Arizona State men’s club hockey team.

For the last three years the Sun Devils have finished in the top 10, but never in the top 5. That’s something head coach Mike De Angelis wants to change this season.

“This year that is definitely the goal to be a top-5, top-6 program,” De Angelis said, adding he feels there are six teams that vie for the ACHA crown each year.

What has De Angelis so confident? For the first time he has potential players contacting him from big junior programs and even players from Canada who want to be Sun Devils.

“I’m expecting our team to be a step better again this year,” he added.

The formula for testing the Sun Devils in recent years, scheduling an extremely tough regular season, won’t change. On the table for ASU are meetings with Weber State, Iowa State and defending national champion Rhode Island.

There will also be a midseason meeting with the Naval Academy and a few empty dates could be filled up by other top-tier teams.

De Angelis said he hopes to add local exhibition games with Junior B teams in Valley to showcase local teams as well.

De Angelis won’t know exactly what lineup he’ll take into his team’s Maroon and Gold Scrimmage at the end of this month, but he knows it will be among the best in ASU history.

“It will be the best roster I’ve had since I’ve been here,” he said. “Every year I’ve been here the amount of interest in hockey gets bigger and bigger and this year it’s been overwhelming.”

One returning feature that ASU is proud to sponsor is the Second Annual Desert Classic Tournament. Last year’s event had four top-15 ranked teams battling in key midseason games at Alltel Ice Den in Scottsdale.

– Cameron Eickmeyer

Schall, Fairchild lead NAU’s resurgence

It was way back in the mid-1980s when Flagstaff’s Northern Arizona University showcased one of the top independent NCAA Division I programs in the country with future NHLer Greg Adams leading the charge.

Since then the program has fallen on hard times, but Todd Schall is ready to change that.

Full-time at his new post behind the Lumberjacks’ bench, Schall’s club will be competing as an ACHA Division III team this year and in the Pacific Coast Hockey Association, which is comprised of nine clubs, eight of which are from California.

Not yet on par with his counterparts to the south – ACHA Division I powerhouse Arizona State and the University of Arizona – Schall is bullish on bringing the once-proud program back to respectability.

“It’s an up-and-coming program, and that’s what we’re hoping for, to make it with the rest of the colleges here in Arizona,” said Schall, who credits fellow coach A.J. Fairchild for much of the attitude adjustment.

Schall expects a majority of his players to come from the Phoenix area this season, with a handful making the trek from Alaska, where out-of-state tuition incentives helped recruiting efforts. The coach is also counting on tapping into the state’s fruitful junior scene for talent.

– Brian McDonough
The Coyotes, Polar Bears & Tilt are members of the Western States Hockey League.

**Roe, Gilbert, Marino on the move**

The Peoria Coyotes are putting a twist on the domino effect theory.

In hockey, Junior B players are developed for Junior A, Junior A for college, and so on. In Peoria’s case, a jump from Junior B leagues can also be considered a step up.

“Our goal here is to develop and advance players on to the next level,” said Peoria GM-assistant coach Trevor Waagner. “We don’t want any kids aging-out. We don’t want to have to recruit any 20-year-olds. We want to get kids when they’re 15- and 16-years-old and prime them for Junior A.”

Three players from last year, forwards Russell Roe and Jake Gilbert and defenseman Mike Marino, caught the eye of other leagues this offseason. Gilbert (Greater Metro Toronto League’s Nipissing Alouettes) and Marino (British Columbia League’s Langley Chiefs) are off to Junior A outfits, while Roe will play for another Junior B team.

Peoria native Roe popped 20 goals and 12 assists last year to lead the Coyotes’ scoring race. He’ll play for the Helena (Mont.) Bighorns in the revamped Northern Pacific League.

“The addition of Roe will give us some scoring punch immediately,” said Helena president Mike Butters. “To play in Helena, you have to work hard and Russell has shown that he is willing to do that.”

Marino, a Glendale resident and Peoria’s captain last year, was one of the top defenders in the WSHL. It wasn’t easy at first, but the Polar Bears had solid mentors.

“When we first joined, the Ventura (Calif.) Mariners were the best there was,” noted Ramsey. “They set the bar and every team wanted to either be like them or beat them. Luckily for us, we’ve been able to sustain that level of success for the past few years.”

Going into its eighth season, Phoenix’s way of approaching the year hasn’t changed from a coaching standpoint.

“Just like every year, we expect to win a national championship, nothing less,” Ramsey boasted. “It’s always the team first and we tell the guys all the time that with team success comes individual success. I can count on one hand the number of players we’ve had over the years that didn’t buy into that, and they didn’t finish the season with us.

“We’re a big family here and the players thrive on the hard work and the ability to carry the torch year after year.”

**Polar Bears still the team to beat**

It’s never easy to lose a league championship, but in the case of the Phoenix Polar Bears, positives can be drawn from their defeat last spring.

The Polar Bears lost to the now-defunct Fort Worth Texans in the Western States League finals and, though the loss still obviously stings a bit, you won’t hear anyone from Phoenix with negative overtones.

“We worked hard all year and it definitely still hurts,” Polar Bears assistant coach-assistant GM Tyler Ramsey said. “But it can be a good thing. It’s good to be challenged and it’s a testament to how much our league has improved.”

Since Phoenix entered the league in 1999, they have been the face of the WSHL. It wasn’t easy at first, but the Polar Bears had solid mentors.

“When we first joined, the Ventura (Calif.) Mariners were the best there was,” noted Ramsey. “They set the bar and every team wanted to either be like them or beat them. Luckily for us, we’ve been able to sustain that level of success for the past few years.”

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“We’re a big family here and the players thrive on the hard work and the ability to carry the torch year after year.”

**Expansion Tilt puts Tucson ‘all-in’**

When the Fort Worth Texans had their Western States Hockey League license revoked earlier this summer, the door was opened for the Tucson Tilt to come aboard.

The Tilt, an expansion franchise, has an ownership group that had planned on buying the Texans, but once Fort Worth went into default status with the WSHL, the new franchise was granted with a Texans’ flavor.

Jeremy Law, Fort Worth’s coach last year who led the Texans to the WSHL title, was hired to hopefully reproduce the magic of one year ago.

“We went after Jeremy right away,” Tucson president Jon MacWilliams said. “We asked around about him and I think his track record speaks for itself. He and I are both competitive and have the same mindset in that we’re going into this season to win a national championship.”

Named after Full Tilt Poker, a corporate sponsorship group, Tucson has a roster full of players from not only the Arizona region, but from all over the United States. The Tilt will play its home games at Tucson Ice on the east side of Tucson, a rink that holds roughly 800 people.

“There’s definitely a buzz around the team,” said MacWilliams. “Our tryout camp went extremely well and we’re very excited about this season.”

MacWilliams added that the inaugural version of the Tilt will be a veteran-laden club, but a handful of youngsters sprinkled in should give the team decent chemistry.

“It’s not necessarily a bad thing to have all older guys,” MacWilliams said. “They’ll help in the new city and especially if we start winning right away.

“We’ve created the hype and we’ll see where that takes us,” MacWilliams added.
Can it really be the start of another hockey season? Hopefully, most skaters have taken some needed time away from the game to recharge the batteries. It will certainly be a much faster start to the season if the players are rested and excited to get on the ice again.

As the Coyotes Amateur Hockey Association’s hockey director, this time of year may be the busiest. Teams are finalizing paperwork, rosters and sizing-up jerseys and apparel to show off team colors.

Interacting with coaches is also an exciting task, as many are just as anxious as the players to get out on the ice. A coach has many off-ice duties and concerns prior to lacing up the skates - the easy part for most of us - such as:
- What will my team rules and policies consist of?
- What kind of traveling can we expect to do while still being budget conscious?
- How will we resolve conflict with team members or parents?
- Do I have set goals for the season in regards to practices and game performance, and how will I communicate that to the players?

The players just want to get out and play hockey with their new friends. As leaders, we must look beyond that and focus on providing a safe, fun and challenging environment for these kids to excel.

As the coach at Arizona State, each day I ask myself how my players can continue to have fun while completing the tasks I’ve outlined for them. There is no simple formula; it will take preparation and a willingness to try and learn from past mistakes and experiences.

When working with groups of people, it’s virtually impossible to please everyone. My goal is to get the necessary information out to the majority of the team so they can help me relay it to the potential minority that is still unsure.

At the beginning of the season, it’s a tough task to get all members on the same page or to “buy in” to team systems, policies and rules.

A coach’s best allies are the core group of the team - those who are willing to help you bring all these diverse personalities and athletes together to have a positive youth hockey experience throughout the year.

It will always be a work in progress for the head coach to find synergies within the dynamics of a 20-member team.

Mike De Angelis is CAHA’s director of youth hockey and the head coach at Arizona State University.

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Ferber continues impressive run

By Eric Walsh

Eric Ferber has no definitive reason for why he started to play hockey, but chances are it’s not something he will look back on with any regret now.

“I’ve always tried to answer that question,” Ferber said. “I pretty much just showed up on the ice and starting playing. It was a sudden interest.”

Since stepping onto the ice for the first time as a preschooler, Ferber has spent a lot of time at one area of the rink in particular. This semi-circular blue spot is oft-referred to as the “goal crease.” That is where the 15-year-old goaltender from Scottsdale is making a name for himself with each puck that he keeps out of the net.

At the USA Hockey Select 15 Festival held over the summer at the National Hockey Center in St. Cloud, Minn., Ferber, who stands 5-foot-10, 135 pounds, was nearly flawless in 92 minutes of action.

One goal allowed during the event tarnished perfection, but Ferber’s 4-0 record was right in line with his confident personality.

“I’m a really competitive player, I hate to lose,” Ferber said. “That mindset can keep you in the game and I’m always trying to work on everything all the time to get better. At the developmental camp, I really showed myself that I could play against others from around the country.”

Ferber’s potential caught the attention of the Western Hockey League’s Swift Current Broncos. On May 16, the Broncos, who compete in the league’s East Division, picked Ferber as part of the 2006 WHL U.S. Prospects Draft.

Ferber joined a class of five Arizona players, including four from DYHA.

Ferber’s determination is nothing new to Kenny Moffatt, head coach of the Desert Youth Hockey Association’s Bantam Tier 1 AAA Phoenix Firebirds.

Moffatt has coached Ferber for the past four seasons and credits the young backstop for participating in several camps like the one in St. Cloud and the Rocky Mountain District Select Camp back in February. (See more on Ferber on Page 18.)

House League keeps CAHA thriving

By Cameron Eickmeyer

The hockey family that plays together generally stays together, or so Coyotes Amateur Hockey Association director Mike De Angelis believes.

The CAHA travel programs for the first time will be divided by birth year. That means players born in a specific year, 1996 for example, remain on the same squad as they advance through the program levels.

“The goal is to keep the core group of kids in the same age group together,” De Angelis said. “I think it’s a better model, too.”

Keeping players together was the main inspiration for the switch, but dividing squads into birth years also means coaches stick with kids throughout their youth.

“There could be potentially less movement from year to year, consistency in the coaches and consistency in the players,” De Angelis said.

Providing consistent coaching becomes more attractive for parents shopping their younger around. An association with this structure, De Angelis believes, will reap the benefits of growth and expansion.

“Over the long run this is exactly what we needed to do,” he said.

Still, the bread and butter for CAHA is its House League, where enrollment continues to skyrocket. This year, De Angelis expects around 450 children to take the ice in the House League, whereas only around 150 participate in the travel program.

“The house league is more solidified and running more efficiently (this year),” De Angelis said.

A big development that the coaching staff hopes house and league players enjoy is a new online live scoring feature. Games played at Alltel Ice Den will have live updates through the Pointstreak program.

“Grandma can watch on the other side of the country,” De Angelis joked. With 2006-07 just starting up, tryouts are on the horizon. De Angelis is stressing to his coaching staff an environment of fun for the children.

He said if his coaches worry more about the player’s experience and less about the banners that hang above the Ice Den ice, then the association will thrive.

“We want to continue to grow as far as numbers and interest goes,” De Angelis said, adding the biggest goal is to help the youths of Arizona. “Overall we need to make sure their hockey experience is a positive one.”
Facing the nation’s finest prospects in his age group, Scottsdale’s Eric Ferber stole the show. The 15-year-old goaltender was dominant through four games at USA Hockey’s Select 15 Festival, surrendering a single goal en route to a .976 saves percentage. His glittering numbers were tarnished a bit with a final-game hiccup but, all in all, Ferber’s Festival was fantastic.

“I knew what to expect coming into the week,” said Ferber. “These are the top kids from around the country. The competition was very good and it was a great learning experience.”

Ferber’s promising performance continued his steady march toward the forefront of scouts’ consciousness, a march that began in earnest when the 5-foot-9 netminder led his Phoenix Firebirds to the 2006 USA Hockey national tournament. He was subsequently selected by Swift Current in the Western Hockey League’s U.S. Prospects Draft. American coaches have also maintained a watchful eye, with the United States Hockey League seeming a likely eventual destination given Ferber’s college goaltending aspirations.

In the meantime, Ferber will ply his trade in Phoenix with P.F. Chang’s Midget U-16 squad, under the tutelage of Jim Johnson, who parlayed four years at the University of Minnesota Duluth into a 13-year NHL career. It’s the next step in a steady rise for Ferber; one that he hopes will continue to hone his already-impressive technique and tenacity.

— Jayson Hron

Arizona Aces

Local sons represent at USA Hockey’s elite summer festivals

They aren’t surprised by it anymore. When Arizona’s top players meet the nation’s top players, the vibe is as pervasive as the desert heat.

“They know you’re from Arizona, and they just kind of give you the look,” said Chris Walker, a defenseman from the Phoenix Polar Bears.

Unfazed, Arizona’s quartet of participants at USA Hockey’s 2006 Select 17 Festival represented themselves and the state well at one of the summer’s most highly recruited events. Each forward cracked the scoresheet and Walker, the lone defenseman of the bunch, was steady while patrolling his own end of the ice.

Colorado College prospect Andrew Hamburg led the group offensively, notching a goal and two assists in the five 46-minute contests. Already at 6-foot-3, Hamburg showed a physical edge as well, racking up six minutes in penalties.

Horizon High School’s Danny McAuliffe, who piled up 93 goals last season, registered an assist at the Select 17s, as did Anthem’s Brady Lefferts.

“Coming from Arizona, there aren’t as many scouts, so making it to an event like this helps out a lot,” said Lefferts.

It was especially beneficial for smaller-but-speedy players like McAuliffe, who crave the open ice. The Olympic-sized surface at St. Cloud State University’s National Hockey Center, combined with a USA Hockey-mandated crackdown on obstruction, created considerable room to maneuver. Even Walker, charged with the task of slowing those onrushing forwards, was agreeable to the pace.

“I like the new rules,” he said. “It gives players a chance to show their skill instead of just being held down.”

— Jayson Hron
Tucson in good hands with Group Ice

By Brian McDonough

Growing up in Chicago, Jason Katz rarely recalls seeing a vacant sheet of ice. In Tucson, however, where hockey rinks and heat waves have never played nice together, it's a whole different story.

“It would be great if we could fill this place and build another rink on the other side of town,” said Jason Katz, Tucson Ice’s youth hockey director armed with the task of introducing more people to the newly-renovated two-sheet complex. “It’s a pretty big town to have only one facility and not have it be full.”

And with Group Ice, a rink management company out of Wisconsin headed by Scott Branovan, at the wheel, the Tucson community has gained a major ally in terms of providing a fun, structured athletic environment for kids at a reasonable price.

“This company has a good understanding and a good handle of the struggles that it's going to take to blossom this program,” said Katz. “They realize this isn't going to be a drop in the hat; this is something we have to push. It’s going to be difficult, but if we work hard enough, it’s going to happen.”

So far, so good. A recent “Learn to Skate” program drew 400 participants, with re-enrollment north of 350. Out of 65 kids who took part in a “Get in the Game” program, 40 signed up again.

This coming fall, Tucson Ice will introduce its “Take a Shot Hockey” program, where first-time players ages 4-12 are treated to a free session on the ice, and then an eight-week session for only $89, which includes loaner equipment, for those who just can’t get enough.

“There’s definitely a good turnover rate from our programs,” said Katz.

Tucson’s youth also has tremendous teachers at its fingertips. Many of the program’s coaches are transplants who have played professionally or high-level college. Ian Armstrong.

Growth continues with new teams

By John Duncan

Each year, the start of a new season brings fresh faces eagerly embracing the challenge of hockey.

Even in well-established organizations such as the Valley of the Sun Hockey Association, each new season brings new opportunities and challenges alike.

According to VOSHA president Rob Gosnell, the association is poised for substantial growth as evidenced by the explosion in interest from younger players.

After having just one Mite and one Pee Wee team last year, VOSHA plans to ice two teams for each age group this year, and may add another midget team as well.

Plans are also in the works to possibly ice a girl’s U16 team for the first time with Gayle Shaloo, Arcadia Ice Arena’s hockey director, in charge of expanding the girls program.

Although Gosnell expresses pride in coach Jim Johnson’s P.F. Chang’s Tier I team, he's excited that VOSHA continues to build its organization from the bottom up.

Seven-year-old Alek Pensky is typical of these eager learners entering the game. He started playing hockey just three months ago after going to several public skates with his family.

Pensky had the chance to see other kids playing hockey and wanted to try it out. His dad, Kevin, supports his son's efforts.

“I saw other kids having fun playing hockey and wanted to expose Alex to it,” Kevin said. “He is really enjoying it.”

Alex is an accomplished chess player, he placed fifth in the state, and is a green belt in karate, but his parents wanted to expose him to team sports.

Kevin said he appreciates the opportunities VOSHA presents at Arcadia Ice Arena to share hockey with his son.

“Alex and I can get out on the ice together and have a good time,” he said.

Other VOSHA skaters represent a wide variety of skills and goals. Zack Husted is a newcomer to the association, but has played for six years. He'll share the ice with the likes of newbie Joshua Tucker.

Libby Doherty, who plays in the girls program, wants to be a "pro hockey player." She is part of a growing number of girls who take the ice with VOSHA.

“You learn more about skating during a (hockey) game than when you're just skating in a big circle (as in figure skating),” she said.

Likewise, VOSHA is not just skating in a circle, but continues to grow from the ground up.
Pinnacle clinches summer Division A crown

Entering this summer’s Division A hockey season, Pinnacle head coach Frank Kraljic knew his team had the most talent, but was worried that an early season dismantling by Horizon would take the wind out of its sails.

Instead, Pinnacle used it as a rallying point, winning seven of its next eight en route to a division title and early front-runner honors for next season.

“It was pretty brutal, but we got our act back together,” Kraljic said. “The boys kept going and wanted to prove they weren’t a low-end team.”

Kraljic got his chance in the championship game, against rival Desert Mountain. A slow start found Pinnacle in a 5-goal hole, but team MVP Matt Warzynski rallied the team back for the 8-6 win.

Warzynski scored a hat trick and added two assists in the championship win, a dramatic exclamation point to a season that started with a fight and a suspension.

“He came back out after the suspension with a resolve to not only care about his own performance, but the team’s performance,” Kraljic said. “He let his actions speak louder than words and followed through.”

However, Pinnacle wasn’t the only team to shine during the summer season. In Division B, Cactus had five players that averaged at least a point per game and defeated Red Mountain 7-2 in the finals. Leading the charge for the Cobras was Andrew Gauthier, who led all divisions in regular points (30) and assists (16).

In Division C, it was goal tending, not offense, that Highland used for its championship, defeating Centennial 1-0.

Highland goalie Quinn Mason recorded five shutouts in 12 games and posted a 1.40 goals-against average and .919 save percentage over the summer break.

McAuliffe named MVP

The league MVP award went to Danny McAuliffe, who scored 22 goals in eight games for Division A Horizon. Feasting on Corona, whom he scored 11 goals on in two games this summer, McAuliffe continued from his stellar fall season, when he scored 44 goals, included nine hat tricks (see more on McAuliffe on Page 18).

Fall season ahead

Once the high school rosters are set by early September, the teams will begin practicing and playing preseason games.

From there the high school schedule will be set for early October and games will begin for all divisions. The championship games will wrap up in February. Stay tuned to your local rink schedules for game times and locations or visit www.thunderonice.com for more information.

— Jeff Hoodzow

Official Business

Obstruction crackdown starts now

It’s anywhere from 90 to 105 degrees outside, it must be close to the beginning of another hockey season.

All the tryouts are completed and teams have been practicing. It’s great to see all the coaches wearing their required helmets in practice (one of the new rules mandated this year by USA Hockey).

Hopefully, those same coaches, as well as the players, also know about the new standard of playing rules: All the hooking, clutching and grabbing is now going to be penalized.

This same standard the NHL successfully enforced last season is going to be used all around the world from mites all the way to the pros.

As for myself, I love it. Referees are going to actually be allowed to do their jobs.

This summer I attended the North American Referee Exposure Camp in Guelph, Ontario, and our group of officials from all over the world (even one from Australia) officiated a Junior A tournament.

It was interesting to see that the teams that were skilled loved the new standards, whereas the teams that thought they could continue to get by playing their old style finished in the bottom half of the standings that weekend.

So now the teams have heard about it all summer, they have been warned. Several officiating seminars are scheduled this fall and the instructors will be going into great detail on the topic.

For those of you who have attended a seminar here in Arizona, you hopefully have already accepted my challenge to make sure that the referees around the state are doing their part in making this new standard a smooth transition.

A lot of the younger officials don’t like to call penalties because they don’t want to get yelled at, and most of the veteran officials have been going by the old standards for so long that it will probably be harder for them to get use to these new standards.

We all saw how the NHL did in its first year with these same standards; it was hard for some of the teams to adapt, but the officials continued to call the new standards the entire season.

And come playoff time, the games were called the same way, and, as a fan, those games were a joy to watch. Players were skating, passing, hitting and scoring without the usual clutching and grabbing.

It’s going to be tough at first, but if every official, coach, player, parent and fan works together all season by all playing the game with these new standards, it will just make this great game even greater.

David Kornowski is the ACHA Arizona Supervisor of Officials. Contact him at: whatsthecallref@aol.com.
Utah youth association, girls join fold

The 2006-07 Sonoran Youth Hockey League season will incorporate more of the same great competition while adding a few new looks. Here are some of the highlights:

Out of state competition

For the first time ever the SYHL will welcome teams from Utah. The WMAHA Grizzlies will field teams at the Squirt, Pee-wee, Bantam and Midget A levels. The Grizzlies organization is making a heavy commitment to the SYHL by agreeing to travel to Arizona for all of their league games. In turn the SYHL will assist the Grizzlies in sponsoring a tournament in Utah to be held in March.

“It was wonderful news to all of us here that a first-class organization and an out-of-town team were joining our league,” said Squirt A Firebirds coach Steve Petruzella. “With seven teams in the Sonoran Squirt A division from Tucson to Salt Lake City, regional rivalries have been created, which is a great thing for everyone involved in youth hockey.”

Girls got game

Also for the first time the Arizona Girls Youth Hockey Association will field three teams that will participate this season. AGYHA will have teams at the Squirt, Pee-wee and Bantam B levels. Girls’ hockey in the state of Arizona is growing and the SYHL wants to do what it can to assist in that growth.

For games played at the Pee wee and Bantam levels the “No Check” rule will be in place which should make those games faster and emphasize skills and skating.

Coyote Cup

The Coyote Cup will once again provide league teams with a chance to participate in a great tournament. As in past years, all SYHL teams except for those that are also participating in the Southwest League are automatically entered into this tournament. This tournament is also open to teams from across North America.

Last year, Sonoran welcomed teams from Canada, Alaska, Florida, Colorado, California, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada and Texas. Along with some great competition, teams also enjoyed a team pizza party, goodie bags, individual trophies and banners and some great fun.

Championship tournament

The SYHL season will climax with the SYHL Championships/Grand Canyon State Games slated for March. The championship round-robin games will be held across the state beginning the afternoon of March 22 with the divisional championship games held at the Desert Schools Coyotes Center in Chandler on Sunday, March 25.

— Bob Strong

Flagstaff training camp tests fitness level

The 2006-07 Flagstaff training camp tests fitness level in the resort’s 500-acre private forest or any of the other local attractions in the town where the girls had come for three-straight years.

Instead, these girls were on a mission to focus on and prepare for the coming season.

“Everyone is on their best behavior,” said Marque Taylor, who attended her second training camp this year.

There was little time for fooling around with the group getting together for pizza and a team building session almost as soon as they reached the hotel, followed shortly by lights out at 9:30 p.m.

The next day began on the ice for two hours, which was followed after lunch by two hours of off-ice training by Velocity Sports Performance.

Following an hour break back at the hotel, the girls went back on the ice. This was followed by a group dinner, individual team meetings and, 15 minutes later, lights out. Then on Sunday, the girls started the day on the ice working on skills followed by scrimmages.

But rather than dread all this work, the girls actually looked forward to it. Andi Husted, who attended her third camp this year, knew exactly what to expect in Flagstaff.

“I enjoy training camp, it’s so much fun,” she said. She added that she knows from prior years that the work will pay off during the season because she will be in shape and she looks forward to going to several more camps in the coming years.

Sierra Van Fleet agreed with her teammate, pointing out that everyone works hard because the teams aren’t set until after camp.

Perhaps the most important thing that happened in Flagstaff was the creation and strengthening of friendships. AGYHA places each older girl with a younger player for the weekend and Taylor looked forward to her first year as an older buddy.

She said she considers the friendships she has made over the years as an important part of training camp.

The AGYHA is a charter member of the Western Girls Hockey League. Along with associations from Colorado and California, AGYHA formed the WGHL this summer to assure reasonably economical ways for girls to play hockey.

— John Duncan
Mike Bahn is the Coyotes’ strength and conditioning coordinator.

Balance off-ice workouts with on-ice play
Welcome to the first edition of Arizona Rubber for the 2006-07 season. It’s a great time of the season when players, coaches, fans, officials, families - everybody in the hockey family - are excited about possibilities and wonderful experiences of the upcoming season.

It is with that same excitement I will be providing regular articles for AZR, addressing various training topics for hockey. Training techniques, concepts and philosophies will fill this space throughout the season and into the offseason as well as nutritional strategies.

Everything will have a focus on off-ice training programs to enhance your on-ice performance and reduce the likelihood of injuries so you can get the most out of your hockey season.

Now that hockey seasons are underway and players know how often they will be on the ice practicing or playing, it’s a great time to plan how your off-ice workouts are going to help you with on-ice performance.

The frequency of on-ice activities should dictate the amount and type of off-ice activity you wish to integrate.

A player who practices twice a week and plays at least twice on the weekend (or even more for tournaments) would perform off-ice programs with less intensity and volume than a player who practices once a week with maybe 1-2 games on the weekend.

You would see a similar philosophy with the Phoenix Coyotes; a player who sees limited playing time, maybe less than five minutes in a game, would have more extensive and frequent workouts than a player like Shane Doan, who regularly leads the forwards in playing time.

Usually, most young players don’t have a world-class training facility like we do at Glendale Arena to train players after practices or games, day or night. You will need to plan your workouts around your on-ice schedule. Being on the ice, whether playing a game or practicing, is as much a training session as an off-ice workout.

If you work out on the same day before you practice, you will need to lighten up on the intensity and volume so as to not affect your abilities on the ice.

Mike Bahn is the Coyotes’ strength and conditioning coordinator.

Roadrunners add three teams to fold
The realization of the vision of a travel hockey program in Peoria began in 1998 when Polar Ice Entertainment applied for membership in the Arizona Amateur Hockey Association.

The Phoenix Polar Bears lent their name to the Travel “A” youth organizations in both Chandler and Peoria.

The Peoria Jr. Polar Bears launched their inaugural season in the fall of 2000. The organization looks back with pride at what was accomplished as the Peoria Polar Bears.

In the fall of 2004, the group’s mascot changed as its identity was forged as that familiar desert bird (Rocky Roadrunner) once again graced the jerseys of hockey players in the Valley of the Sun.

Last season brought continued growth and success for the Roadrunners. Three Roadrunner teams brought home championship banners from the Grand Canyon State Games in addition to other championship banners over the course of the season.

Now as the Roadrunners embark on their third season, the organization continues to grow and establish a reputation of quality and excellence in youth travel hockey. The coaches and players are excited to be on the ice and practicing for the upcoming season.

The organization has grown more than 50 percent in the last two years and the number of teams has grown from five to eight, including 3 AA teams for the 2006-07 season.

AA teams will compete in the Southwest Youth Hockey League, while A teams will be playing in the Sonoran Youth League.

The Peoria Roadrunners skate at the state-of-the-art facilities of Desert Schools Coyotes Center in Peoria. This partnership allows the association to provide a high-quality, competitive program with a focus on player development and long-term growth of youth hockey in Arizona.

Management of the Roadrunners is handled by an all-volunteer Advisory Board of Directors comprised of individuals who share a vision and commitment to youth hockey in Arizona.

The Roadrunners are organized as a nonprofit entity and are members of USA Hockey, Rocky Mountain District and the AAHA.

The mission of the organization is to provide the necessary programming and solid environment to complement the need for a higher level of competitive youth hockey, above the recreational level, to ensure continued development of each participant.

—— Marvin Lomax

Letters from Page 5
Each issue, Arizona Rubber Magazine will publish a handful of letters to the editor and we hope our inbox fills up faster than the penalty box during a Colorado Avalanche and Detroit Red Wings game.

We’d especially like to hear about what you think of our magazine. Let us know what we’re doing right and what you’d like to see us improve.

Thanks for reading and we hope to hear from you soon.

Send your letters to info@arizonarubber.com with “Letter To The Editor” in the subject field. Please include your name and city in the e-mail.

——
Polar Bears well represented at USA Hockey Select Festivals

It was quite a summer for Lyndsay Fry, a member of the Phoenix Polar Bears Bantam Tier II team who participated in USA Hockey’s Select Festival.

The program, which is intended to create a developmental opportunity for some of the best young skaters in the country, identifies and grows potential athletes who oftentimes go on to play an integral role for the country’s national teams, competing at the highest level against international competition.

“Lyndsay is a great role model for any young hockey player,” said Polar Bears coach Ken Schmitke. “She demonstrates the highest degree of work ethic and character to go along with her talent.”

Many former Select Festival participants have gone on to represent Team USA internationally and can be found on many college and professional rosters.

Fry was invited to participate in the Rocky Mountain Regional Camp and then on to the National Camp in Rochester, N.Y., in July. Over 100 girls were selected from all over the country in the Festival’s U-14 Girls Division.

Fry certainly proved worthy of such an honor, scoring six points on five goals in the tournament’s five games placing her as the No. 2 overall scorer in her division. Through her spectacular play, Fry caught the eye of many top university and national coaches.

Brittany Mahood also shined on the national stage this summer. She was chosen to the Select Festival in the Girls 17/18-year-old Division held in Lake Placid in June. Mahood, who was a Polar Bear from 1999-2005 and last season was on the U-16 AA Polar Bears practice roster, scored one goal in five games.

It was Mahood’s fourth straight trip to the National Festival, an accomplishment only Max Mobley (Polar Bears 2000-05) has achieved in the history of Arizona amateur hockey. Mobley played last season for the Junior A North Iowa Outlaws of the North American League.

Chris Walker, a longtime Polar Bear and current defenseman for the program’s Junior B team, was also selected to both the Regional and USA Hockey Select 17 Festival, which was played in St. Cloud, Minn., in July (see more on Walker on Page 18).

It was the fourth time Walker, who will be back with the Junior B Polar Bears this season, has attended the Rocky Mountain District Camp and the second time he was selected to the National Festival.


Johnson from Page 5

AZR: What kind of impact will Rick Federico’s vision of providing opportunities for Arizona’s youth have on the game, locally?

JJ: Rick understands it. He’s very knowledgeable when it comes to game of hockey. His son is going to be a senior this year and he’s a high-level goalie who has a great opportunity go on and play Division I college hockey.

But Rick sees the benefit not only for his kid but for all the youth hockey players in Arizona and he is committed to seeing that this works. What’s great is that Rick Federico has given us a three-year commitment to make sure this program works, because Rick sees the future of all these kids in terms of providing the opportunity to be raised at home, go to school with their childhood friends and still play at a high level so, when they’re athletically and socially mature enough to make the jump, they can go on and play in junior and college.

AZR: Does P.F. Chang’s involvement help put a new face on the sport at the grassroots level?

JJ: Absolutely. What this sponsorship does here in Arizona is eliminate all the barriers relating to kids playing for certain associations; the associations should be working together, but down here they’re too often working apart. Everyone is trying to do something different instead of working towards something for the betterment of the game and development the kids from all associations.

And from the development aspect, the P.F. Chang’s program eliminates those barriers. Now kids feel they can go play at a high level with a high-level team here in the state - that’s the biggest thing.

And with some financial support and support from the corporate end, we can help reduce the cost so these kids and parents don’t feel so much strain, financially.

It’s the name and the recognition and to be associated with such a great corporate name here in Phoenix like P.F. Chang’s, that helps grow the program.

Read more of this interview on www.arizonarubber.com
Sundogs a bright addition to Northern Arizona’s community

By Andrew Draper

Professional sports is big business at any level, and the Arizona Sundogs are no different. The economic impact of a sports organization on a surrounding community covers many areas and can’t be undervalued or overlooked.

Sundogs president Hayne Ellis said it means more than jobs at the arena or retail sales at the team store. The impact is felt in many areas including benefits to sponsoring businesses, support of partner community service agencies and providing the community with a great entertainment value for the dollar.

“Not only will it have an economic impact on the area, but more importantly, the impact it is going to have on the community in terms of adding to the quality of life, in terms of adding to the available entertainment as well as youth programs and finding things for people to do,” he said. “We have a number of youth-based programs that we want to use to enrich the quality of life of youth in the area. As players begin arriving in town, as we begin ramping up to full operations, people will begin to see me backing up these statements.”

Ellis said the team is financially like most businesses, and that means respecting the “B” word: budget.

“We are operating like any other start-up business. From any business standpoint, you need to survive and for us it’s still sometimes a hard sell. We have to work for it,” he said. “Yes, we have our logo and we have to buy skates instead of buying copy paper. We have to buy pads instead of pencils, but the exciting part is what we can offer beyond the typical business.

“People pay a (ticket) price and they expect to be entertained. We are going to do that from the moment they walk in the door. Our business depends on repeat customers.”

Ellis said part of making the team successful as a business is educating the public about the game itself and making the players and staff an integral part of the community.

“A lot of people are taking the ‘let’s-wait-and-see’ approach. When you combine the words hockey and Arizona, a lot of people see that as an oxymoron,” he said. “I think the Roadrunners and Coyotes are a magnificent addition to the sports scene and worked hard on the grassroots efforts to promote the game. That is the same thing we need to do. We have to convince the people that we are the best entertainment value in the area.”

In Northern Arizona, where rink construction has been less than an afterthought to communities, the addition of the Sundogs could also spark public interest in the sport.

Ellis also said he feels a great responsibility to the community that is providing the support to the team, and that the community service aspect of his organization continues to grow as opening day draws nearer.

“We are in a smaller market and we are going to become a team that is very entrenched in the community. You can’t attach a dollar value to it, nor is that the goal. We look beyond the dollar signs,” he said. “We have already partnered up with several non-profit organizations in the area under the tagline ‘Team Up For Hope’ and that’s the message we want to send.

“We have a number of youth-based programs we want to install. We want to be a good neighbor in the community and a force for doing good things in the community.”

Ellis said the team is also creating a charitable foundation to oversee segments of the community service component of the operations.

“We are in the process of getting the registration for The Arizona Sundogs Foundation,” he said. “That is the part of the company that will be issuing the grants and be able to make the financial contributions to the community.

“We are also going to have the players involved in the community at many different levels, whether it’s visiting children in the hospitals, or making appearances at the schools to read to kids, the players will be out there making a positive impact on the community.”

The team also recently announced another piece of the business puzzle in it’s partnership with local radio station 96.7 FM, “The Wolf” to carry Sundogs games to the airwaves. Veteran broadcast announcer Robbie Incmikoski is the new voice of the Sundogs.
Westgate City Center continues expansion plans

Newly-acquired free agents Ed Jovanovski and Jeremy Roenick won’t be the only fresh faces in Glendale when the Phoenix Coyotes take the ice this fall.

Joining the Coyotes will not only be the Arizona Cardinals’ new stadium to the south, but the ever-expanding Westgate City Center, a cutting-edge combination of dining, entertainment and urban development that is expected to turn the ultramodern arena into one of the hottest spots in Arizona.

Within a month of the regular season for the Coyotes, Phase 1 of Westgate will be open, featuring approximately 500,000 square feet of dining, recreation and business options, giving Glendale one of the most spectacular community areas in the state and just the first stage of a 6.5-million-square-foot project.

“There is nothing like this in Arizona,” said Jeffrey Hecht, director of public affairs for The Ellman Companies. “There’s nothing like it anywhere.”

Westgate will also feature a 4,000-seat movie theater and a Times Square-like billboard district, an artistic ensemble of ads that will be as tall as 100 feet. However, the most exciting part of the project, at least from a visual perspective, is the water feature, an aquatic show that Hecht compares to the Bellagio in Las Vegas.

Joining the entertainment is the dining, which will feature 8-9 restaurants in Phase 1 and 25 for the entire project. Hockey fans could choose between the likes of The Yardhouse, with the world’s largest selection of draft beer, and Doc’s Greens, which features gourmet salads.

“It’s going to be a good mix of fast casual places for the office people and bars for a great night-spot for people who don’t want to end their nights at 10 o’clock,” Hecht said.

Westgate won’t just be another place to visit, but a place to stay, either temporarily or permanently.

The Quarter at Westgate, an upscale community, has 171 loft-like town homes for sale and Excalibur Westgate will contain similar options for lease.

Expected to open in mid-2007, Westgate will see the 320-room, 12-story Renaissance Hotel, the first of five hotel sites that are expected to provide 1,100 rooms.

So when the puck finally does drop, Coyote fans and those that don’t know a hat trick from a hat rack will be able to converge together at Arizona’s hottest new nightspot.

— Jeff Hoodzow

Excalibur from Page 8

The 14-and-under A division kicked off the second weekend of competition as Excalibur 91’s knocked off the Arizona Heartbreakers to earn the right to be called the best in the state. Rollerplex also won the 14-and-under B1 division, as the Panthers Green won a close one over Crazy 8’s. The most exciting game of the tournament came in the 14-and-under B2 Championship game in which the Prescott Ravens defeated Excalibur PeeWee Bronze in a shootout, backed by the strong play of MVP Connor McShane, who stopped all four shots in the shootout.

In the 35-and-over A division, Havasu denied the home team another title with a 4-2 win over Excalibur Black in the championship game. The 35-and-over B division was won by Bladeworld, which earned its first state title as it defeated Casey’s Crushers.

One of the two overtime championship games of the tournament came in the 10-and-under B division, where Crazy 8’s defeated Casey’s Crushers, 3-2, on three goals by Brandon Rosenfeld.

In the final championship game of the state finals, Excalibur 95’s brought the weekend and the tournament to a sweet end for the highly-successful Excalibur program, as they captured the 10-and-under A division championship, knocking off perennial power the Arizona Phylers.

“I’m very proud of Team Excalibur, which won six state championships after a year of hard work,” said Marmorstein. “I want to thank all of the AIHA host facilities, players, parents and coaches who supported the AAU and AIHA throughout the year.”

— Jeff Hoodzow

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Arizona Sundogs
**Inline hopes placed on Big League Dreams**

When The Rink Sports Center closed its doors in June 2005, it was a major setback for the Arizona roller hockey community.

For all its shortcomings, the rink was still a great place to play for many kids. The closure left the East Valley roller hockey community with few, if any, convenient options to continue playing.

But now, finally, some good news has arrived and a better future is on the horizon.

According to reports, construction has begun on the new Big League Dreams sports complex near Recker and Elliot roads in Gilbert and is expected to be completed in the next 12-14 months.

Big League Dreams is best known for its recreation of famous baseball parks, but they also include, in many of their locations, covered pavilions designed to host multiple sports such as roller hockey, indoor soccer and basketball. One such pavilion is to be included in the Gilbert design.

There are currently four Big League Dreams complexes built in California, one in Texas with four more, including the Gilbert location, that are currently in the design or construction stages.

Several of these locations support inline hockey on a regular basis.

An inline rink in the East Valley is much needed and the fact that it will exist under the well-established name of Big League Dreams should come as a comfort to those of us still wary after the closing of The Rink Sports Center.

This new rink is much needed to keep the game thriving at the grassroots level in the East Valley.

For committed travel team players, the increased travel time caused by the closure of the center was but a minor stumbling block. However, for the beginning player or the less experienced player, there were more severe consequences.

Without a rink these less experienced or committed players may not play anymore. They will move on to other things and to other sports.

That is why we need this rink in Gilbert and why we need rinks in other key locations in this state. We do not need to keep opening up new rinks in the same 15-mile radius and spreading out farther an already thinning pool of players.

It’s places like Gilbert and Lake Havasu and Prescott that are in desperate need of a stable rink and a consistent place to play.

I have been told that what Arizona needs is a luxurious, multi-rink facility that can host large tournaments like so many other states. This is a great idea and a nice goal to shoot for, but before we worry about hosting national tournaments, we should first meet the needs of the beginning player.

Before they can become talented enough to play in these big national tournaments everyone wants to host, they need to have a consistent place to play.

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**The American Dream**

Here’s a list of the 15 players from Arizona who tasted international inline competition this year for Team USA:

**Southwest 10-and-under**
- Stetson Dirks - Team Excalibur
- Benjamin Jackson - Yuma Blaze

**Southwest 12-and-under**
- Casey Caruso - Team Excalibur
- Bobby Krafve - Team Excalibur
- Ryan Finley - Caseys Crushers

**Southwest ’91**
- Levi Wallace - Tour Outcasts

**Southwest ’92**
- Cody Stocker - Tour Outcasts
- Cody Castro -

**Tour Outcasts**
- Agustin Gonzalez - Team Excalibur
- Cameron Caruso - Team Excalibur

**West 14u**
- Alex Karic - Crazy 8’s

**West ’90**
- Long Duong - Tour Outcasts

**Junior World Team**
- Danny Marmorstein - Team Excalibur

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**Plenty star on inline’s international stage**

By Alex Dodt

In addition to playing for their local travel programs at NARCH and their state at State Wars, 15 players from Arizona also competed in international play this year.

These players battled for Team USA West or Southwest, competing against Team USA from other regions, as well as teams from countries around the globe, including China, Columbia, Hong Kong and Australia.

Two Arizonans - Stetson Dirks and Benjamin Jackson - from different local travel programs - Team Excalibur and the Yuma Blaze, respectively - represented the state in the 10-and-under International division in Detroit.

The three mites led Team USA Southwest to a 3-1 record in round robin, including victories over China and Canada. The playoffs posed a tough road for the Southwest team, as they lost in the semifinals and eventually earned the copper medal after losing to Team USA North in the bronze-medal game.

In the 12-and-under division, Team Excalibur was well represented with Casey Caruso and Bobby Krafv playing for Team USA Southwest. The team, which also included Casey’s Crusher Ryan Finley, defeated Columbia in a close battle in the play-in game to earn a berth in the playoffs.

Stars continued / Page 28
Arizona roller hockey programs land national honors

By Alex Dodt

Arizona teams represented the state well this summer, playing for numerous championships at tournaments across the nation, from Regional Championships in Anaheim to Nationals in Detroit and Toronto.

In Anaheim, Calif., at the Tour Pacific Cup Finals, the premier tournament of the west coast, Arizona teams battled for supremacy in five championship games.

Team Excalibur was the only team successful in their title game appearance as they captured the Bantam A Select Championship with a 4-3 win over the L.A. Knights.

At the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Jr. Olympic Games in Detroit, Mich., Team Excalibur had an incredible showing, bringing home two national championships as well as one silver and two bronze medals.

A.J. Huffman had a memorable tournament, earning the bronze medal in the 16-and-under A-division while being named to the All-Tournament team in both divisions.

In the 12-and-under AA-division, Excalibur 93 defeated Team Remax to win Excalibur’s second gold medal in Detroit. Three players on that Excalibur team, Austin Hale, Mike Ciambella, and Greg Barnett were named to the All-Tournament team.

During the International competition at the Jr. Olympics, Alex Karic, of Tucson, played for Team USA West in the 14-and-under division and won the silver medal in a surprising run to the title game that included a huge upset of the Team Canada 14-and-under squad.

At the North American Roller Hockey Championships (NARCh) in Toronto, Ontario, the last and most prestigious stop on the national tournament circuit, the Rollerplex Panthers brought home Arizona’s lone national championship, in the Bantam Silver division.

Rollerplex, a team composed almost entirely of 14- and 15-year-olds, had a dominant performance at NARCh, going 6-0 in Bantam as well as winning the bronze medal in the Midget Silver division.

Fourteen-year-old Nic Spinasanta capped the tournament by winning the Top Snipe competition in the Midget Silver division.

In another spectacular individual performance, Long Duong, of the Rink Bandits, won the Top Snipe competition in the Midget Gold division, pulling off many mind-boggling moves.

The Mission Arizona Stars, runners-up in the Mite A Elite division at the Pacific Cup Finals, made another championship game appearance at NARCh in the Mite Gold division but fell just short of a gold medal.

The Stars were led by goaltender Anthony Ciurro, the Top Goalie in the Mite Gold skills competition, in their run to the national championship game.

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From Kids To Coyotes, The Desert’s Authoritative Voice Of Ice And Inline Hockey
Stars from Page 26

A tough draw in the elimination round bounced Team Southwest into the secondary loser’s bracket, where they ended up playing Team USA Stars in the seventh-place game. Team Stars were too much to handle for Southwest, which earned its spot in eighth place.

The number of Arizona players rose dramatically in the 14-and-under division, where six different locals played on three different USA teams.

On Team USA Southwest ‘91, Levi Wallace of the Tour Outcasts was a premier player on his team, as they went 2-2 in round robin.

Four Arizonans played for Team USA Southwest ‘92: Agustin Gonzalez and Cameron Caruso from Team Excalibur and Cody Castro and Cody Stocker from Tour Outcasts. The Southwest ‘92 team had a little more success than the ‘91s, as they went 3-1 in round robin taking a high seed into the playoffs.

Another local player, Alex Karic of Tucson, played for Team USA West, one of the favorites in the division. Unlike the Southwest ‘91 and ‘92 teams, Team USA West struggled early and had a low seed in the playoffs. Come elimination time, however, Team West stepped up and reeled off big wins over Great Britain, USA South and Canada ‘91 to reach the gold-medal game.

Their string of clutch wins came to an end there though, as Canada ‘92 knocked Team West off, sending Karic and company home with a silver medal.

Both Southwest teams had a difficult draw in the playoffs and ended up playing each other in the semifinals of the loser’s bracket. In the end, it was Wallace and the Southwest ‘91s coming out on top in overtime. The Southwest ‘92 team went on to the seventh-place game, where they lost to Team USA North, while the Southwest ‘91s finished the tournament on a high note, beating Team USA South ‘91 in the fifth-place game.

In the 16-and-under division, there was only one Arizona player competing, but he made quite an impact. Long Duong, a local legend to many, was a leading scorer for Team USA West ‘90 in their run in Detroit. Duong’s team was on a roll early, but the older, more experienced Team USA West ‘89 squad ended their run in the semifinals with a 5-1 win. Duong and company earned the copper medal, however, after falling just short in a 4-3 loss to Team USA East in the bronze-medal game.

The 18-and-under division is one of the most talented groups in international competition and two big local players, Tyler Koressel and Justin Marr, were major factors for their teams in Detroit.

Koressel, a native of Prescott and a member of Team USA in 2005, played for the 18-and-under Minor team. Marr, a recent Colorado transplant, played for the 18-and-under Major team.

Both USA teams dominated all other countries; their only challenge came from each other. In round robin, they battled to a 2-2 tie and met again in the gold-medal game. In the championship bout, it was Marr and the Major team affirming their place as the top dogs, as they beat Koressel and the Minors, 6-1, to win the gold.

The Team USA World Junior Team is a collection of the country’s elite players under the age of 20. In 2006, that select group included Danny Marmorstein, a longtime star for Team Excalibur. Marmorstein and the World Junior Team were as dominant as ever in Detroit, winning all five of their games by a combined score of 60-8 to take home the gold medal.

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USA Hockey is the national governing body for the sport of ice hockey in the United States.
When Team Canada defeated Team U.S.A. in the gold medal game at the recently completed 2006 World Lacrosse Championships in London, Ontario, it meant the end of an incredible 28-year undefeated streak for the Americans. It also gave the Canadians their second World Lacrosse title and gave Arizona Sting defender Chris Seller, a midfielder on Team Canada, a nice addition to his trophy case.

“Chris Seller helped Canada to its second World Lacrosse title”

By Rick Bowness, Jr.

After opening the tournament with wins over Japan and the Iroquois Nationals, Canada fell to the United States in their third match of the round robin by a score of 13-12. Colorado Mammoth defender Jay Jalbert scored the winning goal for the Americans with three seconds remaining in the fourth quarter to hand the Canadians a tough loss.

Despite the disappointing result, Canada rebounded to win their remaining round robin games against Australia and England to enter the elimination phase of the tournament with a record of 4-1.

In their opening playoff contest against Team Finland, Canada put forth a dominating performance, winning by a score of 27-2 and dominating the Finns from start to finish.

Seller scored his first and only goal of the tournament in the blowout win; a third quarter tally that was set up by Rochester Knighthawks forward John Grant, Jr., Canada kept on rolling from there, destroying Team Iroquois 16-6 in their semifinal match to set up a rematch with the Americans in the championship match.

After establishing a 6-5 half-time lead in the rain at TD Waterhouse Field, the Canadians refused to allow the powerhouse American squad to mount a comeback late in the game, out-checking and out-hustling their continental rivals to the tune of 37 ground balls for Canada versus 18 for Team U.S.A.

Seller, who wore No. 77 in the tournament, scooped up a loose ball and also served a one-minute penalty in the match.

When the final whistle blew, Team Canada had earned a 15-10 win and had ended 28 years of American field lacrosse supremacy in the process. For his part, Seller (1G-6GB-5SOG in the tournament) was happy to contribute on a strong Canadian team that had the likes of Gary Gait, Tom Marechek, Brodie Merrill, Colin Doyle and Gavin Prout on its roster.

“Any time you can play with the best of the best, you’re going to learn a lot,” said Seller, who was an infant when Canada last won gold at the World Lacrosse Championships. “Hopefully I can carry the success I’ve had here into next season with the Sting and win a Champion’s Cup for the great fans in Arizona.”

 Seller proud to be part of historic international win

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Taking Liberties

with John King

There was a time when Jeremy Roenick dominated the game. Three straight 100-plus-point seasons made him a video game God (see EA Sports NHL ‘93) and one of the most colorful personalities in an otherwise faceless league.

But a disappointing 2005-06 in Los Angeles with just 22 points in 58 games has left many wondering if the new NHL had left the old Jeremy Roenick behind. Always armed with an answer, the new J.R. spent the summer getting himself into the best shape of his career in hopes of returning to top form on the ice.

Taking Liberties caught up with a focused J.R. between workouts back home in Arizona.

Taking Liberties:
There’s been a lot of talk about how, after last year, you decided to re-devote yourself to the game. You even wrote as much on your Web site (www.jeremy-roenick.com). What is the new J.R. about?

Jeremy Roenick: I’ve been training my butt off a couple hours a day for the past three months. It’s the first time I really put in the effort all summer. It’s the most I’ve worked in my entire career. I had a very bad season last year so I rededicated myself, and it doesn’t stop at the end of the summer. It’s going to be a grind all season long. I’ve had to strip everything else away and just focus on getting ready to play hockey.

TL: We spoke with (former Coyotes teammate) Jim Johnson and he said you’re in the best shape of your life and Coyote fans will like what they see.

JR: Absolutely. I haven’t been in this type of shape my entire career. I rededicated my body to the game to be the best player I can possibly be. I’m not worrying about running to a TV show or an interview. I’m focused on being totally prepared physically and mentally, and I’ve removed the distractions.

TL: What are you listening to while you’re working out?

JR: All the Top-40 stuff. The hip-hop, the R-and-B. Anything I can shake my butt to.

TL: Does that mean we won’t get glimpses of the old J.R.? The media guy, the great sound byte, the big personality in an otherwise quiet game?

JR: I’m leaving that off to the side and focusing on playing first. If I play to a high enough level, then it’s easy to speak my mind. I can’t be talking if I’m not walking.

TL: You’re back in Arizona again, and I assume your kids are playing hockey. Many believe Arizona is a future hotbed for the game, how has the youth program changed since you left five years ago?

JR: The program has gotten a lot better. The training, the coaching and the facilities all are much better.

TL: This is a return trip to Phoenix. What feels different this time around with the Coyotes organization?

JR: Obviously there is a new regime. And with Gretzky you have the best player ever to play the game to answer to and listen to as a coach. There are no more excuses that you’re playing for someone who didn’t play the game. I’m sure I’ll learn a lot playing for him.

TL: Where do you like to golf in Arizona?

JR: I belong to Whisper Rock, which I think is the best club in the country. I’m also a member at Paradise Valley which is great for the kids. I like Mirabel, Estancia, all of them.

TL: Much has been made of the youth movement in the new NHL. Who out of the young guys impresses you the most?

JR: You have to mention guys like Sidney Crosby and (Alexander) Ovechkin. And (Ilya) Kovalchuk and (Dany) Heatley. Those guys are off the charts.

TL: Have you seen the music video going around on YouTube and Google Video of Ovechkin?

JR: No, but that kid is sick.

TL: Many say the new NHL is a young man’s game. What does dominating hockey look like for you at your age? Have you set any specific goals?

JR: I’d like to score 30 goals and 80 points, to be a point-a-game guy and return to that top echelon of players.

TL: You signed a recent note to the fans, ‘LOVE THE GAME.’ I thought that was nice. Is there a motto you had as you trained this summer? A theme song or something pasted up on the bulletin board that helped motivate you?

JR: My motivation comes from the things that I heard said about me and things that were said directly to me. Those things stay with me. I’ll remember them when I lace them up to play. And it’s what keeps me waking up at 4:30 every morning even when I don’t think I can take it anymore.
CCM/RBK congratulates the winners of the 2006 Arizona Inline Hockey Association State Championship Skills Competition!

**Accuracy Shooter**
- 8&U = Alex MacDonald
- 10&U = Matt Giovino
- 12&U = Jayme Haveman
- 14&U = Mike Tibbetts
- 16&U = Scott Stover
- 18&U = Scott Stover

**Fastest Skater**
- 8&U = Camden Taylor
- 10&U = Julia Cooper
- 12&U = Kevin Smith
- 14&U = A.J. Huffman
- 16&U = Tyler Wilson
- 18&U = Duane Jones

**Breakaway Shooter**
- 8&U = Alex MacDonald
- 10&U = Justin Wisner
- 12&U = Shaun Loomis
- 14&U = Zach Zehrbach
- 16&U = Ryne O’Reilly
- 18&U = Kyle Letendre

**Best Goalie**
- 8&U = Shaun MacDonald
- 10&U = Leo Leader
- 12&U = Rianon O’Reilly
- 14&U = Brett Velez
- 16&U = Rianon O’Reilly
- 18&U = Josh Jones

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- Sidney Crosby