

# Flyers through the Ages Part 1950's

By John Ross

## Season 1950-51

So the repeat Scottish National League Champion Flyers were "Flying" as the new decade started, quite literally as it turned out as concerns about a rail strike in Canada was reported. "Ice Men Will Fly to Beat Rail Strike" was the headline. The Canadian Railway strike caused the Scottish Ice Hockey Association to make extra transport arrangements for the eighty players being "imported" for the coming season. Many of the men lived thousands of miles west of Quebec, the sailing point, while others lived not quite so far away in the Eastern provinces, and buses and planes would now bring them to join the Empress of Scotland to sail to the UK. By mid-August only four of the seven Scottish clubs had completed their signings. Flyers fans were completely in the dark about the team they would be cheering on. "It had been some time since anyone at Kirkcaldy Ice Rink had heard from Coach Al Rogers apart from a brief note saying he had signed five players. Who they are or what position they will play is still a mystery and looks as if Canadian journalists will be the first solve it when they get team lists as the players board the boat". And fans complain about the lack of news in the off season in modern times!

Rogers had already signed four players from the previous season - Belanger, Snider, Greger and Bentley which, if one counted the five players he was supposed to have signed in Canada, would leave one vacancy as the league maximum number of Canadians per team was set at ten.

In an effort to stimulate interest the Scottish Ice Hockey Association had made numerous changes in their 1950-51 programme. Undoubtedly the most controversial change was the extension the National League competition from a 24-game series to a 36-game series. Always a gruelling competition it had now developed into a "marathon." Stamina and consistency would be the deciding factors, and Flyers, if they were to retain the championship for the third successive season, would have to have a pretty dependable line-up. This season there was also to be no preliminary challenge series and the pipe-opener would be the Autumn Cup tournament. The Canada Cup competition, which immediately followed, would be split up into two separate parts to allow the National League series to be played straight through. There was also talk about additional teams. H.M. Stationary Office, which occupied the Edinburgh rink since 1939, was leaving in September and there was hope that an ice hockey team to represent the Edinburgh Rink could be in action at the Falkirk stadium during the coming winter. The Edinburgh rink expected to open for hockey before the New Year but Aberdeen had been refused a building permit and would not take part in the League this year.

"Until television is introduced Ice Hockey will not take its true place in Scotland." This statement was made Mr Festus Moffat, Secretary of the Scottish Ice Hockey Association on the eve of the season. Mr Moffat said that in the recent ice hockey world championship games in London, public interest was stirred by means of television, and consequently large crowds attended most games. Continuing, he said that ice hockey was one of the few games which can picked up really well by television cameras and this was just what Scottish hockey needed to encourage spectators. Towards the end of last season attendances in most rinks were very poor and the fault lay mainly on the poor standard hockey provided. Dealing with this Mr Moffat said that scouts in Canada considered the game here was of a senior-junior class, but this had been seen to and a senior standard will be maintained this season. Indeed, the following question was asked "Is This Scottish Ice Hockey's Last Season?" - Fans, critics, players and coaches all over were practically unanimous that there must be a big improvement in the standard if the game is not to fold up and become a memory. Flyers had winning club last season, and yet support was falling away. The other rinks were the same and nobody's going to suggest they will carry on when the money isn't coming in. The place for the improvement was firstly in the standard and type of players brought across. Scottish fans have grown up and will no longer tolerate "rough-houses" and the goings on to which they have been subject in recent years. They want to see fast, heady hockey and since they pay the piper they have every right to call the tune.

Devaluation proved to be a big handicap last year and it was difficult to induce good players to come to Scotland. More American clubs were formed and it was more profitable for a player to go America. Many of these teams broke up however during the season and this left the players idle, so it was quite a gamble in the American League. The Association, declared Mr Moffat, paid out £4500 to players in order to compensate their loss through devaluation, but were determined to secure good men from Canada even though transportation was up by 100 per cent, from what it was two seasons ago.

On the subject of wages a 'ceiling' £125 per week was allowed for each club for players' wages. There was a basic wage of £8 per week for full-time home and imported players. Every club in the circuit would have ten senior players this year and discretionary bonuses would be paid out by the management in accordance to a player's worth.

There would be three senior referees this season. Bert Gemmel, Dave Cross and Don Cumming—and they would be assisted by Bill Melville, ex-Dunfermline defenceman.

The Canadian Ice Hockey Association had introduced some new rules which the Scottish League adopted. Players or coaches who bang their sticks on the boards will immediately be penalised. A referees committee, consisting one representative from each rink, will deal with the offenders and will meet on weekday instead of a Sunday previously. The aim of the Association is to clean hockey and cut out the petty incidents which mar the game. Sounds a lot like DOPs doesn't it. The only new rule to affect the playing ice was concerning the goal crease. The rule read; "There will a semi-circle in front of the net (partial circle) and shall be drawn out so that the crease shall (at all times) be 3ft. from the goal line.

With costs a concern, quality of imports an issue, public interest not creating the expected revenues the following piece on the Junior game in Scotland should really have been a red flag moment for the sport. Dr. McCabe, President of the SIHA spoke about Junior hockey and that it was a great pity two teams had opted to drop out, namely Dunfermline and Paisley. Junior hockey this year would be on a smaller scale, but the main trophies would be competed for and separate tournaments run for the teams who make a regular feature of weekly games. The juniors have taken a step back, said Dr. McCabe, but hoped they would be to the forefront again. "They used to look upon the time when the teams would consist of Scots only" he said, "but I still think this could be done and will done." To illustrate this Dr. McCabe recalled the team of eight Scots and four Englishmen which attracted all the attention in the World Championships in London last year. Taking the Syme brothers as examples of Scots bred players he said that these players in particular captured the attention of the London sports writers and gave their team a much needed boost. Following the first two games, which Great Britain won, the Symes were inundated with offers go to Canada or to the Continent and become stars, but the crowning moment came when they defeated America by 4-0. In conclusion he said, "Any team which can go out and beat the Americans at any game is worthy of support." Five years on from this point and these reflections would be wholly pertinent if not very poignant.



So the wraps came off the new Flyers line up and tired, after a weeks strenuous travelling, the small band of new recruits arrived at Kirkcaldy Ice Rink and quickly settled into their new quarters. The welcoming party which stood at the entrance to the Ice Rink was smaller than usual, due largely to the doubt which had prevailed as to when the players would arrive. They arrived by special bus from Prestwick and all said they had had very comfortable passage, but that it had proved to slightly monotonous. After a cursory glance at the Rink and their dressing rooms, all expressed satisfaction with their new surroundings. Asked for their impressions of Scotland, they said it surpassed their highest expectations. Only person to claim Scottish antecedents was 21-year-old **Harold Young**, who hails from Montreal. Nicknamed Pep." Harold claimed his family once held titles and land in Scotland. He had a lot of visiting in front of him for he had several relations residing in Perth. Little did he know just how long that "visit" would last. He was no newcomer to British soil, although this was his initial visit to Scotland, as last season he was one of the stars the Earls Court Rangers. A right winger and right-hand shot. "Pep" weighed 165 lbs and stood 5ft 8inches. He has also played for the Junior Canadians and the Verdun Maple Leafs. Renewing old acquaintanceships with Marshall Bentley was **Sherman Blair** who was team mate of Bentley's in the Spokane trials in Washington Sherman, aged 21, 5 ft 8 inches tall and turned the scales at 175 lbs. His home town was Calgary, a left winger and left hand shot, played with the senior team of the famous Trail Smoke Eaters before he sustained fractures to his wrist and nose, and was sent to "recuperate" with the Calgary Meteors. He played with the Trail Smoke Eaters when they reached the finals the British Columbia League. **Albert Campone** (pronounced Camponie) was the "daddy" of the bunch, being the oldest at 22 years of age. From Prince George and weighing 150 lbs he was only 5 ft 6 inches but should prove a favourite with Al Rogers, as they both hailed from Saskatoon. A

centre-ice he played last year with Kelowna Packers in the Senior "A" league. The player who attracted most attention on arrival was **Harold ("Harry") Towns**, whose home town was Oshawa. He was 5 ft 8 inches and 190 lbs. A defenceman and right hand shot Harry played last season with the Oshawa Juniors "B" team. Last, but no means least, was **Jimmy Burnett**, another Oshawa lad who was playing his second visit to the country and remembered as a strong defenceman with the now defunct Glasgow Bruins during season 1947-48. Aged 21 years, he was 6ft and 200lbs. He played with an Oshawa team in the Mercantile league, and was an ex-teammate of goal-tender Pete Belanger. Most importantly he was making a fashion statement "Where large lapels on the coats of the Canadians were once the order of the day, Jimmy favours jackets without these embellishments". Good to know but my primary question when researching was "Where did Chick Mann go?" An answer I have yet to come up with, he appears to have disappeared off the hockey map.

### Fife Flyers' Line-Up for 1950-51



FIFE FLYERS AFTER THEIR FIRST PRACTICE ON SUNDAY MORNING. (Left to right):—BELANGER, SMITH, MITCHELL, TOWNS, SNIDER, BLAIR, YOUNG, BURNETT, BENTLEY CAMPONE and GREGER.

Floyd Snider in his 4<sup>th</sup> season with the club was appointed Captain, Bert Smith and Jimmy Mitchell were also in the Flyers line up and on the eve of their first game at home against Ayr Raiders they signed 28 year old Lee Thorne who was previously with Brighton Tigers. The Flyers won their Autumn Cup opener 8-4. Flyers added Tommy Walker, a junior from Dunfermline Royals and won six of their seven opening games. At the conclusion of the Autumn Cup fixtures the table read:

|                     | GP        | W        | L        | T        | GF        | GA        | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Ayr Raiders         | 12        | 7        | 3        | 2        | 68        | 51        | 16        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>59</b> | <b>46</b> | <b>16</b> |
| Perth Panthers      | 12        | 7        | 5        | 0        | 63        | 56        | 14        |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 12        | 5        | 5        | 2        | 55        | 46        | 12        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 12        | 5        | 6        | 1        | 46        | 43        | 11        |
| Paisley Pirates     | 12        | 5        | 6        | 1        | 57        | 63        | 11        |
| Dundee Tigers       | 12        | 2        | 10       | 0        | 32        | 75        | 4         |

Ayr and Fife played a tiebreaker series as they finished level on points as it had previously been decided that goal difference wouldn't count in such a situation. As a result, the two teams played a two-game total goal tiebreaker series. The Raiders looked as though they would take the title after winning 7-2 at home win in November but in the return at Kirkcaldy in February the Flyers incredibly levelled the aggregate 8-8 with a 6-1 win over a Raiders team on a seven game winning streak. A further two games were required, again the Raiders held a winning advantage after their home game, 7-3 but the Flyers powered to the title when they won 11-4 in Kirkcaldy in late April. A result all the more remarkable given the form that the team had shown since early February.

Before that however the Flyers made a decent start to the Canada Cup and were in with a chance before the break in November for the start of that National League. In the end the 3 game the following Spring could muster enough points as the table finished:

|                     | GP        | W        | L        | T        | GF        | GA        | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Dunfermline Vikings | 12        | 7        | 2        | 3        | 53        | 47        | 17        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 12        | 7        | 5        | 0        | 51        | 40        | 14        |
| Perth Panthers      | 12        | 6        | 4        | 2        | 51        | 46        | 14        |
| Paisley Pirates     | 12        | 6        | 6        | 0        | 55        | 50        | 12        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>52</b> | <b>49</b> | <b>11</b> |
| Dundee Tigers       | 12        | 4        | 6        | 2        | 40        | 48        | 10        |
| Ayr Raiders         | 12        | 3        | 9        | 0        | 50        | 72        | 6         |

In the National league the Flyers were going for their 3<sup>rd</sup> championship in a row. They simply didn't get going. Pep Young had been lost during Canada Cup action for the season with a cut leg, former players Scotty Reid and Hick Moreland came in to provide cover. Dinardo also returned to help shore up a line up that failed to say healthy. Flyers chances of retaining their title was by early March, after a run of eight straight losses, extremely slim and only if you were an eternal optimist. By the time they next won a game, a meaningless Canada Cup game against Falkirk Lions on 5<sup>th</sup> of April, they had succumbed to a mind numbing 15 defeats in a row!! The final table read:

|                     | GP        | W         | L         | T        | GF         | GA         | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Paisley Pirates     | 36        | 23        | 10        | 3        | 202        | 139        | 49        |
| Perth Panthers      | 36        | 20        | 12        | 4        | 151        | 123        | 44        |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 36        | 20        | 13        | 3        | 160        | 153        | 43        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 36        | 16        | 15        | 5        | 135        | 135        | 37        |
| Ayr Raiders         | 36        | 15        | 16        | 5        | 145        | 157        | 35        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>36</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>136</b> | <b>166</b> | <b>27</b> |
| Dundee Tigers       | 36        | 6         | 25        | 5        | 110        | 166        | 17        |

On the back of that win against Falkirk they played the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of the Scottish Cup Final against Paisley Pirates. They had triumphed 14-2 on aggregate over the Ayr Raiders in the first round, in the semi final they saw off the Falkirk Lions 16:6 over two games. In the first leg of the Final in Paisley the Flyers went down 6-3. Their return to form was

underlined when they won 7-4 to level the tie 10-10 on aggregate. The trophy was to be decided by two 5 minute periods of over-time during which each team scored once. It would then go to sudden death where Paisley nicked it. A couple of nights later came that remarkable Autumn Cup win against Ayr.

To round of the season the Jubilee Trophy was won against the Dunfermline Vikings over two legs with the first leg at Kirkcaldy ending 13-1 in Flyers favour. There was some additional silverware in the shape of the Bairns Trophy, which was contested by the bottom three teams, after the following results: Dundee Tigers 5 Ayr Raiders 5 , **Fife Flyers** 8 Dundee Tigers 3, **Fife Flyers** 5 Ayr Raiders 1

|                    | GP       | W        | L        | T        | GF        | GA       | Pts      |
|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Fife Flyers</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>4</b> |
| Ayr Raiders        | 2        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 6         | 10       | 1        |
| Dundee Tigers      | 2        | 0        | 1        | 1        | 8         | 13       | 1        |

## Season 1951/52

Following such a disappointing season it was not a great surprise that the Flyers roster underwent something of an overhaul in the off season. Last years' captain Floyd Snider returned, the only ever-present in local post-war hockey and he was joined by Verne Greger the sole Flyers representative in AllStar honours last season when he made the "B" team. Archie Williams a dashing right winger who had joined the Flyers midway through las season would also return.

High scoring winger Sherman Blair decided a good paying job at home this winter was his best option and last season's centre Marsh Bentley (who sadly passed away aged 90 a few weeks ago) who, the returning Rogers as coach, had hoped would be a certain starter didn't return as he and his brother tended the crops on their farm back in Saskatchewan before he went on to play for Spokane.

Manager McGregor then pulled of what was considered one of the most sensational captures of the close season when he secured the services of Jack "Stubby" Mason, Wembley Lions international and last seasons' All-Star "B" team netminder. Stubby who still enjoyed the reputation of being the finest netminder in Britain albeit a bit temperamental at times was noted for his brilliance and crowd-pleasing personality. Played three years with Wembley Monarchs, one with Wembley Lions and toured Scotland with the Bobby Giddens' "Ice Hockey World" All Stars.

On the eve of the season the early assessment of the new look Flyers team was that they were a workmanlike bunch. "of all the Canadian ice hockey players who have crossed the Atlantic since the end of the war, the new Fife Flyers look the most workmanlike yet to come to Kirkcaldy. All of them have an efficiency and certainly don't lack bulk. The

players will make up one of the oldest and most experienced line-ups seen locally, and should bring back some of the glamour and thrills missing in recent years. As one wise-cracker put it, at least they can all skate!"

The other newcomers to the team were:

**Fern Phillion** - a rather short but well-built defenceman at 5ft 7in and 165 lbs. (almost 12 stone to the average Scot). A left hand shot and likely to hit hard and often. A swimming instructor during the summer months, he played in the Toronto Mercantile league last season. Was recruited on Johnny Vanier's recommendation.

**Al Brown** played in Troy (Ohio. U.S.) last season. 5ft 11in and 180 lbs (which was considered tall and heavy!) a right hand shot he was put forward by Frank King.

**Johnny Vanier** who needs little introduction. Was with Pirates in 48-49 and joined Flyers in 49-50. Not a speed merchant nor a high-scoring winger but he skates hard both ways which is something very few fans appreciate. Now 27, Vanier was with the senior Sudbury Miners last season.

**Joe Millison** was the 'baby' of the team at 20, but looks like being big asset, 5ft 10in and 155 lbs. he is big right winger. He played with the senior B team New Toronto last season, was with St Michaels, the junior farm team for the Toronto Maple Leafs, for five years before that.

**Johnny Pryhora** from Winnipeg has had plenty of experience in England and looks like putting it to good use in the centre. Was at Wembley a year before joining Nottingham Panthers for another two. 23, he is 5ft 10in and 178 lbs. His name (of Ukranian extraction) was pronounced Purr-a-hora

**Frank Facto** 25 years old a really hefty centre at 5ft 11in and 175 lbs. Like Brown, played at Troy (Ohio) last season and was recommended by Frank King. A right hand shot.

**Mickie Linnell** 29 year old left winger who had three seasons with the Swift Current Indians before joining Flyers

The referee circuit was to be enhanced with the arrival of Gordon Gerrard who officiated in the Toronto Major League last season and who would take charge of most of the games. Also in the pool were R Gemmel, D Cross and a couple of well known faces, Nels McCuaig and Harold Young!

The Flyers started their defence of the Autumn Cup with a 2-1 win at Dunfermline thanks to a double from Pryhora but found themselves 8 goals down a few nights later at home to Perth Panthers before Pryhora and Snider found

the net again in an 8-2 loss. Only 2 points were earned in their next six games and they were winless at home in the competition when changes were made by the management team. Defenceman Phillion and right winger Brown were released. The Flyers attempted to attract Ray Dinardo back but failed. Bob Bergeron, ex-Ayr center helped out for a couple of weeks and was due to be heading to the south of France to coach Viege but signed on permanently with Phillion taking the job at Viege. The Flyers brought another ex-Ayr player Hal Kewley in who had an impressive points return last season. These changes helped pick their fortunes up but as the league table showed it was too little too late.

|                     | GP        | W        | L        | T        | GF        | GA        | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Ayr Raiders         | 12        | 9        | 2        | 1        | 59        | 37        | 19        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 12        | 8        | 3        | 1        | 64        | 42        | 17        |
| Perth Panthers      | 12        | 6        | 6        | 0        | 55        | 54        | 12        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>36</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>10</b> |
| Dundee Tigers       | 12        | 4        | 6        | 2        | 34        | 54        | 10        |
| Paisley Pirates     | 12        | 4        | 7        | 1        | 56        | 67        | 9         |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 12        | 3        | 8        | 1        | 42        | 44        | 7         |

Decent form continued into the Canada Cup where the first stages were played from October 29<sup>th</sup> until December 1<sup>st</sup> but before the break in the competition they were on the slide again and too much work was required in the New Year to salvage the teams' chances as the table finished:

|                     | GP        | W        | L        | T        | GF        | GA        | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Falkirk Lions       | 12        | 9        | 3        | 0        | 62        | 38        | 18        |
| Dundee Tigers       | 12        | 8        | 3        | 1        | 57        | 47        | 17        |
| Ayr Raiders         | 12        | 8        | 4        | 0        | 73        | 40        | 16        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>41</b> | <b>47</b> | <b>12</b> |
| Perth Panthers      | 12        | 4        | 5        | 3        | 53        | 61        | 11        |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 12        | 4        | 7        | 1        | 42        | 51        | 9         |
| Paisley Pirates     | 12        | 0        | 11       | 1        | 47        | 91        | 1         |

The poor form from the Canada Cup continued into the start of the National League in December and in their opening two games the Flyers were shutout 4-0 at Falkirk before losing 4-2 at home the following night to Ayr Raiders to bring the slide to 4 successive defeats. Jim Szabo ex Brighton Tiger made a brief appearance in defence before moving on to Perth. A game against the Dundee Tigers scheduled in December was rearranged to accommodate the ice shows and when it was played in mid January the Flyers 3-2 loss was watched by less than a few hundred. Another sign that things were far from well in the sport. Don Mann, ex Wembley Lion, joined the team from the continent at the start of March and after a 700 mile trip made his debut that night against Ayr and almost inspired a Flyers win against the champions elect who won 2-1. The Flyers ended up the lowest scorers in the league and only Paisley shipped more goals as they slumped for the remainder of the season to eventually finish one place worse off than last season which meant they were in bottom spot!

|                     | GP        | W        | L         | T        | GF         | GA         | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Ayr Raiders         | 36        | 24       | 9         | 3        | 170        | 111        | 51        |
| Dundee Tigers       | 36        | 20       | 12        | 4        | 154        | 140        | 44        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 36        | 19       | 14        | 3        | 166        | 138        | 41        |
| Perth Panthers      | 36        | 16       | 17        | 3        | 164        | 166        | 35        |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 36        | 14       | 17        | 5        | 155        | 156        | 33        |
| Paisley Pirates     | 36        | 10       | 21        | 5        | 139        | 197        | 25        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>36</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>129</b> | <b>169</b> | <b>23</b> |

The bottom two played for the Bairns Trophy and the Flyers retained the Trophy won for the first time last season with a 4-2 win at Kirkcaldy. In its inaugural season the Mirror of Merit was won by 'Stubby' Mason.

## Season 1952/53

The summer of 1952 was a rocky one to say the least. It stated with the resignation of Rink Manager Edwin McGregor who had been in the post for one year but was a key person in the establishment of the game in Scotland over the last 15 or so years. It was stated that his departure was in no way connected to the speculation that hockey in Kirkcaldy was about to come to an end.

That summer rink shareholders were asked to vote whether to continue with the team and it took an extraordinary AGM to secure Flyers' future but only after much debate which culminated in several resignations. The issue came to a head when the rink directors voted to BACK the team during the slump, arguing that the "boom and bust" rollercoaster was "part of a cycle that affects all sports." They pointed out hockey had carried the arena since its opening in 1938 until 1947 when attendances started to decline and were confident of a revival in fortunes. They claimed there had been "an increase in revenue from ice hockey" that year -- a claim that was to spark the row which almost led to the club folding.

Two directors, Archibald Dryburgh and Frank Hargreaves, went public with the facts which showed the opposite was true. They revealed gate receipts which topped £16,390 in 1947/48 had dropped to £15,000 in 1948/49 and £12,000 the following season ... and bottomed out at just £6,075 in 1950/51. It was estimated that the season just finished would see a loss of approximately £4000. They called for the chairman's resignation for "failing to suspend a department which was showing a distinct financial loss and had been doing so for some time." In a statement to the Fife Free Press they added: "We strongly advise the board to give up all participation in ice hockey as, by continuing, the ice rink company was most assuredly heading for financial disaster."

In July the board withdrew its financial claims but in doing so "emphatically" pointed out it did not intend to mislead anyone. The matter finally went to the EGM on July 5 in the rink's Club Lounge with an 11.00 a.m. start. The Saturday morning gathering lasted two hours, and the motion to continue ice hockey gained the necessary three-quarters support of the shareholders. Imagine if internet forums and social media had existed back then !

Attention could now be turned to the on ice concerns and top of the list was finding a new coach to replace the departed Al Rogers who had requested an increase in wages (timing is everything) and was understandably denied so he returned to Canada. The Flyers only retained player was Verne Greger who could hardly walk at the end of the season due to a long term injury.

The league took what should have been a step forward with the eventual opening of the rink at Murrayfield. The structure having been completed in 1939 and but for the war it would have been operating as an ice rink for the past 13 years instead of a government logistics building.

The first signing for the new season was a goalie and one who arrived with the fanfare in the local paper "Flyers sign Former NHL Goalie" – **Harry McQuestion** was the man recruited as a former Detroit Red Wing and Stanley Cup winner no less. I guess in those days there was no Elite Prospects website or YouTube video to validate someone's CV but the truth behind McQuestion's pedigree didn't quite match the headline. We'll return to the full story at some point in the season. Other signings were:

**Ron Biggar** a defenceman from Western Ontario who had played with the Intermediate 'A' side the Goderitch Samis Pontiacs last season.

**Bob Burns** ex Dundee Tigers and Falkirk Lions defenceman who was recruited as player coach and was captain

**Gordon Blackman** a former Falkirk Lion a few years back but the 6ft plus defenceman had been playing with Bud Scrutton at Grand Rapids last season and was thought to be hugely more experienced than his previous stint in the country. In a "swap" scenario former Flyer Sherman Blair interestingly would be lining up for Falkirk this season

**Marlowe McDonald** a center who had played the last two seasons with the Flin Flon Bombers and came on the recommendation of Maple Leaf's player Bob Davidson.

**Nick Dubick** a right wing, 6ft 200lbs who also played with Goderitch Samis Pontiacs and was said to have a high scoring average

**Gillen Williamson** 170lbs right wing who played in the Ontario Hockey League for Braysbridge

**Alec Zubatiuk** 6ft 170lbs rugged left wing from the East York Major league

**Bud Stock** 22 year old center who played in the new Toronto SeniorLeague

**Scotty Dowle** 19 year old center who played Junior 'A' hockey for St Katherine's

**Bert Smith** and **Jimmy Mitchell** would also continue to turn out although Smith was lining up a move to a Dutch team Ijs Vogels of Amsterdam in December. Indeed Mitchell also had offers from the Continent but wanted to stay in Kirkcaldy although as a defenceman he was faced yet again with 3 imported players taking all of the regular spots. **Marshall Bentley** who the Flyers had been attempting to sign throughout the summer would eventually arrive in Kirkcaldy in late October, after missing his original sailing

due to the harvest and would take the space vacated by Smith.

John Merrill Wood was a last minute call off as was Gillen Williamson. There had been some rumblings of another war in Europe which had spooked some of the Canadian players considering playing in the UK.

Verner Greger was released to find another club back in Canada after spending the whole summer with his leg in plaster.



Back row left to right: McQuestion, Dubick, Blackman, McDonald, Biggar

Front row left to right: Zubatiuk, Stock, Burns, Dowle

The Flyers played Dunfermline in a Challenge match and in what was described as the good old days with spectators still flooding in after the game had started the Flyers won 4-1 against a weakened Vikings squad. Maybe the dark hockey days of the summer in the town were going to be vanquished ? Four nights later in the return challenge game they went down 4-3.

The Autumn Cup would not be the curtain raiser for the season but was instead replaced by a Scottish Cup home and home series with all eight teams involved. An opening night defeat in Dundee 4-1 was followed by a 7-2 thrashing of the Panthers at Kirkcaldy. The Flyers couldn't find any consistency and they closed their matches in the competition with a trip to Dunfermline who secured a point in the 1-1 draw that was enough to give them the cup on goal average from Dundee:

|                     | P         | W        | D        | L        | F         | A         | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Dunfermline Vikings | 14        | 9        | 2        | 3        | 59        | 41        | 20        |
| Dundee Tigers       | 14        | 9        | 2        | 3        | 64        | 56        | 20        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 14        | 9        | 1        | 4        | 46        | 43        | 19        |
| Ayr Raiders         | 14        | 5        | 4        | 5        | 60        | 44        | 14        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>14</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>46</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>12</b> |
| Paisley Pirates     | 14        | 5        | 0        | 9        | 62        | 71        | 10        |
| Edinburgh Royals    | 14        | 3        | 3        | 8        | 57        | 62        | 9         |
| Perth Panthers      | 14        | 3        | 2        | 9        | 68        | 92        | 8         |

The Canada Cup followed with the now customary two phase fixture list which meant that it didn't end until after the completion of the National League games. An innovation was to be tried in the competition with games now being officiated by a referee and one linesman. The Flyers opened up their campaign with a fine 5-2 win in Murrayfield, one of only two they would secure before ending the competition in last place.

|                     | GP        | W        | L        | T        | GF        | GA        | Pts      |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Falkirk Lions       | 14        | 10       | 4        | 0        | 48        | 50        | 20       |
| Ayr Raiders         | 14        | 9        | 5        | 0        | 62        | 39        | 18       |
| Paisley Pirates     | 14        | 7        | 5        | 2        | 67        | 53        | 16       |
| Edinburgh Royals    | 14        | 7        | 6        | 1        | 55        | 46        | 15       |
| Perth Panthers      | 14        | 6        | 5        | 3        | 63        | 60        | 13       |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 14        | 5        | 7        | 2        | 41        | 48        | 12       |
| Dundee Tigers       | 14        | 3        | 8        | 3        | 50        | 69        | 9        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>14</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>61</b> | <b>7</b> |

In the National League they struggled just as badly. Inevitable squad changes were made with the additions of Ed Williams from Toronto on defence and also from Toronto Don Clayton added to the forwards. Local lad Harry Pearson was introduced as was Len Smigel who had been with Falkirk earlier in the season and he replaced Blackman. 22 year Fred Kentner from the Toronto Senior Major League was advertised as a prolific scorer, this didn't quite turn out. In January the "Kirkcaldy Times" newspaper wrote: "There is a regrettable lack of life about ice hockey these days. It wears a jaded look and the spectators cannot warm up the same enthusiasm which is a great pity for ice hockey is a game which could attract and maintain attention."

That month saw a plan hatched to share gate receipts across teams in a bid to ease the financial load. If takings were more than £300 they were to be split, with the exception of Murrayfield who had 12 imports and only paid out if their revenue topped £325.

The Flyers 7-4 win against Dundee Tigers on 29<sup>th</sup> January was their first success in two years against their Tayside rivals.

By March it was, in the words of the Times "zero hour" for Flyers. Rink directors waited on news of another plan to replace the 50/50 split with contributions into a general pot which would then be used to subsidise the weaker teams. Flyers, ironically were one such club ...

The SIHA went into discussions with W.B. George, president of the Canadian Amateur IHA and zero hour was put on hold. George did hit the nail on the head as he pinpointed local talent as the way forward. Flyers made their move and promptly cut their import quota to six and the crisis was temporarily weathered.

The Flyers got themselves off the bottom of the league, albeit on goal average, for the first time in the season in their second last game of the National league season, they did it in style with a 9-1 win over the Tigers who swapped places with them and that's how it ended:

|                     | GP        | W        | L         | T        | GF        | GA         | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Ayr Raiders         | 28        | 14       | 9         | 5        | 103       | 83         | 33        |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 28        | 14       | 9         | 5        | 106       | 86         | 33        |
| Perth Panthers      | 28        | 15       | 11        | 2        | 106       | 94         | 32        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 28        | 13       | 10        | 5        | 96        | 86         | 31        |
| Paisley Pirates     | 28        | 12       | 13        | 3        | 112       | 115        | 27        |
| Edinburgh Royals    | 28        | 12       | 14        | 2        | 88        | 92         | 26        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>28</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>79</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>21</b> |
| Dundee Tigers       | 28        | 9        | 16        | 3        | 97        | 129        | 21        |

The bottom four teams went into the Airlie Trophy playoff. Edinburgh overcame Dundee 12-9 on aggregate and he Flyers managed to beat Paisley 6-4 at Kirkcaldy and 3-2 the following night to advance to the Final 9-6 on aggregate. The Final first leg was at Murrayfield and again the Flyers kept up their belated run of form to return with a 5-4 advantage. In the final game of the season at Kirkcaldy the Royals snatched a very late winner to tie the series at 9-9 and so an overtime period was required. Bert Smith and Zubatiuk were the Flyers scorers in OT to win the cup.



Airlie Trophy winners and Bob Burns and Harry McQueston sharing the mirror of merit award being presented by Les Lovell Snr. Burns had been awarded the accolade at the final home game when a recording device measured the volume of the crowd who cheered for either him or McQueston and so Burns with the highest recording tied the seasons votes.

The cheering in Burns ears could hardly have abated when he announced that he was taking up the coaching position with Murrayfield Royals for the following season.

### Season 1953/54

The summer presented yet another bump in the road for the stability of the sport. Mr Ian Stevenson announced that the final call had been made on the continuation of the Dunfermline Vikings. "Heavy costs" were the deciding factor. Whilst this was a regrettable outcome for the Flyers losing the 'derby' fixture it was hoped that some of the Vikings ice hockey enthusiasts would venture East to sustain their hockey needs.

The Flyers announced in August a new player coach in defenseman **Ken Broughton**. Broughton wouldn't appear and coaching duties would fall on center **Johnny (Doughboy) Dobos** a former Galt junior 'A' and 'B' player who also played for Woodstock Warriors where he was a renowned playmaker. He had recently coached a representative team that included another three Flyers signings. Netminder **Ron Collins** who played previously for Simcoe Gunners in the Toronto Intermediate league, **Jack Lane** a right wing and 20 year old, 13 stone, left wing or center **Lloyd Boomer** both of whom had played Junior 'B' at Woodstock. 23 year old Acton, Ontario born **Fred Kentner** who had turned professional at 19 with the Eastern United States league Washington D.C. club. **Scotty Dowle** one of the few bright spots from last term returned. With **Bert Smith** being reinstated as a junior the Flyers had one space to fill and they offered Jim Fiddler from Falkirk Lions a trial as well as free agent Dick Wolsherholme, both were short lived.

The Flyers opened their Autumn Cup campaign with a 9-6 home win against Dundee Tigers. **ELEVEN** consecutive defeats followed, including being ousted from the Scottish Cup by Ayr at home, and once again changes were being made. **Bud Stock** was announced as a returnee from last season but he wouldn't make an appearance before December and 21 year old **Jack Chicorski** was recruited to shore up the defence. He had played for Brentford Redmen in the OHA Senior 'A' league as well as Bridgesshot Reds a senior 'B' outfit. They eventually won against Falkirk Lions in their final Autumn Cup match.

|                    | GP        | W        | L         | T        | GF        | GA        | Pts      |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Paisley Pirates    | 12        | 9        | 1         | 2        | 57        | 23        | 20       |
| Perth Panthers     | 12        | 9        | 2         | 1        | 61        | 30        | 19       |
| Falkirk Lions      | 12        | 6        | 5         | 1        | 37        | 33        | 13       |
| Edinburgh Royals   | 12        | 6        | 5         | 1        | 38        | 44        | 13       |
| Ayr Raiders        | 12        | 5        | 6         | 1        | 43        | 43        | 11       |
| Dundee Tigers      | 12        | 2        | 10        | 0        | 38        | 71        | 4        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>33</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>4</b> |

Before the start of the Canada Cup campaign, Dobos was relieved of his coaching duties in favour of ex Vikings coach Henry Hayes following the lifting of his "sine-die" suspension by the SIHA. Scotty Reid returned to play his first game for over a year. The Canada Cup yielded only ONE victory in their final game against Falkirk Lions but before it ended the Flyers lost coach Hayes who was forced to honour the contract he had signed with a Swiss club before joining the Flyers. Lane, Chicorski and Boomer had all departed, only Collins, Fallowfield, Kentner and Dowle remained from the originally recruited team.

|                  | GP | W | L | T | GF | GA | Pts |
|------------------|----|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| Paisley Pirates  | 12 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 47 | 33 | 18  |
| Falkirk Lions    | 12 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 50 | 27 | 17  |
| Perth Panthers   | 12 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 53 | 46 | 16  |
| Ayr Raiders      | 12 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 42 | 45 | 10  |
| Edinburgh Royals | 12 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 34 | 47 | 10  |

|                    |           |          |          |          |           |           |          |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Dundee Tigers      | 12        | 4        | 7        | 1        | 55        | 61        | 9        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>34</b> | <b>56</b> | <b>4</b> |

Fallowfield acted as temporary coach to start the National League campaign before Floyd Snider returned to Kirkcaldy to fill the position. It started positively with a 6-6 draw with Dundee at home but the proverbial wheels fell off the following night in Paisley when they travelled with only 8 players and lost by their biggest ever margin, 17-2! Did Snider realise what he was returning to?

In the next game Snider hit the ice and his influence in defence was obvious but despite this the Flyers lost 5-4 at Falkirk then 6-3 the following night at home against Ayr. Almost inexplicably having lost seven of their opening 8 games at the turn of the year went on a 5 game unbeaten run with 4 wins and a draw against Murrayfield in a match played at Dunfermline due to the Ice Show schedule in Edinburgh. It was enough to temporarily lift them into 3<sup>rd</sup> bottom position.

Temporary respite however as another horrendous run was started which would yield only one more victory (against Dundee) before the end of the season. As lowest scoring team in the league the club announced mid February that top scoring Scotty Dowle would leave the club to return home. The matter was resolved although he was effectively a free agent and played out the season "in the shop window". Bert Smith was voted the Mirror of Merit winner after another close finish with Reid, Kentner and Fallowfield in the running.

|                    | GP        | W        | L         | T        | GF         | GA         | Pts       |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Paisley Pirates    | 36        | 27       | 5         | 4        | 181        | 83         | 58        |
| Falkirk Lions      | 36        | 19       | 11        | 6        | 154        | 127        | 44        |
| Perth Panthers     | 36        | 21       | 14        | 1        | 167        | 123        | 43        |
| Edinburgh Royals   | 36        | 14       | 13        | 9        | 133        | 130        | 37        |
| Ayr Raiders        | 36        | 15       | 18        | 3        | 153        | 164        | 33        |
| Dundee Tigers      | 36        | 9        | 21        | 6        | 183        | 235        | 24        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b> | <b>36</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>119</b> | <b>228</b> | <b>13</b> |

Where would the Flyers go now? Well to a brand new league set up was the answer as the news had been announced in late February of a restructure of the game. **BRITISH LEAGUE IS HOCKEY'S BIG CHANCE** – "ice hockey is to have a chance to regain the popularity it enjoyed in the immediate post-war years. A three-day conference of the members of the Scottish Ice Hockey Association held in Edinburgh decided that Scotland should join forces with England, and form a 12-club British League next winter- F. Ahearne, secretary the British Ice Hockey Association, which controls hockey England, was present the conference, as were representatives of the five Southern clubs—Brighton, Wembley, Harringay, Streatham and Nottingham. The 12-club British League was unanimously approved, despite the fact that several of the Scottish rinks had previously professed opposition. The Scottish clubs must have gained concessions, however, for a wage scale somewhere between these operating in the two Leagues at present was fixed. Each club was to be allowed only ten

Canadians and two home bred players, which was a decided advantage to the Scots. Every club North the Border, with the possible exception of Murrayfield Royals iced two juniors at least close to the standard of the average Canadian—which was something the English teams did not. There were many points still to be decided but now the plan for all-Britain League had been approved in principle, hockey in Scotland was expected to get its biggest boost ever. Lack of variety in opposition was always a stumbling block even when the game's popularity was at a peak. Now that should be a thing of the past and an uplifting of the standard of play should be automatic. The demand for hockey it was thought was still there. But it must be hockey of the right type. Given that and provided there is not too great a gap between the top and bottom clubs ice hockey can prosper again. What could possibly go wrong ?

### Season 1954/55

Goodbye Scottish Autumn Cup, Canada Cup and Scottish National league and hello British Autumn Cup and British National League.

Goodbye Streatham who were part of the original plan and hello again Dunfermline Vikings to make it an 8 Scottish and 4 English team set up.

Henry Hayes was back as coach, this time to stay it was hoped. The other recruits were:

Netminder: - **Walter Malahoff** from Kamloops 28 years old who played both Senior 'A' and Senior 'B' grades of hockey classified well above Scottish standard

Defence: - **Fred Hall** from Medicine Hat, Alberta, **John Popenuik** from Regina, **Neil Matheson** from Vancouver, 21 year old 5ft 11in played junior with Prince Albert.

Forwards:- **Walter Davidson** from Saskatoon, centre, 5ft 7in 22 year old who played juvenile and senior for Saskatoon Wesleys then Kerrobert Tigers in the Intermediate league last year. **Nick Jost** from Vancouver a right wing who played for the Championship winning Kanagan Valley last season, **Johnny Andrews** from Fort William, Ontario, 5ft 10in 21 years old a heavy-built, left hand shot, speedy right winger, who played for both Streatham and Ayr Raiders last season, **Don Cox** also from Fort William, a 20 year old 5ft 7in centreman who was rated the steadiest and hardest working member of the Fort William Hurricanes last season. **Wayne Sutherland** from Selkirk, Manitoba, 20 years old, 5ft 8in left wing or centre who was with Killarney Shamrocks in the Big Six Intermediate League.

On the eve of the season Flyers fortunes of the last few seasons showed no signs of turning for the better with the news that both **Fred Hall** and **John Popenuik** had reneged on their agreements and had signed contracts with Ayr and the Flyers were to launch a protest to the SIHA. Flyers however had not been "asleep" since they lost Hall and Popenuik and the Rink's general manager, Mr H. J. Wishart, confirmed that arrangements had been

completed for another two defencemen to come to Kirkcaldy. There was a difference this time, however, Flyers have had too many misfortunes to take any chances and in Mr Wishart's words: "As it appears that players must sign an official form, no names can be given." That was hard luck on local ice hockey fans who were thirsting for news of Flyers, but a sensible precaution in view of the unfortunate recent experiences. It turned out that one of the replacements was the popular defenceman **Ed Williams** who agreed to return to Fife but unfortunately there had been a sudden bereavement in his family and at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour he would ne be taking up his contract. **Ken Johannson** the former Streatham defenceman did join the club. Also due to join on a temporary basis was ex Paisley Pirates scoring sensation **Bob Kelly**, he then disappeared without reporting for duty. Can you make this stuff up? The team would be introduced onto the ice for the season by the march "Men with Wings".

Ignoring the two challenge cup defeats home and away to the Falkirk Lions the Flyers opened their Autumn Cup campaign with a resounding 7-1 win against the Dunfermline Vikings at Kirkcaldy. 24 hours later they were hosed 11-0 in Paisley! A four game skid which included the visit of the Nottingham Panthers, who were the first English visitors to Kirkcaldy and who attracted the largest crowd for many years, was temporarily halted by a couple of wins including the Flyers visit south of the Border to meet Brighton Tigers.

### FIFE FLYERS AT WESTMINSTER



This photo was taken when Fife Flyers, fulfilling a London fixture, also took the opportunity of visiting the House of Commons, where Mr Tom Hubbard M.P. for Kirkcaldy Burghs, acted as their host and guide. From left to right:—Back row—Malahoff, Davison, Mr Victor Beattie (director, Kirkcaldy Ice Rink), Tom Elder (trainer), Mr Tom Hubbard, Andrews, Hayes (coach), Mitchell and Bruce; front row—Sutherland, Mathieson, and Smith.

Fife didn't ice a full line up until the visit of the Wembley Lions on 9<sup>th</sup> November with **Wilf 'Nebby' Thrasher** and **Ron Hemmerling** making their debuts in a 4-1 win. 'Nebby' needed no introduction as he first appeared in the UK in season 1947/48 with Perth Panthers, then two seasons at Dunfermline, a season at Falkirk then a return to Dunfermline and he had been selected for All Star honours every season, a feat only matched by Floyd Snider. **John Petry** and **Roger Landry** had both been added to the defence a few weeks before. There was a bit more consistency in results but not enough to make a climb up

the table. A surprise 7-3 win against Falkirk in the final couple of games was a spooky repeat of the previous season where the Lions were almost certainly denied the title due to a defeat in in Kirkcaldy:

|                     | GP        | W        | L         | T        | GF        | GA         | Pts       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Harringay Racers    | 22        | 15       | 3         | 4        | 139       | 80         | 34        |
| Falkirk Lions       | 22        | 13       | 5         | 4        | 119       | 72         | 30        |
| Paisley Pirates     | 22        | 13       | 6         | 3        | 94        | 52         | 29        |
| Edinburgh Royals    | 22        | 12       | 8         | 2        | 106       | 77         | 26        |
| Ayr Raiders         | 22        | 10       | 10        | 2        | 108       | 100        | 22        |
| Nottingham Panthers | 22        | 9        | 9         | 4        | 111       | 95         | 22        |
| Wembley Lions       | 22        | 9        | 10        | 3        | 91        | 102        | 21        |
| Brighton Tigers     | 22        | 8        | 10        | 4        | 83        | 97         | 20        |
| Perth Panthers      | 22        | 8        | 12        | 2        | 89        | 117        | 18        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b>  | <b>22</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>77</b> | <b>112</b> | <b>18</b> |
| Dundee Tigers       | 22        | 7        | 12        | 3        | 82        | 118        | 17        |
| Dunfermline Vikings | 22        | 2        | 17        | 3        | 64        | 141        | 7         |

It would be 1967 before the Flyers would once again play in the Autumn Cup competition.

By mid-January the hapless Vikings decided to call it a day on their National League campaign with the games they played expunged from the record books. Flyers had yet to meet the Vikings and had only 2 wins from their 14 games played, astonishingly one of those was a 7-4 home success against the formidable Harringay Racers. The Flyers swooped to sign Vikings player-coach **Henri Labrose** to help the defence and goaltender **Mike Luke**.

In the 5-6 home loss to Wembley Lions at the end of January Cliff Ryan scored his 200<sup>th</sup> career goal for the visitors. The same Cliff Ryan who in 1947 had scored the first of those goals for the Flyers, he was presented with a puck to mark the occasion.

At the start of February with the whole team on two weeks notice the Nottingham Panthers were beaten 5-4 at Kirkcaldy. It did the trick as they went unbeaten for two weeks but were soon on the wrong end of scorelines again. They were also on the wrong end of the law as coach Hayes and Davidson were both fined at Perth Police Court at the end of February for their conduct in a game against the Panthers in Perth at the end of January where Hayes shouted and swore and behaved in a disorderly manner and Davidson challenged two policemen to a fight and committed a breach of the peace. There was a 14-2 shellacking at the end of March in Falkirk but the inconsistency of the team was highlighted by the fact they had also won their last five games at the Gallatown, some relief for the long suffering home fans but scant reward as the Flyers final league position shows:

|                     | GP | W  | T | L  | GF  | GA  | Pts |
|---------------------|----|----|---|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Harringay Racers    | 40 | 30 | 2 | 8  | 273 | 166 | 62  |
| Nottingham Panthers | 40 | 25 | 5 | 10 | 224 | 152 | 55  |
| Paisley Pirates     | 40 | 24 | 4 | 12 | 200 | 143 | 52  |
| Falkirk Lions       | 40 | 21 | 7 | 12 | 190 | 156 | 49  |
| Wembley Lions       | 40 | 17 | 4 | 19 | 175 | 185 | 38  |

|                    |           |           |          |           |            |            |           |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Edinburgh Royals   | 40        | 15        | 4        | 21        | 175        | 181        | 34        |
| Perth Panthers     | 40        | 12        | 8        | 20        | 161        | 221        | 32        |
| Brighton Tigers    | 40        | 13        | 6        | 21        | 200        | 209        | 32        |
| <b>Fife Flyers</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>215</b> | <b>29</b> |
| Dundee Tigers      | 40        | 13        | 3        | 24        | 146        | 211        | 29        |
| Ayr Raiders        | 40        | 11        | 6        | 23        | 168        | 223        | 28        |

'Nebby' Thrasher was presented with the Mirror of Merit following the 3-2 win in the last home game against Ayr Raiders. The following week an exhibition match between East Canada (with Flyers Luke, Thrasher, Domenico and Hayes) and West Canada (with Flyers Matheson and Sutherland), won 8-5 by the East was to take a more significant part in the history of the sport in the town than was hoped given the news that had broken the day before the match.

## PROFESSIONAL ICE HOCKEY IN SCOTLAND IS ENDED -

SIHA to Consider Amateur Set-up. The news that the Scottish ice Hockey Association decided to end professional ice hockey in Scotland was something that those who had followed the fortunes of the ice game in recent years were well prepared for. The only real surprise was that the decision was made so promptly. Knowing the ways of ice hockey legislators it was a more likely bet that series of meetings would be held before the towel was finally thrown in, but the very rapidity of the decision, and its finality, shows that the British League, far from solving any problems, had in fact brought to head a crisis that has been threatening the game up here for several years.

## Season 1955/56 or lack of it

The gamble to merge the leagues and make the game a National competition had failed. The Flyers continued to struggle to gain any dominance in the game and the demise just along the road of the Vikings was obviously a matter that caused grave concern not to just Kirkcaldy Management but around the entire Scottish circuit. In mid-summer came the somewhat inevitable news:

Following a meeting of directors, Mr H. J. Wishart, manager of Kirkcaldy Ice Rink, announced that there would definitely be no ice hockey at the Gallatown Stadium next season. Since the British League, upon which so many hopes were pinned, came to an end it was obvious that the ice game was faced with even greater difficulties than ever. While some optimists maintained that, in spite the failure of the British League, there would still be professional ice hockey in Scotland this coming season, the more sensible view was that it would either be a reversion to junior ice hockey or nothing. With Dunfermline out altogether, the rink being recently acquired by the Scottish Electricity Board and Paisley having intimated that they would team up in the English circuit, Murrayfield, Dundee, Kirkcaldy, Perth, Falkirk and Ayr were left with the possible inclusion of Crossmyloof (Glasgow), where the banner of junior ice hockey had been kept flying very commendably

at a time when other rinks practically threw the junior game overboard and sought to flog professional hockey into life again. Dundee had already announced that they would not take part in any form of hockey at all and now Kirkcaldy would follow suit. Murrayfield were reported to be in pretty much the same position but at a special meeting of the Scottish Ice Hockey Association in Falkirk they were included in the list of five clubs who were to carry on ice hockey with junior players this coming season. The others in this five-club league were Perth, Ayr, Falkirk, and Crossmyloof. This decision to ice teams of Scottish boys with Canadian coaches was one that should have been made years ago. The position now was that Scottish players, once so plentiful, and so capable, were now a scarce commodity in most quarters, thanks to the policy import laden teams at a time when the Scots predominated in the British teams and were really going great guns. It had been reported more times than anyone cared to remember that no country ever had such magnificent opportunities with their home-bred players and then cut down their junior programme to a farcical level, thereby cutting off the source of supply of home-bred players. Had the juniors been encouraged as they ought to have been there were no doubts there would have been an eight-club Scottish League, bristling with home-bred talent and providing ice hockey fare of a high standard. However, what's done was done, and people were left to reflect on what might have been.

While the Dunfermline Rink had packed up altogether Mr Harry Wishart, manager of the Kirkcaldy Rink, who had brought about a big improvement during his tenure at the Gallatown Stadium, was quite confident that the Kirkcaldy Rink would achieve success through the other activities, namely curling, skating and dancing, which had been going well. As an ex-junior ice hockey player he was naturally disappointed that ice hockey would no longer be included in the schedule. Had professional ice hockey continued, Fife Flyers, for once, had the nucleus of a reasonably good team. Since ice hockey started in Kirkcaldy in season 1938-39 it has had many ups and downs, including the set-back of the war years. There was quite revival of interest in the early post-war years, when a sports-starved public, including returned Service personnel, flocked to the Rink as, indeed, they did to most places of entertainment, but as the enthusiasm began to wear off so, unfortunately, did the standard of play and once on the slide the game seldom looked like recovering its former prestige. Meantime, we can only say farewell to the ice pad, at least for the time being.

The hockey lights in the town were all but extinguished by the autumn and it was signed off by a heartfelt letter in the paper "ICE HOCKEY Sir, —At first glance at the title, one would be excused if they were to ask. " What does it

mean? Firstly, because the complete silence in the town concerning the game, more especially as this is the time when the excitement and enthusiasm were agog, and secondly because of the fact that there has been no statement forthcoming from the management at the Rink as to whether the decision of not having Ice Hockey this season is a permanent or temporary one. If the decision was a temporary one pending an examination of the results from other rinks, as to whether there was a following for "Amateur Ice Hockey," it would have been better had they made this known to the supporters who have aided the management in past seasons to keep Ice Hockey in Kirkcaldy. The supporters are also interested in the local talent which can be brought on with sound coaching. What about it Mr Wishart? You had hopes of bringing on the small boys last season, there were possibilities in some of the boys you had and it would be a pity to drop these practices. We would like to see these boys brought on under professional tuition. Then, if there any chance of Ice Hockey being played at the Kirkcaldy Rink in Season 1956-57 we would have a few players ready to into the Selection Box." This season it is the intention the Fife Flyers Supporters' Club Committee to function in a social capacity, with an occasional trip Paisley on a Friday evening, so that those interested can have a look at Senior Ice Hockey. We can only hope that next season will see a return of the senior game to Scotland and above all to Kirkcaldy. (Miss) Alison B. Campbell, Secretary. Fife Flyers Supporters' Club "

The ice pad was turned over to touring big bands -- stars of the calibre of Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth were visitors -- and there were sporadic games which occasionally mustered interest among locals, but the sport remained dormant until the 1960s.

In May 1958 Kirkcaldy Town Council discussed the purchase of the arena. The planning sub-committee studied the idea of turning it into a swimming pool, but the proposal didn't enjoy universal support. The idea of building a pool next to the rink also fell on stony ground.

The Scottish Amateur Ice Hockey League was formed for the 1955-56 season. Five teams participated in the league. The Falkirk Lions won the playoffs for the Scottish Cup with a 13-1 trouncing of the Edinburgh Royals. After one season of play, the league folded as the rink directors deemed there to be an insufficient number of teams for a viable competition to be staged.

Paisley soldiered on with Nottingham, Harringay, Wembley and Brighton in a National league until the sport literally came to an end in the country after the 1959/60 season.

**What now ?**