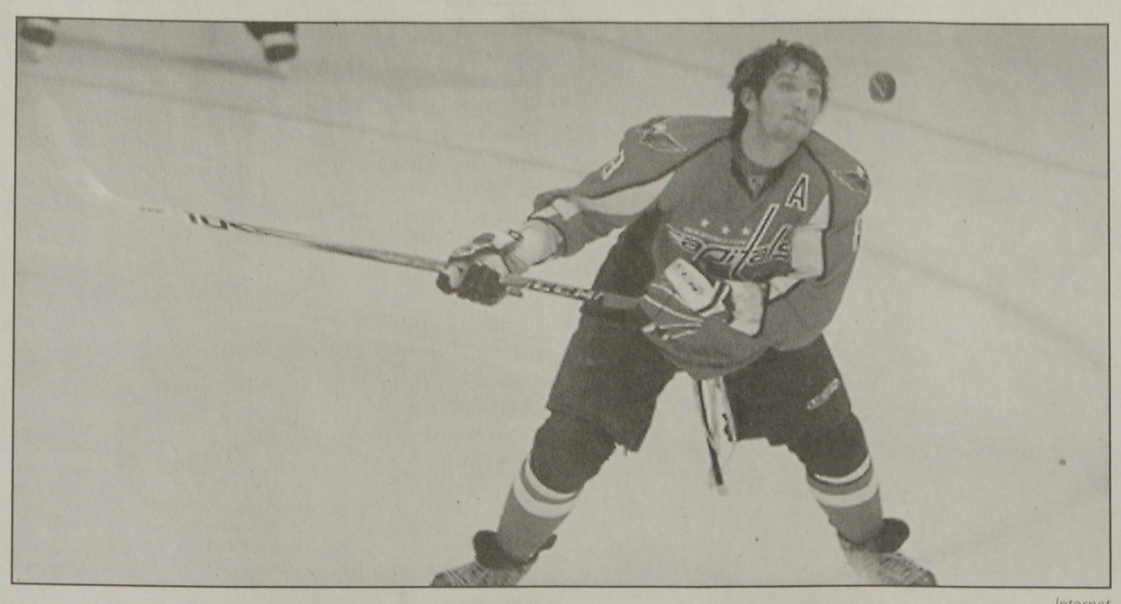
Skills competition doesn't live up to the hype

by Mitchell Bernard
an opinion



Internet

Despite a major program overhaul, the NHL All-Star Skills Competition fell short of many fans' expectations.

Even my Ovechkin-fanatic roommate was let down.

"That's it?" he asked, as the annual NHL Super Skills Competition came to a close.

"Wow. Well that was worthless," he said in disgust, still dawning his Ovechkin jersey proudly.

This past Saturday I sat down with my roommates to watch the annual NHL Super Skills Competition. A new format for the competition promised to be a more fan-friendly design in hopes to increase the ratings for the event.

The new design didn't help.

Unlike previous competitions, this year's show began with an obstacle course relay. If you even so much as blinked, you could miss an entire round. What hurt most was players, such as Jason Spezza, were limited to stick handling through a few markers before passing it off.

Is that really a display of talent? Is that really what the fans want to see?

After a number of obstacles including a saucer pass and a one-timer, the obstacle course finished with the goaltender attempting to score from the opposing end. This isn't the first time the NHL introduced the goaltending scoring competition, but it should be the last.

Sure, some goaltenders like Rick DiPietro have a great shot. But when Tim Thomas couldn't even make it to the opposing end, it doesn't make for great television.

The fastest skater event has always been a captivating event of the past, as two players go head-to-head in a battle around the rink. Whichever player can keep the momentum going around the net has a great shot at the title.

This year, however, the NHL introduced the fastest skater competition as a race from the goal line to the opposing blue line. It took about four seconds for the race to end, so if one player was slow out of the gates they really had no chance of winning. It was too fast for the fans to enjoy. Apparently it is no longer a skill to be able to make great cuts around the net while maintaining speed.

To give the players a break during the competition, the NHL placed the Young Stars challenge during the festivities. Previously, the Young Stars game had been played the day of the All-Star game in front of about 8,000 fans.

What did this do for the competition? Absolutely nothing. I don't think I even remember the score. In fact, I think that part of the competition was a bit of a break for all viewers, not just the players.

The NHL was able to keep the accuracy shot competition intact, and finally I was content. Tomas Kaberle of the Toronto Maple Leafs went four-for-four to win the event.

Skills competition or not, this was a glimmer of hope for my Leafs. Hey, we need at least something to brag about, don't we?

The final event of the evening was the Breakaway Challenge. The new event is quite similar to the NBA Rising Stars Slam Dunk competition. How close is it to the NBA's rendition? Dominque Wilkins, two-time slam-dunk champion, was a judge in the NHL version.

I will admit, I was quite excited for the event. With names such as Pavel Datsyuk and Alexander Ovechkin slated to participate, I was hoping for some great entertainment.

But the Breakaway Challenge didn't live up to the hype. The players didn't seem to have that creative spark that would have made the competition an amazing event. Players were given points for sliding on their knees? For missing the puck?

At least in the NBA competition you have to get the ball in the hoop to receive good scores. Can you imagine someone winning the slam-dunk contest, even though they missed the backboard completely?

But to give the players credit, the goaltenders weren't really giving them a fair chance to display their talents. The poke checking took away from the competition and as one broadcaster said, it should really be looked at as an adjustment to next year's competition.

The NHL attempted to make the Super Skills Competition more for the fans and not so much for the players. Why then would they use cameras following the players during a breakaway? I really didn't get the angle they were trying to portray. It's hard to enjoy what the athletes are doing when all you have is a view of their back.

Maybe I'm just a classic kind of person. I enjoyed the skills competitions from the '90s. The new introductions took away from the actual skills of the athletes, and it seemed as though most of the players were even uncomfortable participating in the event.

The NHL absolutely has to alter the All-Star weekend. Even the classic version of the competition wasn't great entertainment. They are on the right track, but more changes are needed to keep fans wanting to watch the show year after year.

I don't think copying the NBA Skills Competition is the way to go, though. Things don't translate well from hardwood to ice.

Who wants my Bud Bowl tickets?



THE FIFTY MISSION CAP

by
Brian Munn

Sports fans far and wide were pretty excited for last weekend. After all, the NHL All-Star skills competition and game were held in Atlanta, the Red Bull Crashed Ice finals were shown on TSN on Saturday night, and right here in Fredericton we had a spectacular V-Reds/Tommies game at the LBR.

But for this fan, the weekend was only about one thing: Baseball.

That's right. Even though it's still about two weeks before pitchers and catchers will flock to Florida and Arizona for spring training, the Boston Red Sox put tickets up for sale at 11 am sharp on Saturday.

So I sat at my desktop, with 24 Internet Explorer pages opened to the Red Sox "Virtual Waiting Room." And just for good measure, I opened 24 more pages on my laptop. So with 48 pages waiting to get into the ticketing site, I figured I had a 20 minute wait – half an hour, maximum.

But soon it was noon, and I had no tickets. Then it was 12:30, and 1 pm. Games were slowly selling out.

2:00 came and went, then 3:00, then 4:00. The Milwaukee tickets were gone, and things weren't looking good for the series against Cleveland.

Finally, at 4:30, after I had stared blankly at two computer screens for about five hours, I realized I might have a problem. Who cares that much about a sports team?



So I put on my Red Sox jacket and my Red Sox hat, and headed off to my girlfriend's house.

And as soon as I got there, I opened up another 30 Internet Explorer pages to that God-forsaken Virtual Waiting Room.

It was 6:43, and after nearly eight hours I was ready to give up. "Perhaps," I encouraged myself, "I'm just not meant to go to Fenway this year." I finally gave in to just spending the money I had set aside for tickets on the MLB Extra Innings package for the summer.

But as I was about to give up on my tickets, I noticed one of the 30 pages on my girlfriend's computer had broken through the best defenses of the Red Sox ticket offices. Finally, tickets were mine!

7 hours and 43 minutes of my Saturday. That's sacrifice, friends. It's not a five mile line in the -27 degree weather outside Lambeau Field, but then again, technology has made us all just a little bit softer.

So what would you do for the tickets?

The Brunswickan Sports Department has recently acquired two tickets to this weekend's Bud Bowl celebration at Sweetwaters, and I want to give them away.

My email address is brunswickansports@gmail.com, and I want to know what you would do for these Bud Bowl tickets.

If you can impress me, the tickets are yours. And despite being a Leafs fan, I'm not easily impressed.

So this is your chance to do what the Indianapolis Colts couldn't, and win your way to the Super (Bud) Bowl (party).

date
JAN. 31 & FEB. 1

place
S.U.B. - BLUE LOUNGE

hours
9 - 7

last day
9-5

► FINE ART
FANTASY ◄
WILDLIFE ◄
► GIANT-SIZED POSTERS
► MUSIC
FRAMES & HANGERS ◄
► FILM
► PHOTOGRAPHY
► 1000S OF POSTERS



THE IMAGINUS
POSTER SALE

Local competition highlights festival

from *Climbing* page 1

also has several community outreach programs. They host private events, school groups, community groups such as Youth at Risk, and birthday parties, in addition to a popular junior after-school program. The club hosts between 12-30 kids, mainly from elementary and middle school, every Monday.

The club also hosts an annual "Rock School" and "Ice School," which has two-day trips into the New Brunswick wilderness for climbing excursions. The Rock School runs in autumn with 40 people, while two groups participate in the Ice School each February.

"Community outreach is crucial, because as a university club we have to create a viable atmosphere in which students and the community can participate," said Bowles.

"By reaching out to the community we form a mutually beneficial relationship, which is very important to us."

Bowles added that one of the most important aspects of the relationship the club has with the community is that the financial support the club receives allows them to subsidize all costs for students.

"Community outreach is integral in the financial aspect. Both the community members and the university community benefit, but the funding benefits students."



Andrew Meade / *The Brunswickan*

The climbing wall at the LB Gym will host beginner and intermediate competitions as part of the Rock and Ice Club's Banff Mountain Film Festival weekend. The club has hosted the annual event for over a decade.

V-REDS RESULTS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23RD

MEN'S HOCKEY
UNB – 6
STU – 1

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24TH

MEN'S HOCKEY
UNB – 4
STU – 3

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25TH

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL
UNB – 3
MUN – 0

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL
UNB – 3
MUN – 2

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
UNB – 55
MUN – 69

WOMEN'S HOCKEY
UNB – 5
UPEI – 2

MEN'S BASKETBALL
UNB – 90
MUN – 75

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL
UNB – 3
MUN – 1

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30TH

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL
UNB – 3
MUN – 2

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
UNB – 64
MUN – 73

MEN'S BASKETBALL
UNB – 86
MUN – 65

UPCOMINIG V-REDS EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30TH

WOMEN'S HOCKEY
STU @ UNB
7:00PM @ AUC

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL
DAL @ UNB
6:00PM @ LB GYM

MEN'S HOCKEY
DAL @ UNB
7:00PM @ AUC

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL
DAL @ UNB
8:00PM @ LB GYM

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND

WRESTLING
UNB OPEN
12:00PM

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
ST. FX @ UNB
1:00PM @ LB GYM

WOMEN'S HOCKEY
UPEI @ UNB
2:00PM @ AUC

MEN'S BASKETBALL
ST. FX @ UNB
3:00PM @ LB GYM

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL
ACADIA @ UNB
6:00PM @ LB GYM

MEN'S HOCKEY
ACADIA @ UNB
7:00PM @ AUC

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL
DAL @ UNB
8:00PM @ LB GYM

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
SMU @ UNB
1:00 @ LB GYM

MEN'S BASKETBALL
SMU @ UNB
3:00PM @ LB GYM

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

ROB HENNIGAR
MEN'S HOCKEY

BARB VRIENDS
WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL