

Students, teachers play for scholarship fund



Teachers and students pose for a group shot after the game. TONY PEARON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

The teachers and students of North Hastings High School squared off Friday in the 43rd annual Tom Welsh Memorial hockey game.

Welsh was a popular tech teacher who died in the 1970s; the game was established by geography teacher Bob Shouldice in his memory. By now, according to teachers coach Dan Freeman, the game is now an institution ? a part of the NHHS experience.

Freeman, along with Catherine Betson and Allison Avery, has been organizing the game for over a decade. ?It's an event the students remember for years,? he reports, ?and so do the teachers. Teacher Leeyann Tomasini even dug out her seater from 20 years ago. In addition, the proceeds from the game go to the school's scholarship fund, so it's all good.?

In days gone by, the teachers used to dominate the game, but these days, with the average age of the teachers' team getting steadily older, and no new prospects coming up, the shoe is on the other foot. Although North Hastings did not field a school hockey team this year, many of the players were from Bancroft rep teams, including the All-Ontario midget finalists, and the very successful Midget B girls. (Rules require two women on the ice at all times). The students also had the benefit of Trent Schutt, a junior A player with the Wellington Dukes. Schutt, who commutes twice a week from Bancroft to Prince Edward, scored the students' first two goals without an overwhelmingly amount of effort, on the way to a 5-1 triumph.

Nonetheless, the teachers put up a good struggle, even though some team members (who shall remain nameless) haven't had a lot of hockey experience, or even skating experience. Thankfully the game was played under no-contact rules; as Freeman pointed out, ?no oxygen was required.? Several teachers definitely deserve sportsmanship awards simply for suiting up and giving what they could. In fact, student goalie Alex McGibbon was kept reasonably busy, although nowhere near as busy as Chip Gillis defending the teachers' net.

Freeman termed it ?a moral victory for the teachers,? particularly since he claims the students declined a Reach-for-the-Top challenge from the staff. Overall, the game was fun to watch, and from the viewpoint of the student team bench, fun to play. After the tense moments of recent play-off hockey at the arena, it was a mellow moment, and the student scholarship fund was the real winner.