October 2021

Skating the Line: Transnational Hockey in the Interwar Windsor-Detroit Borderlands

Nicole Pillon
University of Windsor, pillono@uwindsor.ca

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By

Nicole Pillon

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of History
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2021

“Skating the Line: Transnational Hockey in the Interwar Windsor-Detroit Borderlands”

by

Nicole Pillon

APPROVED BY:

_____

M. Wright

Department of History

_____

G. Teasdale, Advisor

Department of History

September 23, 2021

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ABSTRACT

Scholarship on the role of ice hockey in the development of the Canadian identity has neglected the unique experience of border communities in their discussions of the relationship between the formation of hockey fandom and Canadian nationalism. Usually focused on large hockey communities in Canada such as Toronto and Montreal, these studies examine the "Canadian" experience of hockey without considering the multi-faceted nature of border cities that were exposed to both Canadian and American ice hockey clubs.

This paper argues that professional hockey fandom in the Windsor-Detroit borderlands demonstrated that Windsorites' shared socio-cultural conditions with Detroit, Michigan made them identify more with their American neighbours than other Ontario cities such as Toronto or Hamilton. Through an examination of newspapers from the region such as the *Border Cities Star* and the *Detroit Free Press*, it is evident that the "borderlands" identity of the area was more influential in the formation of Windsor's identity than the province's broader nationalist tendencies. Furthermore, the installation of the National Hockey League's Detroit Cougars in Windsor during the 1926-1927 season strengthened the cross-border sport community that already existed in the region. Strategic marketing and language found in print media in the years following the Cougars' move to Detroit in 1927 also emphasized the working-class values of the area. These values made the Detroit team more appealing to Windsor audiences than that of their closest Canadian competition, the Toronto Maple Leafs, which catered to upper-class audiences.

DEDICATION

For Gill

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Guillaume Teasdale for guiding me through my undergraduate and graduate experience at the University of Windsor, as well as helping me turn my love of hockey into a research project of which I could be proud. I am grateful for his help in finding my academic voice.

Thank you to Dr. Miriam Wright for challenging me to think more deeply about historical material and teaching me the fundamentals of historiography. She helped me to give my project the structure it needed. Her Making of Post-War Canada class was one of the first classes in which I did primary research with newspapers, and I have felt compelled to continue investigating local history through their language ever since.

My gratitude also goes to the History Department faculty for their helpful advice. Thank you to Dr. Natalie Atkin for her support throughout my time at the University of Windsor and for being a reference for me in my graduate school applications.

I wouldn't have been able to get through these last few years without my grad school cohort. Thank you to Kess and Megan for offering emotional support when I was struggling with my coursework and MRP, Matthew for nagging me to finish this project so that I had more time for television, Lauren for her guidance and our chats about Scotland, and Harrison for reminding me to go outside once in a while.

Thank you to my parents for their encouragement throughout my academic career. To my grandfather for his curiosity and his gentle antagonism about my being a Red Wings fan. To Olivia for inspiring my creativity and my coffee habits. Lastly, thank you to Gill for all the adventures, sports-related or otherwise. Thanks for sharing your love of hockey with me even when I didn't appreciate it.

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INTRODUCTION

Located on Grand River Avenue in Detroit, Michigan, approximately five kilometres from both the Ambassador Bridge and the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel, Olympia Stadium stood as a gathering place for sports fans from both sides of the Canadian-American border from the 1920s to the 1980s. On the other shore of the Detroit River, Border Cities Arena provided a similar experience for paying customers in Windsor. Less than two kilometres from the border, the arena was frequently visited by citizens of both Windsor and Detroit. Located within twelve kilometres of each other, the two venues created a community of local sports, specifically ice hockey, during their peak years.

Though small, this distance seems significantly larger in the present as the border between Canada and the United States has become increasingly politicized in the 21st century. During the 1920s, the Windsor-Detroit border region was more easily accessed than it currently is for most people. An individual only needed a birth certificate to cross the Windsor-Detroit border. Before the opening of the Ambassador Bridge in 1929, ferries were employed to carry thousands of Canadians and Americans across the river for a fee of 10 cents each way.[1] This physical ease of access between the two nations contradicted the increasing anxiety surrounding international borders and nationalism in the post-war climate, a time when borders globally tightened to prevent unchecked movement between countries.

Regardless of international anxieties surrounding unwanted populations, major cities in Canada and the United States were growing as a result of urban sprawl and

[1] "Michigan History: The Detroit River ferryboats," The Detroit News, accessed 10 December 2019, http://blogs.detroitnews.com/history/2000/01/21/the-detroit-river-ferryboats/.

increased post-war production internationally. The cities of Windsor and Detroit were no different. In the 1920s, the region thrived due to the booming automotive industry spearheaded by corporations such as Ford and Ford Canada. Approximately 40% of Windsor's population was employed by either Ford or Ford Canada.[2] As such, the company was the largest source of jobs for southwestern Ontario and southeastern Michigan. Both the American and Canadian branches of Ford employed workers from Canada and the United States, and as a result there was significant cross-border traffic and economic ties.[3]

The economic connections between the city of Detroit and the Essex townships that would eventually become the City of Windsor[4] extended to the entertainment culture of the area. The city centres in both Windsor and Detroit were developed in close proximity to the border, making the goods and services available on either side easily accessible. Woodward Avenue in Detroit and Ouellette Avenue in Windsor were both examples of this phenomenon as each street was within walking distance of the ferry launch on the shores of the Detroit River.

The cultural and social centres, including the shopping districts and entertainment venues, of each city were being developed to promote cross-border traffic. For example, the most popular and largest department store in Detroit at the time, Hudson's, was located on Woodward Avenue. The Fox Theatre, one of the most iconic theatres in the United States, was also constructed on the same street. Both of these attractions were in

[2] David Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit: Gordon M. McGregor, Ford of Canada, and Motoropolis* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 260.
[3] Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit*, 260.
[4] For the purposes of this paper, the Windsor-Essex townships will be referred to as "Windsor" despite the amalgamation not taking place until 1935.

walking distance of the original stadium of the Detroit Tigers baseball team, which was located on the intersection of Trumbull and Michigan Avenues.

These brick-and-mortar establishments represented the cultural influences that were exchanged between Detroit and Windsor. Windsorites anticipated the arrival of American newspapers, particularly the *Detroit Free Press*, each day, including Sundays, when Windsor did not publish an edition of their largest newspaper, the *Border Cities Star*.[5] American music played on Windsor radio stations, and the scores of American sporting events were broadcast year-round to Windsor listeners.

Windsorites benefited from the growing metropolis that Detroit had become in the 1920s. Being flush with cash and influence through its success in producing cars, Detroit was considered one of the most desirable places to visit in America, on par with other American industrial cities such as Chicago and Boston.[6] For example, Detroit was one of the only major cities that hosted three Major League sports in the early 20th century. Specifically, it was one of the first American cities to lay claim to a National Hockey League (NHL) franchise, the Detroit Cougars.[7]

While it has been argued that the cultural exchange between Windsor and Detroit has heavily favoured Detroit,[8] the sports culture of the region suggests that the Canadian side of the border was significant in the development of the thriving cross-border sports community that existed in the region during the interwar period, particularly the 1920s and early 1930s. The Canadian influence on local sports was especially prevalent

[5] Brandon Dimmel, "'South Detroit, Canada': Isolation, Identity, and the US-Canada Border, 1914-1918," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 26, vol. 2 (2012): 203.
[6] "New Players Added to Detroit N.H.L. Team," *Globe and Mail*, 13 November, 1928, 9.
[7] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.
[8] Dimmel, "South Detroit, Canada," 202.

regarding the spread of interest in ice hockey into Detroit as the sport gained popularity after the creation of the NHL in 1917. Southwestern Ontario, particularly the Windsor-Detroit borderlands, were considered a backwater hockey community in comparison to other cities in Ontario such as Toronto and Ottawa, which had had professional hockey in the area for years.[9] However, the installation of the NHL's Detroit Cougars in Windsor during the 1926-1927 season changed the area's reputation regarding the calibre of its hockey, despite the team being "American" and only temporarily hosted by Border Cities Arena in Windsor.

Based on an analysis of local newspapers such as the *Border Cities Star* and the *Detroit Free Press*, it is clear that the relocation of the Detroit Cougars to Windsor during the 1926-1927 season allowed for an expansion and strengthening of the transnational sporting community in the border cities. These newspaper articles also demonstrated a mutual regional identity between Windsor and Detroit that the Essex townships did not share with the rest of Ontario. Furthermore, Windsorites' favouring of the Detroit team through the years of 1926-1933 suggests that the working-class identity of the team was more representative of the Windsor population than that of the closest Canadian team, the Toronto St. Patricks, which had begun catering to white-collar audiences. With the arrival of the NHL team in Detroit, the media coverage of local semi-professional teams became more focused on Windsor and Detroit rivalries, which further emphasized Windsor's preference for their geographically close American neighbours over the broader Canadian-ness of the rest of Ontario.

[9] Bob Duff, *On the Wing: The History of the Windsor Spitfires* (Windsor: Biblioasis, 2010), 14.

Historiography

Before detailing the evidence that supports these conclusions, it is vital to establish the historiography that was used in order to situate these conclusions within its historical framework. Sports historian Colin D. Howell has pointed out the existence of a "bachelor subculture"[10] of single, working-class men within sports spectatorship while also suggesting that the increasing professionalization of sport created a workplace within a sphere that had previously been reserved for the upper-class sects of Canadian society.[11] Howell's argument that sport, particularly ice hockey and other team sports, became microcosms of the society from which their players were drawn and to whom they were subsequently sold as an entertainment commodity, is relevant to discussions about hockey in the Windsor-Detroit borderlands.[12] During the interwar period, the role of the professional athlete was relatively new and came in contrast to the previous idea of sport as a moral device that was to be played for the love of the game itself.[13] Athletics as a profession meant that sports became valuable for the profits they produced,[14] and effective marketing, especially where the sport was new to the area, was essential to that sport's success. The Windsor-Detroit borderlands had little professional hockey sport activity in the region at the time, meaning that the growth of NHL hockey in the area was also an indication of the growth of professional sport in general. This trend also suggests that the growth of the professional sport in the area allowed ice hockey to stay popular during the economic downturn of the 1930s.

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[10] Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 53.
[11] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 54.
[12] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 52; 88-89.
[13] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 54.
[14] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 54.

Michael A. Robidoux's *Men at Play: A Working Understanding of Professional Hockey* argues that hockey became a symbol of Canadian nationalism during a period of instability and insecurity within Canada relating to its culture. Robidoux states that Canada had relied heavily on Britain for the development of its identity, and in the post-war years looked to separate itself from its colonial overseers.[15] The increasing fear of Americanization within hockey was a similar concern. The fear of American teams taking Canadian talent, or "ivory-hunting," grew as more American franchises were founded in the interwar years.[16] While concerns of Americanization are not central to examinations of the regional identity that Windsor supported, it does contribute to discussions of what it meant for the growth of hockey in a border region. Robidoux's argument about athletes as capital[17] also relates to the marketing of Detroit's NHL team, as specific aspects of the team's character and the players' work ethics were emphasized for the purposes of making the team more appealing to locals.

Bruce Kidd's *The Struggle For Canadian Sport* suggests that professional sports teams became representative of the towns in which they played, and therefore the teams needed to be good.[18] This illustrates the connection between community identity and the commercialization of hockey. Thus, Kidd's argument is integral in analysing the relationship between the Windsor-Detroit border region and the professional athletes that were recruited to play there. The dynamics of successful hockey teams relating to the wealth of cities is also relevant,[19] as it is arguable that the Windsor-Detroit border

[15] Michael A. Robidoux, *Men at Play: A Working Understanding of Professional Hockey* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 32.
[16] "Hockey Players Become Rare As 'Ivory-Hunting' Advances," *Border Cities Star*, 4 January, 1928, 13.
[17] Robidoux, *Men at Play*, 29.
[18] Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle For Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 189.
[19] Kidd, *The Struggle For Canadian Sport*, 204.

community's economic circumstances sheltered its hockey community during the Great Depression and allowed it to remain stable through the economic crisis.

Hockey Night in Canada: Sports, Identities, and Cultural Politics by Richard Gruneau and David Whitson also provides significant framework on this topic. The rise of mass culture and the influx of American content flooding Canadian media markets before the creation of the Massey Commission in 1951 allowed for the mass marketing of hockey in the area.[20] The argument posed in Gruneau and Whitson's monograph that hockey was not popular due to an imagined communal experience amongst Canadians is also relevant,[21] as the Windsor-Detroit borderlands' unique socio-economic conditions made its experience of professional hockey different from the majority of Ontario and Canada.

Methodology

The use of ephemeral sources, such as newspapers, provide significant insight into the culture of professional hockey in the Windsor-Detroit borderlands. To assess the media "voice" that was presented to Windsorites in the interwar period, the work of two sports columnists for the *Border Cities Star* is relevant: Dick Gibson and Vern DeGeer. These two columnists, while writing at different times, share a common perspective and way of speaking about the relationship between Windsor and Detroit. Thus, they suggest a continuous view of the transnational community formed by the two cities that changed little over time. Furthermore, the newspaper's close relationship with the team allows for

[20] Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sports, Identities, and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 21;23.
[21] Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 26.

interviews and perspectives of team members and staff that would not be offered through other primary sources.

However, some of the articles presented in newspapers such as the *Border Cities Star* were written by agencies, such as the Canadian Press. These articles would not offer the same local perspective as writers employed by the paper itself. Newspapers are also highly cultivated and edited before they are published, meaning that there are specific perspectives that are maintained in each issue. While this can indicate trends amongst a newspaper's readership, it also implies that certain points of view are left out for the paper to be marketable. In the case of sports journalism, men were considered the dominant readership and sports content was largely catered to them.[22] The use of newspapers also relies on the accessibility of these sources through online and physical archives. Due to their fragile nature, not every issue of each publication was available for use. While it was possible to access the *Detroit Free Press* through online archives, it was more challenging to access issues of the *Globe* and other Toronto newspapers. They therefore were supplemented through secondary source materials.

Examining articles in the *Border Cities Star* and the *Detroit Free Press*, specifically, included searching for specific phrases and language that indicated an explicit tie between Windsor and Detroit through ice hockey at the NHL level. General commentary on the team within the newspapers was also used to assess what aspects of the team's public reputation and interactions with the press were valued and how that related to Windsorites' perceptions of themselves. The use of the Detroit paper acts as

[22] Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 82.

both a contrast to Windsor's relationship with Detroit and a reiteration of the working-class perspective that was presented in the *Border Cities Star*.

These sources are significant in my study of sports culture during the interwar period due to the increasing commercialization of sport in North America. Sports schedules became more regulated to better align with industrial production,[23] and as such the desire of sports teams to compete for the leisure time of the general populace became its own industry. Ad space in newspapers were an invaluable source of promotion for sports, particularly team sports that could house thousands of spectators.[24] Newspapers and other media outlets became "galleries of sporting idols" where athletes were treated as heroes, even as national and local identities might have overlapped.[25] Newspapers and other print publications were also beginning to create target audiences through their advertising, meaning that content in these publications was becoming increasingly tailored to these audiences.[26] This included the stylistic changes in sports reporting that took place in the 1920s, such as longer descriptions of games and players that gave the reader a better sense of their personalities and the emotion of the game.[27]

This methodological approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the Detroit Cougars' first year in the National Hockey League, the 1926-1927 season. This includes an examination of the region's initial reception to the team through its representation in the media, the area's growing interest and allegiance to the team, and the "borderlands" identity that was prominent in discussions of the team. It is through these foundations that

[23] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheer*s, 51.
[24] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 66.
[25] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 91.
[26] Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 82.
[27] Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 84.

the development of the team's working-class identity and the marketability of that identity to Windsor and Detroit hockey fans can be assessed. These observations also serve as a platform for further research into fields relating to Canadian nationalism and sport.

CHAPTER I: THE FIRST YEAR

Initial Reception

After its inception in 1917, the National Hockey League (NHL) quickly worked to broaden its influence from Canada into the American market. Within a decade, the league had franchises in four American cities: Boston, New York City, Chicago, and Detroit. However, the NHL's expansion into the United States was not backed by sufficient infrastructure to support professional hockey teams in every city that purchased a franchise. The most significant example of this was the transplant of the Western Hockey League's Victoria Cougars from British Columbia to Detroit, Michigan in 1926. Due to the lack of an NHL-calibre indoor arena in Detroit, it was determined that the Detroit Cougars, renamed after they moved to the border region in 1926, would play in Windsor, Ontario during 1926-1927 season.[28]

On 15 May, 1926, the *Border Cities Star*, Windsor's most prominent newspaper, reported that Detroit would be the home of a new NHL franchise without significant aplomb. The article did not warrant front-page attention, nor did it reveal any major details as to the particulars of the new franchise.[29] The emphasis on local recreation in Windsor newspapers indicates that the local population was most interested in the franchise because the area would have its first indoor ice arena, meaning that the community "on both sides of the border"[30] could skate there recreationally, an activity that was announced weekly in the *Border Cities Star*.[31] Amateur hockey teams also anticipated using the climate-controlled ice, as hockey was taught in schools and school

[28] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.
[29] "Detroit Gains Hockey Berth," *Border Cities Star*, 17 May, 1926, 17.
[30] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.
[31] Duff, *On the Wing*, 14.

teams were given permission to use the arena's rink.[32] In this regard, the new professional hockey league franchise allowed for a higher level of community involvement, which was cause for more excitement than the spectacle of watching some of the best hockey players in the business compete.

In the mid-1920s, Canada's hockey market was in competition with the rapid growth of hockey in the much larger United States.[33] While on a national scale, Canada's major cities featured some of the most advanced and updated technology and hockey facilities, the Windsor-Detroit region specifically was considered a backwoods community in regard to its hockey presence. This is largely due to the area having never had an indoor arena or a professional team play there.[34] Even when the Cougars relocated from British Columbia to Detroit, the papers in Toronto, which had already had an NHL franchise for a decade, downplayed the move. *The Globe* published a brief article on the Cougars' relocation as the Detroit Cougars but grouped it together with the announcement that Chicago would also be getting a franchise.[35] The *Globe* put more emphasis on the Toronto Hockey League's success than the growth of the NHL into southern Ontario and Michigan,[36] indicating that regionalism was significant in the city's sports media and that Canadian sports were preferred to American ones. Thus, the Detroit Cougars, as the new professional team, received little fanfare in Ontario upon relocation.

Predictably, the announcement was given greater coverage in the *Detroit Free Press*. Articles following the news of the relocation stated that "one of the best hockey

[32] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.
[33] Karl McNeil Earle, "The Global Game: The Internationalization of Professional Hockey and Technological Modernism," *Studies in Popular Culture* 21, no. 1 (October 1998): 63-64.
[34] Duff, *On the Wing,* 14.
[35] "Ten Teams to Play in National League," *Globe*, 17 May, 1926, 9.
[36] "Entrees Will Exceed All Previous Seasons," *Globe*, 19 November, 1926, 25.

clubs in the world"[37] would represent Detroit at the NHL level. Talented players on the previous season's Cougars team were highlighted and photographed in the paper to connect faces to the new franchise.[38] When the news broke, it appeared as if the local, albeit American, ownership of the squad[39] made the American side of the Detroit River more invested in the team's arrival. This might have been because the purchase of the Cougars had been a significant risk for three reasons: the team had been purchased for one hundred thousand dollars,[40] all of its players were Canadian,[41] and they played under a name that had little to do with Midwest geography; cougars are animals more associated with the west coast than the Midwest. According to the local newspaper coverage of the team's arrival, it was anticipated that the team would not have a winning record due to the low budget that the team had for purchasing talent, and Detroit had to compete with larger markets in New York and Chicago for the best players.[42]

Marketing

As the NHL season began in November of 1926, the necessity for high fan attendance at the Cougars' games precipitated the cross-advertisement of the team by American corporations in Windsor's newspapers, specifically the *Border Cities Star*. Since the Cougars played in Windsor due to the lack of an appropriate venue in Detroit,[43] it was vital to the success of the franchise that the Detroit team be marketed to Canadians. The Michigan department store, Hudson's, posted an advertisement stating that Detroiters

[37]"Still Another Who Wants Hockey Club," *Detroit Free Press*, 15 May, 1926, 17.
[38] "Detroit's Representatives in Professional Hockey," *Detroit Free Press*, 13 May, 1926.
[39] "Million Dollar Arena Will House Detroit's High Priced National Hockey League Team," *Detroit Free Press*, 4 May, 1926, 18.
[40] "Victoria Cougars Are Finally Sold," *Border Cities Star*, 4 October,1926, 48.
[41] "1926-1927 Detroit Cougars Roster and Statistics," hockey-reference.com, accessed 01 December 2019, https://www.hockey-reference.com/teams/DTC/1927.html.
[42] "Still Another Who Wants Hockey Club," *Detroit Free Press*, 15 May, 1926, 17.
[43] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.

had Canadians to thank for their love of hockey and that the sport was "getting into our blood."[44] This form of advertisement opposed Windsor's view of itself, wherein the best goods and services were to be found in Detroit.[45] In this instance, advertisers used the tangible economic connections between Windsor and Detroit to their advantage by tying into the imagined yet real cultural connection between the two cities, specifically Windsor's favouring of Detroit.

In contrast to the façade that Detroit's advertising presented to Windsor's consumers, printed articles and advertisements about the Detroit Cougars in Detroit newspapers exhibited a strong sense of local pride in Detroit athletes and Detroit teams. In fact, this was the primary topic of focus in the Sports section of the *Detroit Free Press*. Michigan sports were published on the first page of each day's sports section, regardless of the schedule of the professionally recognized teams in the area. Though they appealed to Canadians through hockey's innate 'Canadian-ness' when it was useful,[46] the Detroit press promoted hockey as an American enterprise,[47] though they did not necessarily categorize the sport as a product of Michigan. In the *Detroit Free Press*, writers were careful to consistently call the Cougars the "Detroit Hockey Club"[48] instead of the more ambiguous terms, such as the "Border City boys,"[49] that were used by newspapers being published across the border.

Despite Detroit's singular focus in developing and promoting Michigan interests through printed media, Windsor's newspapers used articles to suggest strong cultural ties

[44] "Canadians: We Are Greatly Indebted to You!," *Border Cities Star*, 18 November, 1926, 17.
[45] Dimmel, "South Detroit, Canada," 202.
[46] "Canadians: We Are Greatly Indebted to You!," *Border Cities Star*, 18 November, 1926, 17.
[47] "Still Another Who Wants Hockey Club," *Detroit Free Press*, 15 May, 1926, 17.
[48] "Veterans and Recruits Among New Detroit Hockey Talent," *Detroit Free Press*, 16 October, 1932, 37.
[49] "Comments of Other Critics," *Border Cities Star*, 6 December,1926, 18.

with Detroit. This became evident when the hockey season of 1926-1927 began. For example, a *London Advertiser* article stated that only American cities with large Canadian populations could support an NHL team,[50] and it is clear from Windsor's support of the Cougars that the Detroit franchise benefited from having such a large concentration of Canadian fans in its midst. The Cougars became Windsor's "home team"[51] in both the practical and ideological senses. The *Border Cities Star*'s coverage of the team became an almost daily occurrence despite the decade-long presence of a Canadian team, the Toronto St. Patricks, only hours from Windsor's city limits.[52] Players from the Cougars were profiled by resident columnist Dick Gibson, including the team's manager-player, Art Duncan.[53] Even before the team had played a single game, the paper was fascinated by the personality and backgrounds of the players they would be supporting, citing where each player was from and if they had participated in the war effort several years earlier. In the case of Art Duncan, he was given a page-length profile.[54] The Cougars' roster was entirely Canadian,[55] creating a situation wherein a Canadian team was playing under an American name in a Canadian city. Though only a small portion of the roster was from Ontario, and none were from Windsor,[56] the social connection of Canadians choosing to play a Canadian sport in Windsor was of significant interest to Windsorites. Historiography about sport indicates that "hockey heroes" were considered representations of the nation and its success,[57] and this appears to be the case

[50] "Comments of Other Critics," *Border Cities Star*, 7 December, 1926, 18.
[51] "Ottawa Cops Decision, 2-1," *Border Cities Star*, 23 November, 1927, 14.
[52] Earle, "The Global Game," 63-64.
[53] Dick Gibson,"Tips & Tales," *Border Cities Star*, 26 November, 1926, 18.
[54] "Canadians: We Are Greatly Indebted to You!," *Border Cities Star*, 18 November, 1926, 17.
[55] "1926-27 Detroit Cougars Roster and Statistics," hockey-reference.com, accessed 01 December 2019, https://www.hockey-reference.com/teams/DTC/1927.html.
[56] "1926-27 Detroit Cougars Roster and Statistics."
[57] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 92.

in Windsor. Windsorites appeared interested in the idea of the sport regardless of the lack of professional hockey exposure in the area.

The popularity of the Cougars in Windsor heavily impacted the content in the sports section of the *Border Cities Star* by inspiring a broader interest in hockey being played at all levels of competition. Hockey became the most common topic of discussion in the *Border Cities Star* weekly sports column written by Dick Gibson. Another column, entitled *Pro Hockey Gossip*, was featured on occasion, wherein players in minor league teams that were being scouted or signed by professional teams were reported upon. [58] The column also featured notable prospects who had left local teams to play elsewhere or who have had contract disputes with their current teams.[59] The paper printed fan letters to Dick Gibson complaining about lineup decisions,[60] meaning that readers were emotionally invested in the outcome of the games. Ads by CCM, a Canadian brand that prided itself on selling cutting-edge hockey equipment, for hockey skates were featured in the sports section.[61] These columns and advertisements made hockey more accessible to the public, as the paper endorsed amateur and informal hockey and skating. Athletics have been described as "an end and not a means" in relation to their marketability historically,[62] and this appears true in relation to how the promotion of hockey in the Windsor-Detroit borderlands bolstered enthusiasm for the sport and the commodities that were associated with it. The interest in Canadian, hockey-related enterprises alongside local hockey suggests the connections between the local persona that the border region

[58] "Pro Hockey Gossip," *Border Cities Star,* 9 November, 1927.
[59] "Pro Hockey Gossip," *Border Cities Star,* 9 November, 1927.
[60] "So Long As Hornets Are Going Ahead, Who Cares?," *Border Cities Star,* 22 January, 1927, 18.
[61] "New CCM Special,"*Border Cities Star,* 22 November,1926, 18.
[62] Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers,* 66.

presented and the underlying nationalist tendencies that were present on the Canadian side of the border.

A Communal Experience

Despite differing self-perceptions among Windsor and Detroit, the friendly relationship between the two cities could be seen in the language through which Windsor was represented in its media, even when Detroit newspapers did not share this language. "Border fans"[63] were invited to watch the Cougars play at Border Cities Arena.[64] This title suggests that the venue was to be shared between the two cities and not just used by people living in Windsor. When it was announced that the Cougars were coming into Windsor to begin pre-season training, hockey fans "on both sides of the border"[65] could look forward to having a professional team in the area.[66] When the Ottawa Senators came to Windsor to play the Cougars, they came to "the Border."[67] Athletes playing in the region were the "Border City boys."[68] The *Border Cities Star* reported that Detroit should be the "best hockey city in America,"[69] proving its enthusiasm for the city. The deliberate promotion of the idea that the Cougars were shared between Windsor and Detroit by Windsor's media suggests that there was an interest among Windsor citizens in representing themselves as a thriving, intertwined hockey community regardless of Detroit's attempts to claim the team as its own.[70]

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[63] Dick Gibson, "Tips & Tales," *Border Cities Star*, 11 December, 1926, 18.
[64] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.
[65] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.
[66] "Arena Plans Opening Soon," *Border Cities Star*, 29 September, 1926, 23.
[67] "Leaders of Other Group Coming Here," *Border Cities Star*, 8 December, 1926, 19.
[68] "Comments of Other Critics," *Border Cities Star*, 6 December,1926, 18.
[69] Dick Gibson, "Detroit Should Be Best Hockey City in America," *Border Cities Star*, 23 November, 1927, 14.
[70] John J. Bukowczyk, "The Permeable Border, the Great Lakes Region, and the Canadian-American Relationship," *Michigan Historical Review* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 12.

Attendance

Despite the team being in Windsor, there was significant number of American traffic crossing the Detroit River in order to attend the games. As the Ambassador Bridge and Windsor-Detroit Tunnel had not yet been built, the main method of transportation across the river was a ferry.[71] Many of those who attended the games, from both Windsor and Detroit, worked at automotive factories in Detroit.[72] Thus, they had to wait until the end of their shifts to take the ferry to Windsor and attend a game, which cost approximately ten cents each way,[73] making the trip an additional expense for Michigan natives. However, the portion of Michigan workers who worked for branch plants in Canada would have had easy access to cross-border hockey games, meaning that the amount of Americans at each Cougars game in Windsor might have been higher as a result.[74] Thus, as a consequence of a shared transnational enterprise, the Cougars were a convenient form of entertainment for adults on both shores of the Detroit River.

This ease of access created by similar economic circumstances might have been a factor as to why fan support for the Canadian Toronto St. Patricks was lower in the Windsor-Detroit region. As a city, Toronto is significantly farther away from Windsor than Detroit, even though one does not pass through an international border to get there. To see their preferred team, St. Patricks fans would have had to travel to see them in Toronto or wait until they came into town a few times a season. Even if a family could afford a car such as a Model T, which was sold for approximately 675 dollars in 1920,[75]

[71] Dimmel, "South Detroit, Canada," 201.
[72] Dimmel, "South Detroit, Canada," 200.
[73] "Michigan History: The Detroit River ferryboats," *The Detroit News*, accessed 10 December 2019, http://blogs.detroitnews.com/history/2000/01/21/the-detroit-river-ferryboats/.
[74] Dimmel, "South Detroit, Canada," 200.
[75] Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit*, 225.

paved roads were scarce, and travelling via car to Toronto would have been an uncomfortable ride.[76] A trip of this nature would have been inaccessible to many hockey fans, as automotive workers would have worked a regulated forty-eight hour weekly schedule, during which they would have had only one day off.[77] In order to attract working-class individuals to professional hockey games in the Windsor-Detroit region, it was essential to have a geographically close hockey team that workers could physically see after they were finished their shifts. The fact that Detroit usually played at 8:30pm[78] would have aided this endeavour and made the games more accessible to working-class fans. The construction of the Ambassador Bridge and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel in 1929 and 1930 respectively would have made it even easier for fans crossing over to reach the arena on time. As economic conditions were shared on both sides of the border, the ritual of going to games after work would have been something that both Canadian and American hockey fans could enjoy together. In this way, the geography of the region played a role in the support of the Cougars over the St. Patricks in a manner that other cities in Ontario would not have experienced.

Due to the high number of automotive workers making lower wages in the area, cost was a significant factor in determining the attendance at Cougars games. The *Border Cities Star* reported that fans coming from the United States had to pay heavy taxes on tickets,[79] meaning that they were significantly more expensive than attending a hockey game on their own side of the border. Despite its description as being more rough and

[76] Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit*, 185.
[77] Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit*, 122.
[78] "Hockey Tonight Olympia," *Detroit Free Press,* 10 November, 1932, 17.
[79] "Sidelines of Hockey Bouts," *Border Cities Star,* 19 November, 1926, 18.

violent than other sports of the period,[80] hockey was marketed as a family-friendly sport,[81] meaning that families purchased several tickets for a single game. Tickets could cost up to $1.65 per person, which was a significant sum for a family.[82] By the 1930s, there were complaints that the cost to attend a game was too high; thus, cuts to player salaries and officials were put into effect to reduce hits to profits.[83] On top of the cost to attend the game itself, borderites coming from Michigan had to take the ferry both to the game and back home, meaning that lower-income families might find the cost too high[84] to attend games with any regularity.

Though the attendance record of the Cougars during their time in Windsor was low, the per capita attendance at the Border Cities Arena during the hockey season was high in relation to the populations of the two cities it serviced. On average, approximately 2 200 people attended any given Cougars game.[85] This would have been a significant number considering that the population of the Windsor-Detroit borderlands would have been smaller than other NHL markets with a similarly sized fan base.[86] This suggests that hockey was extremely popular in the region. Though the market was perceived to be small in relation to cities such as New York, Boston, or Chicago,[87] the combined fandom of Detroit and Windsor meant that the Cougars remained in the NHL when teams, such as Pittsburgh, were folding or being relocated on a season-by-season basis.[88]

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[80] "Hockey May Be Rough and Yet Clean," *Border Cities Star*, 30 November,1926, 17.
[81] "Hockey May Be Rough and Yet Clean," *Border Cities Star*, 30 November,1926, 17.
[82] "Hockey Tonight Olympia," *Detroit Free Press,* 10 November 1932, 17.
[83] "Attendance Figures Slump in National Hockey League," *Detroit Free Press,* 27 November, 1932, 18.
[84] "Michigan History: The Detroit River ferryboats," *The Detroit News*, accessed 10 December 2019, http://blogs.detroitnews.com/history/2000/01/21/the-detroit-river-ferryboats/.
[85] "National Hockey League 1926-27 Attendance Graph," hockeyDB.com, accessed 11 November 2019, http://www.hockeydb.com/nhl-attendance/att_graph_season.php?lid=NHL1927&sid=1927.
[86] "Still Another Who Wants Hockey Club," *Detroit Free Press*, 15 May, 1926, 17.
[87] "Still Another Who Wants Hockey Club," *Detroit Free Press*, 15 May, 1926, 17.
[88] "Pittsburgh Out of Hockey Loop," *Detroit Free Press*, 2 October, 1932, 33.

It is a testament to the dedication of the fan base that though attendance at the Cougars' games was relatively low, second last in the league,[89] games against marquee teams saw attendance that was as much as three times higher than other games. For example, the Cougars' first game was against the Boston Bruins, a popular American team, and it sold out.[90] Though sales for this game might have been higher due to local intrigue in the new franchise, the Cougars' first matchup against the Ottawa Senators saw a similar response. Several hundred people waited outside the arena on game day in the hopes of being able to see the game in the standing-room-only section,[91] though most were turned away at the door.[92] Opportunistic buyers also sold their tickets outside the arena at nearly double the original ticket price,[93] creating an informal ticket scalping operation in Windsor. Thus, it seems that Windsor audiences were attracted to seeing talented players and winning teams regardless of the home team's record[94] or the cost to attend the games. This suggests that the experience of watching professional hockey as a communal activity was more important to the population than the price demanded to get in the door.

Spectacle

Having standout uniforms, facilities, or entertainment was becoming increasingly important in the NHL in the 1920s, and in this regard the Windsor-Detroit border region was at an advantage. Though it was known for their automotive industry, the region had

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[89] "National Hockey League 1926-27 Attendance Graph," hockeyDB.com, accessed 11 November 2019, http://www.hockeydb.com/nhl-attendance/att_graph_season.php?lid=NHL1927&sid=1927.
[90] "Local Arena Is Sold Out For Opener," *Border Cities* Star, 18 November, 1926, 18.
[91] "Huge Crowd Fails to Get Into Arena," *Border Cities Star*, 10 December, 1926, 19.
[92] "Huge Crowd Fails to Get Into Arena," *Border Cities Star*, 10 December, 1926, 19.
[93] "Huge Crowd Fails to Get Into Arena," *Border Cities Star*, 10 December, 1926, 19.
[94] Rodney J. Paul, "Variations in NHL Attendance: The Impact of Violence, Scoring, and Regional Rivalries," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 62, no. 2 (April 2003): 359.

also earned a reputation of having modern hockey venues. With a brand new arena in both Detroit and Windsor, conditions in the arenas were more comfortable for both players and fans than those of arenas in other NHL cities.[95] The conditions for the players were preferable, as both the Border Cities Arena and, later, the Olympia in Detroit offered a state-of-the-art locker room and bathing facilities for their use after games.[96] Their practice facilities were also in the same city as their main ice rink, which was an advantage over teams that had separate practice facilities in a different location.[97] This meant that hockey players were enticed to come to the team as free agents. Fans who were on the fence about which team to support might also have been intrigued by Windsor and Detroit as marketable hockey cities.

For fans, watching a hockey game was as much about the city and entertainment surrounding the team as it was about the game being played.[98] In Windsor's perception, Detroit was an ideal location for an NHL franchise. Detroit had the Detroit Tigers, a Major League Baseball team which Windsor vigorously supported,[99] along with close access to successful college football teams such as the Michigan Wolverines.[100] Windsorites also perceived Detroit to have better shopping, meaning that they would be inclined to support a Detroit hockey team as a means of continuing to enjoy the cultural commodities across the border in which they were already partaking. Detroit's need to install its professional hockey league team in Windsor in 1926 would have made Windsorites feel like a larger part of the region's socio-cultural economy than they would

[95] "Make Hockey Rinks Comfortable for Players," *Border Cities Star,* 30 November, 1926, 17.
[96] "Visit to Red Wings' Dressing Room Reveals Trainers Are Unsung Heroes," *Detroit Free Press*, 13 November,1932, 8.
[97] "World's Flashiest Team – and Uniforms," *Border Cities Star,* 25 November, 1926, 18.
[98] "World's Flashiest Team – and Uniforms," *Border Cities Star,* 25 November, 1926, 18.
[99] "Patsy O'Toole is Silenced,"*Border Cities Star*, 8 August, 1934, 21.
[100] "Wolverines Draw with Detroiters," *Border Cities Star*, 29 November,1926, 17.

have previously, creating a greater sense of connection to Detroit as a partner in cultural exchange rather than just the receiver of Detroit's goods. Inversely, the temporary relocation of the Detroit Cougars to Windsor would have given Windsor an attraction that Detroit lacked at the time: famous hockey players. In this era, hockey players were being given celebrity status.[101] Fans were attracted to their handsome faces and "jazzy"[102] jerseys as a part of the hockey-viewing experience.

Team Play and Identity

Being the first professional team in the area, Detroit's NHL team could form the identity that they chose and that was most marketable in the region. The Detroit team's owner in later years, James Norris, would become infamous for wanting to control the community-based teams in Michigan for this reason.[103] For the Cougars in 1926, this meant basing the team's identity on playing physically. This mentality was embraced by the Windsor and Detroit media, which represented the working-class sensibilities of the cities. Praise of violence in the game of hockey was an essential part of the development of hockey as Canada's sport,[104] and this trend persisted in Windsor. In their early years, Windsorite Cougars fans praised the team for being "giant-killers"[105] who were not intimidated by talented teams.[106] In the 1930s, head coach Jack Adams stated that he could "take a chance"[107] on hardworking players because he believed that "fellows who

[101] "Handsome Hockey Stars in Jazzy Jerseys," *Border Cities Star*, 29 November, 1926¸ 17.
[102] "Handsome Hockey Stars in Jazzy Jerseys," *Border Cities Star*, 29 November, 1926¸ 17.
[103] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 65.
[104] Michael A. Robidoux, "Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey," *The Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 456 (Spring 2002): 220.
[105] "Leaders of Other Group Coming Here," *Border Cities Star,* 8 December, 1926, 19.
[106] "Leaders of Other Group Coming Here," *Border Cities Star,* 8 December, 1926, 19.
[107] M.F. Drukenbrod, "Fighting Spirit…Adams Banks On It," *Detroit Free Press*, 8 November, 1932, 15.

won't quit can win a lot of hockey games."[108] This physicality resonated with the working-class audience that watched the games, and the fans appeared to appreciate watching a team who supported their values.[109]

With an increasing sense of identity came larger attendance numbers in later years. In a *Globe* article, the sports editor stated that playing at home was an advantage that "means more in Detroit than in any other city in the National Hockey League."[110] While this could be interpreted as an insult, it could also mean that the border region embraced the team and rooted for its success with vigorous enthusiasm. By the mid-1930s, the passion within the fan base escalated to the point where when the Toronto Maple Leafs, formerly the St. Patricks, played Detroit in the playoffs, the *Chatham Daily Star* stated a clear preference for Detroit, stating that it was impossible to "back both to the bitter finis."[111] From the beginning of the franchise, the Cougars players were considered to be a part of a "hockey family,"[112] one that was tightly knit and of great interest to Windsor hockey fans. Articles published after the Cougars' first hockey season concluded mentioned where the Cougars would be going upon the end of the season, taking great interest in the players such as Hap "Happy" Holmes and Art Duncan who chose to stay in Detroit to train during the offseason as opposed to heading south to play baseball.[113] This clear allegiance became more prevalent the longer the organization was in town and fans became more familiar with the rosters. Without the development of a team identity, specifically one that was rooted in the economic backbone of the region, it

[108] M.F. Drukenbrod, "Fighting Spirit…Adams Banks On It," *Detroit Free Press*, 8 November, 1932, 15.
[109] Robidoux, "Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport," 211.
[110] M.J. Rodden, "On the Highways of Sports," *Globe,* 11 November, 1932, 12.
[111] "Leafs in Second Spot," *Chatham Daily News*, 1 May, 1934, 11.
[112] "Entire Squad on Job Today," *Border Cities Star*, 1 November, 1928, 23.
[113] "Detroiters Break Up For Summer," *Border Cities Star*, 28 March, 1927, 17.

is arguable that the Windsor-Detroit fandom would not have celebrated the team as ardently as they did. A collective fan identity had been established in correlation with the team's growth and success, and it bound the two riverside communities together in a way that would have been difficult to replicate in any other Canadian or American city alone.

CHAPTER II: CHANGING TIMES – THE GREAT DEPRESSION

While enthusiasm for sports, particularly hockey, remained high throughout the end of the 1920s, the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 limited the resources and economic flexibility of most working- and middle-class individuals. The Great Depression was a period of significant economic turmoil internationally, but several cities in Canada were affected more heavily than others due to the nature of their economies. During the 1930s, approximately 15% of the Canadian population, over 1.5 million people, were on social assistance programs.[114] Montreal experienced a 28% unemployment rate,[115] while 30% of Toronto's workforce was without jobs.[116] Across the border in the United States, 28% of households were not earning a regular pay cheque.[117] Cities that depended on industrial work, such as Cleveland, saw unemployment rates as high as 50% among blue-collar workers.[118]

The Windsor-Detroit borderlands were no different than the rest of the American Midwest in that it experienced significant economic change due to the lack of jobs across most industries and a lack of demand for products that had been highly coveted during the 1920s, such as cars and automotive parts. Windsor and Detroit depended heavily on

[114]Denyse Ballargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal During the Great Depression* (Montreal: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1999), 5.
[115] Ballargeon, *Making Do*, 6.
[116] Ryan George, "The Bruce Report and Social Welfare Leadership in the Politics of Toronto's 'Slums', 1934-1939," *Social History* 44, no. 87 (May 2011): 90.
[117] David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 177.
[118] Robert F. Himmelberg, *The Great Depression and the New Deal* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 10.

the automotive industry.[119] Detroit was even dubbed the "Motor City"[120] due to the number of cars that were produced there. However, the economic boom of the 1920s that had allowed for many families to purchase vehicles had passed.[121] In 1930, approximately 13.3% of workers in Detroit were unemployed due to the Depression.[122] By 1933, 45% were without jobs.[123] This was the highest unemployment rate among major cities in the United States.[124] At the same time, significant reliance on assistance programs arose, including dependence on food allotments and government-sponsored welfare cheques.[125]

Many families moved to other parts of the country in order to find work.[126] The population of large cities rose, and the market for goods and services being sold became larger than in years previous. For example, Detroit's population rose by half a million people between 1920 and 1930 with the majority arriving during the Depression.[127]

Despite the desperate circumstances of many individuals, sports in the Windsor-Detroit area were extremely popular during the Great Depression.[128] Baseball, boxing, and ice hockey provided a distraction from the economic uncertainty and turmoil in the area.[129] Sports have been dubbed "cultural dope"[130] by scholars in relation to their role in

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[119] David Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit: Gordon M. McGregor, Ford of Canada, and Motoropolis* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 260.
[120] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 21 March,1932, 14.
[121] Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit,* 225.
[122] Beth Tompkins Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford* (Raleigh: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 120.
[123] Tom Stanton, *Terror in the City of Champions: Murder, Baseball, and the Secret Society That Shocked Depression-Era Detroit* (Guilford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 4.
[124] Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit*, 120.
[125] Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit*, 132-33.
[126] Himmelberg, *The Great Depression and the New Deal*, 10.
[127] Stanton, *Terror in the City of Champions*, 9.
[128] Stanton, *Terror in the City of Champions*, 4.
[129] Stanton, *Terror in the City of Champions*, 4.
[130] Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 84.

society; however, in the Windsor-Detroit borderlands, they served as a means of relaxation and a point of community engagement.

In the early twentieth century, professional sports grew increasingly popular not only in Windsor-Detroit but across North America; consequently, venues were built to host them in many cities across Canada and the United States.[131] Going out to sporting events began to be marketed more toward families than single men.[132] Marketing surrounding sports specifically targeted women across all platforms, an instance of this being when the owner of the Boston Bruins, Charles Adams, spoke on the radio asking women to attend games.[133] The construction of professional-grade venues allowed women to have private spaces to socialize if they chose to do so.[134] NHL-level arenas were also constructed to look more like theatres, an aesthetic that was more appealing to audiences from upper-class backgrounds.[135] Thus, sports were being marketed toward a larger demographic than in previous years, as well as audiences that were more likely to have disposable incomes.

The sporting industry was also gaining popularity across a variety of mediums, meaning that they saturated the media market. Sports reporting became popular in the 1920s through the *Globe* newspaper in Toronto,[136] and this trend continued during the 1930s. For the three-cent cost of a newspaper,[137] people could read about their favourite

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[131] Russell Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan': Professional Hockey Spectatorship in the 1920s and 1930s in New York and Toronto," in *Canada's Game: Hockey and* Identity, ed. Andrew C. Holman (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009), 127.
[132] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 131.
[133] Stephen Hardy and Andrew C. Colman, *Hockey: A Global History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 227.
[134] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan'", 142.
[135] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan'", 131.
[136] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 142.
[137] "The Border Cities Star," *Border Cities Star*, 9 February, 1932, 1.

team or athlete, even if they could not afford to attend sporting events. The ritual of hockey discussion in newspapers drew ire from commentators, stating that, though teams had been practicing for years the same way, each practice was still being reported on.[138] Furthermore, sporting events were also being broadcast on the radio.[139] This made sports available for a large portion of the local population. For example, in Canada, the Toronto Maple Leafs were marketed as Canada's team through radio exposure to Anglophones across the country.[140] In fact, it was reported that commentary on the Maple Leafs had made all sports media more "Leafs conscious"[141] and less focused on amateur hockey. Likewise, the Montreal Maroons were promoted as the team to support for Anglophones in Montreal.[142]

In the Windsor-Detroit borderlands, improvements in local infrastructure made attending sporting events such as ice hockey more accessible. The completion of the Ambassador Bridge and the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel in 1929 and 1930 respectively made travel across the border easier for those with personal vehicles. Advertisements were published in Windsor's daily newspaper, the *Border Cities Star*, promoting Greyhound buses that would take patrons across the border to Detroit's Olympia Stadium for a small fee.[143] Taxicabs also took fans across the border for a similar fare.[144] In the 1930s, sports spectatorship and leisure travel for sport became more common due to the greater accessibility of public transportation despite the broader trend of economic disparity.[145]

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[138] Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2002), 219.
[139] Himmelberg, *The Great Depression and the New Deal,* 76.
[140] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 226.
[141] Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 219.
[142] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 219.
[143] The fee was 50 cents. "Hockey Fans," *Border Cities Star*, 3 February, 1932, 17.
[144] "Hockey Fans," *Border Cities Star*, 3 February, 1932, 17.
[145] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 65.

While Detroit's NHL hockey team had originally experienced some of the lowest attendance levels in the league during the boom years of the 1920s,[146] by the 1929-1930 season, the team had risen to fifth in the league.[147] This came in direct contrast to the fact that attendance across the league suffered due to the Great Depression. For example, the Toronto and Montreal teams being notably affected in the Canadian market.[148] Despite having built a new arena and having increased dedication to improving the fan experience,[149] the Toronto Maple Leafs saw a drop in attendance in the 1932-1933 season, a condition that the *Globe* accredited to the Depression.[150] Despite having a higher metropolitan population than their competition, the New York Americans suffered the lowest attendance their team had ever seen during the 1931-1932 season in a game against the Detroit Falcons when only 3,000 fans attended the game.[151] Jack Adams, manager of the Detroit Falcons, even made exceptions for fans unable to buy tickets by allowing them to trade potatoes for tickets, alluding to both the fan desire to attend games and the eagerness of the team's ownership to have fans in the stands.[152] This dedication to the sport in an area that was heavily impacted by the economic downturn in the United States is significant in assessing fan loyalty in the region. It also suggests how integral the sport of hockey was to the local population's ability to cope with the Depression.

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[146] "National Hockey League 1926-27 Attendance Graph," hockeyDB.com, accessed 11 November 2019, http://www.hockeydb.com/nhl-attendance/att_graph_season.php?lid=NHL1927&sid=1927.
[147] "National Hockey League 1928-29 Attendance Graph," hockeyDB.com, accessed 27 November 2019, http://www.hockeydb.com/nhl-attendance/att_graph_season.php?lid=NHL1927&sid=1929.
[148] M.J. Rodden, "On the Highways of Sports," *Globe,* 11 November, 1932, 12.
[149] Percy Sueuer, "Attendance Figures Slump in National Hockey League," *Detroit Free Press*, 27 November, 1932.
[150]M.J. Rodden, "On the Highways of Sports," *Globe,* 11 November, 1932, 12.
[151] "Traded Players Star As Americans, Falcons Draw," *Border Cities Star*, March 7, 1932, 13.
[152] Stan Fischler, "Red Wings nearly became NHL dynasty in late 1930s," NHL.com, accessed 10 April 2020, https://www.nhl.com/news/stan-fischler-nhl-scrapbook-april-1/c-316455226.

Throughout North America in the 1920s and 1930s, professional sports benefited from municipal investment in the creation of entertainment districts and sports venues that created both fan interest and local employment opportunities. Toronto, for example, commissioned Maple Leaf Gardens, a theatrical-style building designed to host the Toronto Maple Leafs and complement a growing entertainment district in the city.[153] The mayor went so far as to state that it was a matter of "civic pride" to provide Torontonians with the best entertainment facilities possible.[154] New York City also rebuilt Madison Square Garden in 1925 to accompany the growth along Broadway Street and the city's theatre district.[155] In Detroit, Olympia Stadium was designed by a prominent theatre architect in order for it to match the aesthetic of the pre-existing Fox Theatre on Woodward Avenue, one of the most iconic theatres in the United States at the time.[156]

The expansion of hockey and entertainment districts correlated to financial success in major Canadian and American cities in the 1920s, but its continuance throughout the 1930s came in direct contrast to the debilitating economic conditions in those same cities. Detroit and other blue-collar cities received millions of dollars to aid local relief programs in feeding and housing its citizens.[157] With almost half of its working-age population out of work due to the Great Depression by 1935,[158] Detroit's entertainment venues were attractions that were out of reach for many people. Furthermore, the significant cost of having to pay heavy taxes on event tickets when crossing the border meant Windsorites and Detroiters paid more to attend games than if

[153] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 136.
[154] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 220.
[155] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 134-135.
[156] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 138.
[157] Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit*, 132-33.
[158] Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit*, 120.

they had stayed on their side of the Detroit River.[159] However, despite these obstacles, it is evident that the sport culture and fan interest in hockey, specifically, only grew throughout the Depression years. This is particularly true during the years of 1932 and 1933.

An Opportunity for Rebranding

The difficulties that Windsor-Detroit citizens had in attending American sporting events impacted both local and national sports leagues, including the NHL. The league depended upon attendance numbers being relatively high in order to both operate at a profit and to promote itself in a sports market that was already saturated with boxing, baseball, and football.[160] The *Detroit Free Press* illustrates that the city's readership was heavily invested in the Detroit Tigers and the Michigan Wolverines. As some of these sports used the same venues as professional hockey, scheduling NHL games was a struggle for prime bookings, and NHL arenas being used for prize fighting matches was a particular concern.[161]

However, the Windsor-Detroit borderlands saw higher attendance for the sport during the economic crisis than other urban areas. This included Toronto, which, despite having brand new facilities[162] and the Maple Leafs winning the Stanley Cup in recent memory,[163] experienced a significant drop in attendance. The Leafs, the most popular Anglo-Canadian hockey team, reached franchise-low attendance levels during the 1932-1933 season, their arena being only half full at one point during the season.[164] Like other

[159] "Hockey: Stratford vs Windsor," *Border Cities Star*, 19 November, 1926, 20.
[160] Stanton, *Terror in the City of Champions*, 4.
[161] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History,* 218.
[162] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 129.
[163] Canadian Press, "Toronto Leafs Land Stanley Cup With 6-4 Win," *Border Cities* Star, 11 April, 1932, 14.
[164] Percy Le Sueuer, "Attendance Figures Slump in National Hockey League," *Detroit Free Press,* 27 November, 1932, 15.

industrial cities such as Chicago, Detroit hosted NHL games with all-time low attendances during the early 1930s.[165] However, the Detroit Falcons consistently saw attendance numbers of approximately 7,000 attendees per game, one of the highest averages in the league during that span.[166] The team also drew crowds of over 12, 500 people during the 1931-1932 season, which was among the best in the league for a single game.[167]

Despite the economic upheaval of the Great Depression, it was during the 1932-1933 season that the Detroit franchise's popularity gained significant momentum, as there were several key developments in the franchise that made the team more marketable to the local fan base. Before the 1932-1933 season, the Cougars, then the Detroit Falcons, were sold to Chicago grain magnate James Norris.[168] One of his first changes as owner was to rename the team from the Detroit Falcons to the Detroit Red Wings.[169] While the previous name had been chosen by a poll in the newspaper,[170] James Norris chose the Red Wings name himself.[171] He picked the Detroit Red Wings as an accompaniment to the winged wheel logo inspired by the name of a minor league team in Montreal for which he played.[172] The name and logo were chosen specifically for their marketability in the Detroit region, as the automotive industry was the predominant employer in the area

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[165] Percy Le Sueuer, "Attendance Figures Slump in National Hockey League," *Detroit Free Press*, 27 November, 1932, 15.
[166] Attendance records for the 1932-1933 season are sparse and have been collected through recording attendance numbers found in the *Border Cities Star.* "Aurie Nets Only Goal," *Border Cities* Star, 14 March, 1932, 17.
[167] Vern DeGeer, "Goal Apiece at Olympia," *Border Cities Star*, 22 February, 1932, 15.
[168] "Rival Hockey Heads Confer Over Outlaws," *Detroit Free Press*, 31 August, 1932, 13.
[169] "Veterans and Recruits Among New Detroit Hockey Talent," *Detroit Free Press*, 16 October,1932, 37.
[170] Joe Falls, "Those magnificent men in red," *Detroit News*, 30 September,1995.
[171] "1932 – Red Wings Born," *Sports Team History*, accessed 02 July 2021, https://sportsteamhistory.com/timeline/red-wings-born.
[172] "1932 – Red Wings Born," Sports Team History, accessed 02 July 2021, https://sportsteamhistory.com/timeline/red-wings-born.

at the time.[173] The Detroit Red Wings name alluded to the red wings on the team's logo, but it also created visual consistency with the team's historically red uniforms.[174]

When the new name was introduced at the beginning of the 1932-1933 season, it was not given any fanfare. In Detroit, the *Detroit Free Press* integrated the new name into its articles about the NHL with only a brief reference to the team's old name.[175] The moniker was also introduced informally in Windsor; the *Border Cities Star* introduced the name on 6 October 1932 in an article that claimed the name was not very "romantic" in its allusion to their all red uniforms.[176] While this might suggest a lack of interest in the team's rebranding, the renaming of teams across the NHL generally did not receive significant attention. For example, when the Toronto St. Patricks became the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1927, the *Globe and Mail* did not make an explicit announcement that the team had been rebranded.[177] A possible reason for this trend was the frequency with which NHL teams were renamed, relocated, or were relegated to minor leagues. With teams coming in and out of the league every year, the league was more likely to be nonchalant about teams being rebranded.[178] In relation to the Detroit Red Wings, the understated reaction to the team's new name also suggests the disinclination to theatrics that the team itself embodied.

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[173] "1932 – Red Wings Born," Sports Team History, accessed 02 July 2021, https://sportsteamhistory.com/timeline/red-wings-born.
[174] "NHL Uniforms – Detroit Cougars", NHL Uniform Database, accessed 2 July 2021, http://www.nhluniforms.com/RedWings/RedWings.html.
[175] M.F. Drukenbrod, "Druke Says: Hockey is Next It's Tough Game Has Many Thrills," *Detroit Free Press*, 16 October, 1932, 3.
[176] "Falcons Change Name, Purchase New Goal-Tender," *Border Cities Star*, 6 October, 1932, 25.
[177] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 219.
[178] Cities that circulated in and out of NHL ownership include Pittsburgh and Ottawa. Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History,* 219.

The team's new identity also correlated with the increasing success of the regional hockey league in Ontario and Michigan, the International Hockey League (IHL), and the area's preference for it over the NHL. The two local IHL teams, the Detroit Olympics and the Windsor Bulldogs, were considered the most popular hockey attraction in the area.[179] Players from the IHL were often used to fill the rosters of NHL teams or to rehabilitate NHL players as they returned from injuries.[180] This created a rivalry between the two teams for talent, which made the hockey community in the region more dynamic. The league's inclusion of both a Windsor and Detroit team created a border rivalry between Windsor and Detroit that drew fans to go to games on either side of the river. The NHL club also played a city series against the minor league team in Detroit, creating a rivalry between the two clubs.[181] Though the two leagues were forced to play on different nights due to the availability of the Detroit Olympia, fans took exception to the NHL having the ability to change the IHL schedule to suit its own due to their increasing influence on minor and semi-professional leagues.[182] This local rivalry thrived by drawing on the locality of the teams and the closeness of the two communities. The Red Wings ownership appeared to have subscribed to this mentality as a way to integrate themselves more thoroughly into the region.

The National Hockey League team's attempts to draw on the identity of the region in a way that could be marketable created interest. The previous names of the franchise, the Detroit Cougars and Detroit Falcons, were both unrelated to Detroit geography. Furthermore, the "Falcons" moniker had also been used by the IHL team in

[179] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sports Gossip," *Border Cities* Star, 18 March, 1932, 18.
[180] "Comments of Other Critics," *Border Cities Star*, 30 November, 1926, 18.
[181] "Red Wings Cop Final Tilt, 3-2," *Border Cities Star*, 7 November, 1932, 18.
[182] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History,* 218.

Toronto over the same period. The Red Wings name was not only original to the province of Ontario, but also stood out against the blue Toronto Maple Leafs logo and black and white Chicago Black Hawks insignias, two of the team's NHL rivals. This made marketing the team easier and made it stand out more against its competitors when photos of the team were published in the newspaper. With the increasingly sophisticated photography being published in the press,[183] having a distinct logo would have been integral to the branding of the team in a league that was rapidly expanding into the American market.

When Norris rebranded the team, he also infused the team with significant funding so Detroit could afford the top-end talent that drew crowds, including people from Windsor.[184] New coach Jack Adams quickly made several changes to the roster, including adding fifty thousand dollars in talent.[185] With more money invested in hockey in the area, the ability to scout talent and acquire players was increased significantly. This included adding players from southwestern Ontario and Michigan to the Detroit roster. The Detroit Cougars did not even have an American player on their roster until 1930.[186] The first time that a Detroit NHL team iced a roster with more than one American player was in the 1932-1933 season, wherein they had three American players.[187] None were from Michigan.[188] The inclusion of more players from the Windsor-Detroit borderlands would have created a stronger connection between the fans and the team, but the

[183] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 226.
[184] "Detroit Red Wings' Prospects Unknown," *Daily Boston Globe*, 1 November,1932, 23.
[185] "New Players Added to Detroit N.H.L. Team," *Globe*, 13 November, 1928, 9.
[186] "Leroy Goldsworthy," hockey-reference.com, accessed 12 December 2019, https://www.hockey-reference.com/players/g/goldsle01.html.
[187] "1932-33 Detroit Red Wings Roster and Statistics," hockey-reference.com, accessed 02 December 2019, https://www.hockey-reference.com/teams/DET/1933.html.
[188] "1932-33 Detroit Red Wings Roster and Statistics," hockey-reference.com, accessed 02 December 2019, https://www.hockey-reference.com/teams/DET/1933.html.

emergence of American players on the team in general indicates a growing sense of a blended hockey league that resembled the Windsor-Detroit community itself. The local newspapers frequently pointed out the presence of local players on the Detroit NHL team and players on opposing teams that had previously played there.[189]

Playoffs

In southwestern Ontario, support for Detroit's NHL team was significantly higher than local support for the Toronto Maple Leafs during the NHL's regular season. An example of this occurred when the talent on the squad propelled the team to success throughout the year before during the 1931-1932 season. Despite their lack of a Stanley Cup victory, Detroit's games were expected to have one of the highest gate prices in the league due to their popularity.[190] The frequency of transportation services going to Olympia Stadium and back on game days is also indicative of how many Windsorites were interested in attending Detroit games.[191] The *Border Cities Star* reported that the Detroit Falcons were overlooked and underrated, and the record of the Falcons during the 1931-1932 season supports this argument.[192] The Falcons finished third in their division after winning eighteen of their games and finishing with 46 points.[193] The team also carried the longest streak of wins at an NHL home arena with nineteen straight wins at home,[194] the Detroit arena being called a "tough spot"[195] on the NHL schedule. The Falcons made the playoffs for the first time in three years, an exciting development for a

[189] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 8 February,1932, 16.
[190] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 4 April,1932, 14.
[191] "Playoff Tickets," *Border Cities Star*, 26 March,1932, 16.
[192] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 18 March,1932, 18.
[193] "1931-32 NHL Summary," Hockey-Reference, accessed 20 July 2020, https://www.hockey-reference.com/leagues/NHL_1932.html.
[194] Vern DeGeer, "Rangers Spoil Detroit's Remarkable Home Record," *Border Cities Star*, 4 March,1932, 19.
[195] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 9 March,1932, 16.

fan base that had never seen the Falcons win the Stanley Cup.[196] *Border Cities Star* columnist Vern DeGeer reported that the final games of the season were highly attended due to fans wanting to say goodbye to their players, even going so far as to give the players standing ovations as they played their final games as Falcons.[197]

The contentious environment surrounding professional hockey in the area was also perpetuated by the competitiveness and success of the local Canadian teams. The 1931-1932 NHL playoffs demonstrates this phenomenon. At the beginning of the 1932 playoffs, three Canadian teams were in contention for the Stanley Cup: the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Montreal Canadiens, and the Montreal Maroons. The 50% chance of a Canadian team winning the Stanley Cup would have inspired excitement in many Canadian hockey fans. Canadians had "so jealously guarded"[198] their "traditional supremacy"[199] over the sport that it would make sense that Canadian cities would support a Canadian team winning one of hockey's most important prizes. However, in the Windsor-Detroit borderlands, the newspaper coverage of the playoffs suggested that the region supported the Detroit Falcons over their Canadian rivals during this contest. During the playoffs, when the Detroit Falcons and the Toronto Maple Leafs were both competing, the Toronto Maple Leafs received only two sports section headlines in which the focus was entirely on their series, despite their playing every round of the playoffs. One of these headlines was to announce that the Maple Leafs had won the Stanley Cup.[200] Alternatively, the Detroit Falcons, who were defeated by the Montreal Maroons

[196] "Falcons and Olympics Assured of Hockey Playoff Positions," *Border Cities Star*, 21 March,1932, 15.
[197] Vern DeGeer, "Earl Roche Tops Parade," *Border Cities Star*, 21 March,1932, 18.
[198] "Tie Game Clinches Olympic Title For Canadians," *Border Cities Star*, 15 February,1932, 14.
[199] "Tie Game Clinches Olympic Title For Canadians," *Border Cities Star*, 15 February,1932, 14.
[200] "Toronto Leafs Land Stanley Cup With 6-4 Win," *Border Cities Star*, 11 April, 1932, 14.

in four games, received three standalone headlines during their short stint in the playoffs. Over the course of the first round, when Toronto and Detroit were both playing, the two teams shared main headlines twice.[201] However, Detroit was mentioned first on both occasions and received more coverage in the articles themselves.[202]

A Team to Root For: Talent, Grit, and the Working-Class Identity

While the NHL was generally gaining popularity throughout Canada and the United States at the time, the lack of a playoff appearance for the Detroit NHL team in the early years of the Depression[203] would have been a concern for the team's ownership. Thus, the team's new name and corresponding winged wheel logo that had originally been used to encourage local attendance reflected the working-class, automotive identity of the region in order to further promote the team in the area during this period of uncertainty. The Red Wings' distinctive logo featured an automotive wheel with two wings. It made its first appearance in the *Detroit Free Press* on 15 November 1932.[204] The visual presentation of the logo accompanied the increasingly working-class identity of the team as portrayed by the local press.

The reimagining of the team's uniforms and branding came during a period of debate within the NHL about the sport's target audience and whether the working-class elements of the sport, which included fighting and rough play, belonged in the league.[205] The rules of the game were also being contested in order to create more scoring and prevent serious injuries, which drew significant criticism from papers in Windsor.[206] An

[201] "Maroons Hold Falcons to Tie; Hawks Defeat Leafs," *Border Cities Star*, 28 March, 1932, 15.; "Stanley Cup Games at Olympia, Chicago Tomorrow," *Border Cities Star*, 26 March, 1932, 17.
[202] "Stanley Cup Games at Olympia, Chicago Tomorrow," *Border Cities Star*, 26 March, 17.
[203] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 21 March, 1932, 14.
[204] "How Wings' Goalie Looks to Lowly Puck," *Detroit Free Press*, 15 November, 1932, 17.
[205] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History,* 227; 239.
[206] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 24 February 1932, 18.

example of a contentious rule change was the institution of the five minute major penalty for fighting in 1933.[207] The NHL was also criticized for having rules that were inconsistent with semi-professional leagues playing at the same time.[208] While the National Hockey League was considered the top sporting league in Canada and was associated with excellence, its influence over minor leagues was thought to be detrimental to the rules of both leagues.[209]

Discussions surrounding the Red Wings in the local newspapers regarding their play reflected the strong working-class background of the region, particularly through the characteristics of the team that local newspapers chose to highlight and celebrate. Thus, despite a broader movement toward catering to middle- and upper-class fans within the NHL by making the sport more gentlemanly, the Detroit Red Wings remained a representation of blue-collar values and were more successful in the Windsor-Detroit borderlands for this allusion. Descriptions of the team in the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Border Cities Star* indicate that the team was praised for exhibiting traits associated with working-class workers and work ethics. For example, Red Wings player Herbie Lewis was called an "oil and gas man"[210] in the *Detroit Free Press* when describing his work ethic. Captain Larry Aurie was described as a "tireless worker."[211] The team's tenacity and hardworking nature was frequently pointed out; in one instance, the players were called "battlers."[212] Their coach, Jack Adams, stated that he would "take a chance on"[213] players who were tenacious in their play and that "fellows who won't quit can win a lot

[207] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 239.
[208] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 244.
[209] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 218.
[210] Jack Carveth, "Lewis Works on First Line," *Detroit Free Press*, 22 October, 1932, 14.
[211] M.F. Drukenbrod, "Fighting Spirit…Adams Banks On It," *Detroit Free Press*, 8 November, 1932, 15.
[212] M.F. Drukenbrod, "Fighting Spirit…Adams Banks On It," *Detroit Free Press*, 8 November, 1932, 15.
[213] M.F. Drukenbrod, "Fighting Spirit…Adams Banks On It," *Detroit Free Press*, 8 November, 1932, 15.

of hockey games."[214] The team also was described as being unexpectedly physical and aggressive on the ice as they played with an "unexpected thump" against the Chicago Blackhawks in the 1932-1933 season opener.[215] Red Wings players were also featured in discussions regarding the removal of fighting and physical play from hockey at the NHL level, as several Detroit players were known for being aggressive.[216] In previous years, the NHL had questioned if "bad men"[217] that were physically forceful still belonged in the league, but commentary on the Detroit NHL team suggests that those kinds of players were still welcome in the Motor City.[218]

Coach Adams also initiated a change in how the team played and how they represented Detroit on an international scale. While playing in the NHL, Adams was coached to play roughly.[219] His coaching style reflected the early trend in hockey wherein fights were considered part of the spectacle of the sport and were encouraged as part of a "double feature"[220] of a game and a fight. His coaching tactics bred the same mentality in his players, the Red Wings being known as a "bruising"[221] team. This mentality was embraced by the Windsor and Detroit media, and Red Wings Captain Larry Aurie was even praised in the *Border Cities Star* for fighting in a 6-2 win against the New York Americans.[222]

The attitude surrounding the team from their formation was that of the Red Wings being underdogs in the NHL. This underdog mentality would have also appealed to

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[214] M.F. Drukenbrod, "Fighting Spirit…Adams Banks On It," *Detroit Free Press*, 8 November, 1932, 15.
[215] Jack Carveth, "Red Wings Down Hawks in Opener, 3-1", *Detroit Free Press*, 11 November, 1932, 17.
[216] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 239.
[217] Dick Gibson, "Ching Johnson is Big Man, But Not Bad Man," *Border Cities Star*, 26 January, 1928, 47.
[218] Dick Gibson, "Ching Johnson is Big Man, But Not Bad Man," *Border Cities Star*, 26 January, 1928, 47.
[219] "Third Period," *Border Cities Star*, 10 December, 1926.
[220] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 228.
[221] "Detroit Red Wings Win Bruising Game," *Globe*, 16 November,1932, 12.
[222] "Detroit Red Wings Win Bruising Game," *Globe*, 16 November, 1932, 12.

working-class audiences in a way that teams such as the New York Rangers, which were considered flashy and wealthy,[223] would not have. The changing of the team's name would have bolstered the region's desire for the team to be successful. The Falcons had not made the playoffs since the 1928-1929 NHL season.[224] The playoff drought was consistently commented upon by local reporters as a disappointment, especially as local teams such as the MLB's Detroit Tigers were in playoff contention. The *Border Cities Star* stated that it would be a welcome return to the playoffs for the American NHL squad, as it would be good for the area; it was "doubtless being welcome[d] everywhere."[225] The local newspapers stated that the Windsor-Detroit area was one of the most active hockey regions in the world,[226] and a return to the playoffs would be economically and culturally important to the area, especially during the Great Depression.

The promising play of the Detroit Red Wings rejuvenated the area's playoff hopes in a way that increased attendance and discussions around the team. For example, the team was characterized as playing with as much enthusiasm against the Boston Bruins as the Detroit Olympics did against the Windsor Bulldogs of the IHL, the standard for good hockey in the area.[227] At the time, the NHL was praised for its ability to provide spectators with a "full sixty minutes of play"[228] at any given game due to its speed and intensity, and as such the Red Wings were delivering an entertaining product to Border Cities hockey fans.

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[223] "Handsome Hockey Stars in Jazzy Jerseys," *Border Cities Star*, 29 November, 1926¸ 17.
[224] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 21 March, 1932, 14.
[225] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 21 March, 1932, 14.
[226] Dick Gibson, "What's What in Sport," *Border Cities Star*, 22 March, 1928, 19.
[227] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star,* 18 March, 1932, 18.
[228] Hardy and Colman, *Hockey: A Global History*, 227.

Fan Activity

Scholarship on the subject of fan activity has argued that the role of working-class people in popularizing spectator sports has been exaggerated in historical studies of "working-class" sports.[229] When discussing working-class spectators, scholarship associates aggressive and loud behaviour with the demographic and argues that these stereotypes encouraged many leagues to cater their sports toward a more upper-class following.[230] Furthermore, reporting on fan activity in newspapers was considered rare unless the behaviour was deviant from what was expected in a sports setting.[231] While cities such as Toronto or New York City might have had a large population of white-collar and wealthy citizens to attend sporting events and allow the sport to "put on a high hat,"[232] the composition of the Windsor-Detroit area suggests that the working-class population and their enthusiasm for attending sports cannot be overlooked when analyzing hockey fandom in the region. The press's frequent documentation of typically "working-class" behaviours amongst fans at Detroit Red Wings games during the years of 1932 and 1933, specifically, suggests that the local newspapers normalized these behaviours in Windsor and Detroit. The regularity with which aggressive or loud behaviour[233] was mentioned in articles about the Red Wings indicates the continued working-class identity of Red Wings fans in spite of the greater trend toward upper-class audiences across the NHL.[234] For example, fans were so enraged during losses that they

[229] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 141.
[230] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 129; 131.
[231] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 147; 149.
[232] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 129.
[233] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 147.
[234] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 129.

threw cabbages, bottles of bathtub gin, pamphlets, and paper napkins onto the ice.[235] On another occasion, eggs were hurled at the players during a playoff game between the Buffalo Bison and the Detroit Olympics of the International Hockey League.[236] It was also pointed out when the Red Wings started twelve separate scrums in a single game, giving special attention to when Detroit star Larry Aurie started a fight that lasted for five minutes;[237] that particular game was dubbed "one of the wildest free-for-all battles in the history of pro hockey in Detroit."[238] Similarly, it was noted when a Toronto Maple Leaf game racked up twenty-one penalties.[239] Hockey fans criticized the local teams "at the risk of a public hanging," and games were occasionally suspended due to rowdy crowds.[240] This behaviour was described as "the face of wild disorder beyond the control of any human being."[241] Local newspapers also noted the regularity of serious injuries, such as players being knocked out during games, with commentary on the possibility of increasing the level of protection that hockey equipment could offer to players at the NHL level.[242]

Regardless of specific local preferences and attendance records, the NHL was the hockey league that received the most media attention during the hockey season in both the United States and Canada. The league was described as being owned by rich men instead of by local ownership,[243] meaning that they had the financial resources to endorse

[235] Vern DeGeer, "Rally Turns Hawks Back," *Border Cities Star*, 15 February, 1932, 14; Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 141.
[236] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 11 April, 1932.
[237] Vern DeGeer, "Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 19 December, 1932, 20.
[238]Vern DeGeer, "Free-For-All As Wings Win," *Border Cities Star*, 19 December, 1932, 21.
[239] "21 Penalties Handed Out," *Border Cities Star*, 11 November, 1932, 24.
[240] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 11 April, 1932, 14.
[241] Vern DeGeer, "Broadcasting the Sport Gossip," *Border Cities Star*, 11 April, 1932, 14.
[242] "May Armor Hockey Men," *Border Cities Star*, 15 February, 1928, 21.
[243] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 128.

and promote their teams nationally. Regardless of the economic conditions in North America, the celebrity culture surrounding the NHL grew due to this coverage. The *Border Cities Star* reported that Maple Leafs fans travelled to games in Toronto in order to request sticks and autographs from their favourite players.[244] Like other sports such as European football, hockey arenas sold favours that could be worn to indicate a preference for a specific team; these were particularly popular with women.[245] These developments progressed in contrast to the desire amongst NHL ownership to make hockey games a more upper-class experience where evening wear was preferred to street clothes.[246] Working-class audiences had been criticized as being too violent and loud at hockey games,[247] but their attendance was arguably the main reason for the growth of the sport in general at the early stages of the league due to the larger population of working-class people in many major hockey markets. Though hockey had been dubbed a gentlemanly sport that relied on the integrity of its players,[248] the appeal of it to border hockey fans was of the opposite persuasion. The continued language surrounding working-class values and behaviours in the local press, such as descriptions of aggressiveness and the strong work ethics among Detroit players, combined with the winged wheel logo to present the Detroit Red Wings as a strong representation of the population that supported them. These factors made the team more marketable to Windsor hockey fans, and as such they preferred the Red Wings to its closest Canadian rivals, the Toronto Maple Leafs, despite their Canadian origins.

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[244] "Toronto Leafs Land Stanley Cup With 6-4 Win," *Border Cities Star*, 11 April, 1932, 14.
[245] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 143.
[246] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 129.
[247] Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan,'" 129.
[248] Dick Gibson, "What's What in Sport," *Border Cities Star*, 16 March, 1928, 22.

CONCLUSION

Despite drastically different socio-economic circumstances in the region between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the Windsor-Detroit borderlands fostered a vibrant cross-border sports culture that provided the locals with both a way to engage with their community and a distraction from their financial and societal troubles. A relatively new development in the area, the growth of professional ice hockey fostered an intense regionalism that was unique to southwestern Ontario and southeastern Michigan. This regionalism, which emphasized aspects of blue-collar workmanship that were prevalent in contact sports such as hockey, popularized aspects of sports fandom that were becoming increasingly unpopular across the rest of Ontario and Canada. Upon analyzing the sports sections of newspapers published in Windsor and Detroit, including the *Border Cities Star* and the *Detroit Free Press*, it is evident that local sports writers relied on language that emphasized the transnational connection between the two cities in order to describe the relationship between them and the sports teams they supported.

Upon the 1926 relocation of the Victoria Cougars to Detroit and its introduction to the National Hockey League, the landscape of professional hockey in the Windsor-Detroit borderland became a topic of provincial and international discussion. The expansion of ice hockey in the area contradicted its previous reputation of being a backwoods community for the sport.[249] Though the border region had already been considered a hotspot for entertainment and sports due to the proximity of Detroit and its surrounding communities, the expansion of ice hockey allowed for a distinctly Canadian

[249] Bob Duff, *On the Wing: The History of the Windsor Spitfires* (Windsor: Biblioasis, 2010), 14.

influence upon the social landscape that was heavily influenced by American pastimes and media. The fortification of hockey in southwestern Ontario, specifically, combatted the national fear discussed in Canadian media that Canada had no distinct culture of its own.[250]

Examining the language used to describe professional hockey, specifically the Detroit Red Wings, during the late 1920s and early 1930s revealed that the area maintained a uniquely working-class identity through its sports following. The targeted branding of the team by the Red Wings ownership suggests an awareness and encouragement of this identity that transcended the municipal boundaries of Windsor and Detroit.

Research on this topic contributes to sports scholarship in North America by suggesting the nuances of sports fandom in border communities, particularly in relation to ice hockey. The Canadian-ness of ice hockey throughout Ontario, specifically southwestern Ontario, did not translate to greater support of Canadian NHL teams in the Windsor-Detroit border community. While aspects of nationalism were present in the representation of these teams to the media, such as commentary on if players had participated in military efforts overseas,[251] the strong sense of regionalism that the area cultivated through shared socio-economic circumstances made the connection between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, Michigan, stronger than the developing sense of Anglo-Canadian nationalism in Ontario. The Windsor-Detroit borderland's preference for the geographically close Detroit Red Wings over the Anglo-Canadian Toronto Maple Leafs,

[250] Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 129.
[251] "Canadians: We Are Greatly Indebted to You!," *Border Cities Star*, 18 November, 1926, 17.

despite their Canadian origin, suggests the emphasis on common circumstances and proximity over broader concepts of nationalism and Canadian-ness.

While this is a case study on sports fandom in a border community, it is valuable in the study of American and Canadian socio-cultural relations in the post-war years. It also contributes to broader sports scholarship by taking geographic circumstances into account as an influence on sports fandom, an aspect which has been neglected in sports studies in favour of factors such as gender, class, and race. While these factors also play a role in the way that ice hockey was marketed in the Windsor-Detroit border region, the two cities' geographic and economic circumstances were given priority based on their common economic base and their entwined industrial workforces. Class was also emphasized in this study, and as such it challenges the role of class in spectator sports scholarship.

To expand upon this project, it would be beneficial to examine the transition from Windsor's "borderlands" mentality in the late 1920s and early 1930s to the more Canadian perception of itself that grew stronger in later years. This research would involve analysis of the Detroit team in the years following the 1935 amalgamation of the Essex townships into the City of Windsor. The growth of Windsor's identity as a city separate from its relationship to Detroit would be influential in how its sports fandom was represented, particularly in relation to ice hockey. Though hockey grew in popularity internationally in the post-war years, it was still regarded as a Canadian sport featuring predominantly Canadian athletes despite the dubiousness of hockey's specific origins.[252]

[252] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 44.

In this way, the changing relationship of the area to professional hockey, particularly at the NHL level, could also be compared to the post-war rise of prize fighting in the United States.

Furthermore, an examination of the increasing popularity and regionalism of semi-professional hockey in the Windsor-Detroit region, specifically the International Hockey League, would be useful in better understanding the area's desire to distance itself from its relationship to Detroit from the mid-1930s onward. The media's discussion of the two local teams, the Detroit Olympics and the Windsor Bulldogs, would be a beneficial source in analyzing how the city's view of itself changed. Due to the intense competition that existed between the two teams, the media would have chosen to portray the rivalry in a specific way that might have alluded to greater feelings of nationalism than would be accessible otherwise.

This research could be supplemented by examining other resources published specifically for Canadian audiences that featured articles about ice hockey. An example of this would be the *Maple Leaf*, a serial publication sent to Canadian soldiers overseas during World War II. Researching how hockey was presented to soldiers overseas during wartime would also speak to how hockey played a role in the perpetuation of Canadian nationalism and Canadian morale during a period of international stress. Seeing which teams and leagues were presented to soldiers overseas would also be telling of which teams were prioritized to Canadian audiences.

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VITA AUCTORIS

NAME:	Nicole Pillon
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Windsor, ON
YEAR OF BIRTH:	1997
EDUCATION:	Sandwich Secondary School, 2015
	University of Windsor, B.A., Windsor, ON, 2019
	University of Windsor, M.A., Windsor, ON, 2021