

TRY TO BEAT THAT!: THE 1978-79 BRANDON WHEAT KINGS

Dietrich kept things light in dressing room

BY PERRY BERGSON

Don Dietrich's biggest impression may have been made off the ice during the 1978-79 season.

The 17-year-old Brandon Wheat Kings defenceman was brought along slowly by his coach, former National Hockey League rearguard Dunc McCallum.

Freshly out of senior hockey with his hometown Deloraine Royals, the rookie played on Brandon's blue-line behind the four 19-year-old defencemen ahead of him in the pecking order.

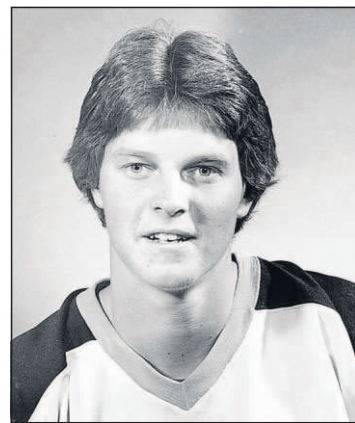
Even as he was protected by McCallum, Dietrich showed flashes of the player he would become, putting up 43 points in 69 games.

With more responsibility in the 1979-80 season after the graduation the four 19-year-old blue-liners ahead of him in the lineup, Dietrich responded with 60 points in 63 games. That prompted the Chicago Blackhawks to grab him in the ninth round, 183rd overall in 1980.

He graduated to the pro ranks in 1981-82, debuting in the NHL on Dec. 31, 1983 with the Black Hawks against the Detroit Red Wings. He played 17 games with Chicago and 11 with the New Jersey Devils.

Dietrich retired from pro hockey after the 1990-91 season.

He began working at a golf course in Buxton, Maine, moving the family back home to Deloraine in 1994 to take over a restaurant. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1995, and had his first bout with cancer in 1999. He was given six months to live, but took an experimental drug and was soon well enough to begin a job at



Don Dietrich

Canada Customs.

"I take every one of those attitudes that I got in hockey, basically, with that junior foundation to deal with my illnesses the way I do," Dietrich told the Brandon Sun in 2016. "There's no guarantee."

Dietrich wrote a book with his wife Nadine and area writer Brad Bird called No Guarantees, which came out in 2007. It can be purchased at Amazon.

Dietrich died on Feb. 16, 2021 at age 59.

KELLY MCCRIMMON: "Dieter was my roommate and my best friend then and through many years after. He was so well liked by everyone, he was so funny, just a guy who everybody absolutely loved. He was 17 on that team, and in that era, 17 would be the youngest you played — it would be very uncommon to have a 16-year-old in the Western League in those days — so as a 17-year-old he was a young guy, yet he played senior hockey the year before in Deloraine. He was just a fabulous guy and a great friend to me for sure but he was a great friend to everybody."

LAURIE BOSCHMAN: "He was a terrific guy. I knew him more after our careers finished and saw him while he was battling his disease. He was a good man, and a very good hockey player. He was a tremendous asset."
BRIAN PROPP: "Dieter was awesome. He was quiet but his sense of humour was unbelievable. That made a difference. You need to have character guys who have fun and joke around."
RICK KNICKLE: "He was such a good player. When I first time say I thought 'Whoa, that's a generational-type guy that can skate like that and handle pucks and confident ... He played both ends of the rink really well, and it showed.'"
TIM LOCKRIDGE: "Dieter was kind of the class clown. He was always a smart ass, had a smart-ass remark or comeback for everything he always said. He was really witty and would do anything for you. He was just that kind of guy you wanted to take care of. He was just a buddy."
BRANT KIESSIG: "The most light-hearted guy on that team would have been Don Dietrich. He was kind of the class clown. He kept things light at times when that team got way too serious. We got a little bit dark. We were our worst critics."
MIKE PEROVICH: "Dieter always had a smile on his face. He was always happy. If you told him something he would listen, and he was always asking questions and wanted to learn. He was a good teammate. I liked him. He was a good guy."
GREGG DRINNAN (Brandon Sun): "He was a deer in the headlights to start with. He had been playing with the Deloraine Royals I think. I often wondered why Dunc brought him along as slowly as he did, because he had

the size and the ability to take on a bigger role but I wonder if he was mentally mature enough as a 17-year-old to play that kind of role in that league, the way the league was at the time. Let's be honest, it was a pretty brutal league physically at that time."

RAY ALLISON: "(Don) was comic relief most of the time. Dieter was six-two and probably weighed 200 pounds, he was a big fellow. He enjoyed life and had a good time and played hard."

KELLY ELCOMBE: "(Don) was just a really nice guy, like Darren (Gusdal), just a really good guy. I think Dieter just loved the hockey life and everything that came with that, not only the team but just hanging out and the guys and the lifestyle and playing and travelling. He was a total, total hockey guy."

WES COULSON: "I played with Donny a fair bit. He was a smart, smart player and he had some good offensive skills but it was throwing a 17-year-old kid into a lineup we had that was mostly 19-year-olds or a lot of them. We had a fairly old team, and it can be kind of intimidating to a younger kid."

BRIAN PROPP: "(Don) had a book (his autobiography No Guarantees) he gave me and I read that a couple of times. He was a fun kind of guy, he liked to have fun and joke around but could be a little serious too."

GREGG DRINNAN: "As a 17-year-old, especially in the first part of the season, Dunc likely figured that if he played Donny too much, he would get into those wrong situations where he was likely to fail and do a lot more harm than good. Later on, Donny certainly got more ice time, and then there were injury issues. It seems to me he

great hockey players. Dieter, I thought, had a bigger role and he could have stepped in and played more if they let him."
WES COULSON: "Dieter just had a heart of gold. He would do anything for anybody, anywhere any time. He was a really nice guy. I think he was a little bit intimidated to start with but he got himself out of that. I don't think you would have one guy on that team say one bad word about Dieter. He was always ready to help any way he could. If that meant he had to get out and drive the bus, he would have just so he could help the rest of the guys on the team."
DAVE STEWART: "Dieter was gung ho. He was one of those guys where he wanted to go places. You could tell. He had a lot of natural talent but again he needed a little training. He was a big boy but he wasn't that aggressive when it came to hitting and stuff like that. He wanted to be more like a Perovich but he wasn't ready for that. He had to get a little tougher ... Dieter was always a good guy. I used to run into him all the time when I was in Brandon. He had way too much bad luck that kid, way too much bad luck."
DAVE McDONALD: "(Don) was only 17 that year. He was a talented young player. He liked to have fun. We would laugh and joke around. We had lots of fun with him. He was a character for sure. He was a fun guy."
DON GILLEN: "When you first got to know Dieter, you felt like you knew him all your life. He was the kind of guy you met at training camp and you felt like you grew up with him. He was a guy that you made an instant connection with." » pbergson@brandonsun.com » Twitter: @PerryBergson

STEPHEN PATRICK: "We had a party at Christmas, and what that song from Grease, White Lightning, came on and he started dancing to it. It was very, very funny. Dieter was the first guy I saw in high-top runners and painter pants. He had a lot of skill. He was good with the puck, and could shoot the puck. He had a good career and was a real good guy. Dieter and I were there (two years later) as 19-year-olds together. I really, really liked him."

DAVE CHARTIER: "Donny is my brother. Him and I got drafted the same year. Donny went to Chicago and I went to Winnipeg. I knew Nadine very well, I knew his kids very well, I tried to keep him touch with him. Donny was the biggest gentleman in my history ... He played good, he wasn't a dirty player, he played the game like it was supposed to be."

TIM LOCKRIDGE: "Donny was younger and Kelly (Elcombe) was a year younger too ... I think it was just inexperience with the two of them at the time. Maybe Dunc didn't have quite the confidence in them maybe because they were both

on a five-on-three power play in the deadlock. Richard Martens was spectacular in net for New West, stopping 63 shots. Defenceman Kelly Elcombe, who left the University of Wisconsin and was playing with the MJHL's St. James Canadians, made his debut for Brandon. Wheat Kings forward Brian Propp had his 32-game point streak snapped.
BWK goals: Patrick.
BWK goalie: Knickle.
Shots on net: 64-32 BWK.
Attendance: 4,700, in Brandon.
Record: 23-0-4.
Brian Propp: "Their goalie played really well. But they play good defensively. Their wingers come back and hook onto you really well. There were a few times when rebounds were lying out in the open, but their wingers had our guys covered well and we couldn't get to the puck. But, I enjoyed the game. Games like that are good for you."

BRANDON 3, SASKATOON 3
Game 28, Dec. 5, 1978
Recap: After Brian Propp opened the scoring, Saskatoon's Brent Ashton scored twice and Ken Federko added a single as Brandon trailed 3-1 after 40 minutes. Brad McCrimmon single-handedly wiped out the deficit, scoring goals 59 seconds apart early in the third period. In Brandon forward Dave Chartier's second game back from a knee injury, he was slashed and suffered two broken bones in his wrist.
BWK goals: Brad McCrimmon (2), Propp.
BWK goalie: Knickle.
Shots on net: 39-26 BWK.
Attendance: 2,556, in Saskatoon.
Record: 23-0-5.
Dunc McCallum: "I think we suffered a bit of a letdown after playing New Westminster. We played as bad in the first two periods as we've played all season. But we really got it going in the last 10 minutes. I think our pride started to show through."

BRANDON 4, SASKATOON 1
Game 29, Dec. 7, 1978
Recap: Steve Patrick scored the winner midway through the second period — his seventh goal in nine games as a Wheat King — after Ken Federko tied it 1-1 for the Blades in the opening frame. Ray Allison scored his 30th goal of the season in his return to the lineup after missing four games with a shoulder injury. Brandon now led the Eastern Division by 28 points, and had a 49-game unbeaten streak in regular-season games. They hadn't lost on home ice in 32 regular-season games. Brandon had scored 219 goals and allowed 77, both league bests by wide margins.
BWK goals: Allison, Patrick, Propp, McDonald.
BWK goalie: Olson.
Shots on net: 57-30 BWK.
Attendance: 1,974, in Brandon.
Record: 24-0-5.
Dunc McCallum: "We got some good, solid hits when we needed them. Patrick got a couple of hits early and that started us off and I thought (Kelly) Elcombe helped, too."

BRANDON 7, REGINA 1
Game 26, Dec. 1, 1978
Recap: Brian Propp's sixth hat trick of the season and two assists led the way against the Pats, who Brandon had outscored 53-15 in going 6-0-0. Propp now had 404 points in his WHL career, becoming just the sixth WHL player to eclipse 400 points. Propp trailed franchise career points leader Ron Chipperfield by 66. A shoving match in the second period after some stick work led to four players from each side being banished, leaving the Pats with just five skaters on the bench. In all, 154 minutes in penalties were handed out by referee Glen Agar.
BWK goals: Propp (3), Boschman, Gillen, Brad McCrimmon, Stewart.
BWK goalie: Olson.
Shots on net: 63-43 BWK.
Attendance: 1,955, in Brandon.
Record: 23-0-3.
Dunc McCallum: "I definitely was not happy with the way my club performed. We didn't play disciplined hockey. We played really well in Edmonton, then tonight ..."

BRANDON 1, NEW WESTMINSTER 1
Game 27, Dec. 3, 1978
Recap: Steve Patrick scored 3:36 into the second period and Pat McGill responded for the Bruins less than two minutes later

same Oil Kings.
 Then, on Sunday and Monday nights in Edmonton, Wheat Kings can add to a WHL record they set on Sunday night in Saskatoon.
 When Wheat Kings hit the ice tonight, they will again be without forwards Dave Chartier (knee) and Brad Kempthorne (collar bone). And joining this pair on the sidelines will be defenceman Mike Perovich, who sustained a cracked bone in a hand when he stopped a shot Sunday night.
 So, McCallum will not have to sit anyone out to get newcomer Steve Patrick into the lineup. Patrick, who joins Wheat Kings from St. James Canadians of the Manitoba Junior League, will spend most of the night skating with centre Dave Stewart and left wing Dave McDonald.
 "For the next couple of games we're going to be moving some guys around," said McCallum, who will be working with four complete forward lines, something he doesn't necessarily enjoy. "It's tough to promote your 19-year-olds when you work four lines regularly. The only time four lines are convenient is when you are playing on consecutive nights, like when we make our West Coast swing."
 McCallum will, of course, leave the line of Laurie Boschman between Ray Allison and Brian Propp intact, and you can expect Patrick, Stewart and McDonald to be together a lot of the time. That leaves Walt Poddubny, Larry Roberts, Don Gillen, Brant Kiessig, Kelly McCrimmon and Darren Gusdal. The latter three, along with Stewart, handle the penalty-killing chores, while McCrimmon and Poddubny, normally wingers, will be seeing some playing time at centre.
 Despite the juggling, McCallum says he expects his club to return to its free wheeling style of play tonight, something it didn't do Sunday in Saskatoon, despite the fact Wheat Kings won 10-3. "We played a pretty close-checking game in Saskatoon," McCallum said, "but that's not likely to happen at home."
 Prior to tonight, Wheat Kings and Edmonton have met three times this season, all at the Keystone Centre. Brandon has emerged triumphant on each occasion, by scores of 6-0, 6-3 and 3-1. Wheat Kings have hit double figures in seven games this season, but have had their problems against Oil Kings.

and a charley horse he couldn't shake or a thigh problem. If he had been a year older and the player he was the next season in the fall of '78, that would have made a big difference, especially when Perovich got hurt. I loved Donny Dietrich. He was always cackling."
RICK KNICKLE: "Dieter was an unbelievable person. We hung together and did a lot of things together because of being one year younger (than the team's 19-year-old core)."
DON GILLEN: "Dieter never changed. He was always a teammate."

ON THE ICE

SEASON IN REVIEW

BRANDON 14, EDMONTON 2

Game 22, Nov. 22, 1978
Recap: Brandon set a record in its major junior era with 14 goals, with Brian Propp and Ray Allison providing the early lead. The secondary scoring certainly kicked in, with Don Gillen earning a hat trick in the second period and Dave Stewart finding the back of the net three times in the third period. Steve Patrick returned to Brandon, and scored again in his second outing with the club.
BWK goals: Gillen (3), Stewart (3), Propp (2), Allison, Kiessig, Patrick, Lockridge, Boschman, Kelly McCrimmon.
BWK goalie: Knickle.
Shots on net: 72-34 BWK.
Attendance: 2,357, in Brandon.
Record: 20-0-2.
Ray Allison: "We moved the puck a lot better than we have been. The defencemen were getting it to us (the forwards) and we were carrying it in and throwing it around quite a bit. Then, we started getting the bounces and it was plain the luck was with us."

BRANDON 7, EDMONTON 2

Game 23, Nov. 24, 1978
Recap: The new line of centre Dave Stewart with wingers Dave McDonald and Steve Patrick exploded for nine points, including three goals, as Brandon set a league mark for consecutive unbeaten games in a season, 23, erasing the old mark, 22, set by the Estevan Bruins in 1967-68. The win extended Brandon's regular-season unbeaten streak over two seasons to 43, another record, and ran its home ice unbeaten streak to 29 games — including the last 16 games of 1977-78 — which was nine short of the record. Incredibly, in 23 games, Brandon had opened a 20-point lead in the Eastern Division over the second-place Saskatoon Blades. Brian Propp was shadowed all night and earned only a single assist, allowing Ray Allison to take over the scoring lead for the first time all season with 80 points, one more than his linemate.
BWK goals: McDonald (2), Boschman, Stewart, Allison, Kiessig, Boschman.
BWK goalie: Olson.
Shots on net: 67-37 BWK.
Attendance: 2,493, in Brandon.
Record: 21-0-2.
Dave McDonald: "We'll be a good line by the end of the season. Steve and I like to hit and that's part of the reason for our success. The other big reason is that Stewie is really good with the puck. We always try to take the body, but a few nights it works out better than others."

BRANDON 3, EDMONTON 3

Game 24, Nov. 26, 1978
Recap: The Wheat Kings trailed 1-0 through 40 minutes, with Brian Propp finally scoring 4:47 into the third period. They soon fell behind again, but Don Gillen and Steve Patrick scored goals 18 seconds apart to give Brandon its first lead. With less than two minutes remaining, de-

fenceman Craig Levie tied it up for Edmonton. Ray Allison injured a shoulder and only played a couple of shifts. He was held without an assist, snapping a record of 24 games in a row with a helper that stretched back to last season.
BWK goals: Propp, Gillen, Patrick.
BWK goalie: Knickle.
Shots on net: 36-30 BWK.
Attendance: 1,605, in Edmonton.
Record: 21-0-3.
Dunc McCallum: "It was a good game, very entertaining and I enjoyed it. It was the first time we've been behind and the kids responded."

BRANDON 3, EDMONTON 1

Game 25, Nov. 27, 1978
Recap: Defenceman Mike Perovich scored the winner for the Wheat Kings with the teams playing three skaters aside midway through the second period. Brandon played without injured forward Ray Allison, who hurt a shoulder last game, and Dave Chartier, who had missed 16 games in a row with a knee injury but is close to returning to the lineup. Defenceman Brad McCrimmon had his 20-game points streak snapped.
BWK goals: Propp, Perovich, Patrick.
BWK goalie: Knickle.
Shots on net: 45-28 BWK.
Attendance: 1,080, in Edmonton.
Record: 22-0-3.
Dunc McCallum: (On unsportsmanlike conduct penalties taken by Brian Propp and Laurie Boschman) "I think the guys were thinking more of themselves than the team. In both cases, they put themselves above the hockey team and hopefully they've learned a lesson. At 18 and 19 years of age they have to be disciplining themselves more in that direction."

BRANDON 7, REGINA 1

fence on a five-on-three power play in the deadlock. Richard Martens was spectacular in net for New West, stopping 63 shots. Defenceman Kelly Elcombe, who left the University of Wisconsin and was playing with the MJHL's St. James Canadians, made his debut for Brandon. Wheat Kings forward Brian Propp had his 32-game point streak snapped.
BWK goals: Patrick.
BWK goalie: Knickle.
Shots on net: 64-32 BWK.
Attendance: 4,700, in Brandon.
Record: 23-0-4.
Brian Propp: "Their goalie played really well. But they play good defensively. Their wingers come back and hook onto you really well. There were a few times when rebounds were lying out in the open, but their wingers had our guys covered well and we couldn't get to the puck. But, I enjoyed the game. Games like that are good for you."

BRANDON 3, SASKATOON 3

Game 28, Dec. 5, 1978
Recap: After Brian Propp opened the scoring, Saskatoon's Brent Ashton scored twice and Ken Federko added a single as Brandon trailed 3-1 after 40 minutes. Brad McCrimmon single-handedly wiped out the deficit, scoring goals 59 seconds apart early in the third period. In Brandon forward Dave Chartier's second game back from a knee injury, he was slashed and suffered two broken bones in his wrist.
BWK goals: Brad McCrimmon (2), Propp.
BWK goalie: Knickle.
Shots on net: 39-26 BWK.
Attendance: 2,556, in Saskatoon.
Record: 23-0-5.
Dunc McCallum: "I think we suffered a bit of a letdown after playing New Westminster. We played as bad in the first two periods as we've played all season. But we really got it going in the last 10 minutes. I think our pride started to show through."

BRANDON 4, SASKATOON 1

Game 29, Dec. 7, 1978
Recap: Steve Patrick scored the winner midway through the second period — his seventh goal in nine games as a Wheat King — after Ken Federko tied it 1-1 for the Blades in the opening frame. Ray Allison scored his 30th goal of the season in his return to the lineup after missing four games with a shoulder injury. Brandon now led the Eastern Division by 28 points, and had a 49-game unbeaten streak in regular-season games. They hadn't lost on home ice in 32 regular-season games. Brandon had scored 219 goals and allowed 77, both league bests by wide margins.
BWK goals: Allison, Patrick, Propp, McDonald.
BWK goalie: Olson.
Shots on net: 57-30 BWK.
Attendance: 1,974, in Brandon.
Record: 24-0-5.
Dunc McCallum: "We got some good, solid hits when we needed them. Patrick got a couple of hits early and that started us off and I thought (Kelly) Elcombe helped, too."

BRANDON 7, REGINA 1

Game 26, Dec. 1, 1978
Recap: Brian Propp's sixth hat trick of the season and two assists led the way against the Pats, who Brandon had outscored 53-15 in going 6-0-0. Propp now had 404 points in his WHL career, becoming just the sixth WHL player to eclipse 400 points. Propp trailed franchise career points leader Ron Chipperfield by 66. A shoving match in the second period after some stick work led to four players from each side being banished, leaving the Pats with just five skaters on the bench. In all, 154 minutes in penalties were handed out by referee Glen Agar.
BWK goals: Propp (3), Boschman, Gillen, Brad McCrimmon, Stewart.
BWK goalie: Olson.
Shots on net: 63-43 BWK.
Attendance: 1,955, in Brandon.
Record: 23-0-3.
Dunc McCallum: "I definitely was not happy with the way my club performed. We didn't play disciplined hockey. We played really well in Edmonton, then tonight ..."

BRANDON 1, NEW WESTMINSTER 1

Game 27, Dec. 3, 1978
Recap: Steve Patrick scored 3:36 into the second period and Pat McGill responded for the Bruins less than two minutes later

more after our careers finished and saw him while he was battling his disease. He was a good man, and a very good hockey player. He was a tremendous asset."
BRIAN PROPP: "Dieter was awesome. He was quiet but his sense of humour was unbelievable. That made a difference. You need to have character guys who have fun and joke around."
RICK KNICKLE: "He was such a good player. When I first time say I thought 'Whoa, that's a generational-type guy that can skate like that and handle pucks and confident ... He played both ends of the rink really well, and it showed.'"
TIM LOCKRIDGE: "Dieter was kind of the class clown. He was always a smart ass, had a smart-ass remark or comeback for everything he always said. He was really witty and would do anything for you. He was just that kind of guy you wanted to take care of. He was just a buddy."
BRANT KIESSIG: "The most light-hearted guy on that team would have been Don Dietrich. He was kind of the class clown. He kept things light at times when that team got way too serious. We got a little bit dark. We were our worst critics."
MIKE PEROVICH: "Dieter always had a smile on his face. He was always happy. If you told him something he would listen, and he was always asking questions and wanted to learn. He was a good teammate. I liked him. He was a good guy."
GREGG DRINNAN (Brandon Sun): "He was a deer in the headlights to start with. He had been playing with the Deloraine Royals I think. I often wondered why Dunc brought him along as slowly as he did, because he had

great hockey players. Dieter, I thought, had a bigger role and he could have stepped in and played more if they let him."
WES COULSON: "Dieter just had a heart of gold. He would do anything for anybody, anywhere any time. He was a really nice guy. I think he was a little bit intimidated to start with but he got himself out of that. I don't think you would have one guy on that team say one bad word about Dieter. He was always ready to help any way he could. If that meant he had to get out and drive the bus, he would have just so he could help the rest of the guys on the team."
DAVE STEWART: "Dieter was gung ho. He was one of those guys where he wanted to go places. You could tell. He had a lot of natural talent but again he needed a little training. He was a big boy but he wasn't that aggressive when it came to hitting and stuff like that. He wanted to be more like a Perovich but he wasn't ready for that. He had to get a little tougher ... Dieter was always a good guy. I used to run into him all the time when I was in Brandon. He had way too much bad luck that kid, way too much bad luck."
DAVE McDONALD: "(Don) was only 17 that year. He was a talented young player. He liked to have fun. We would laugh and joke around. We had lots of fun with him. He was a character for sure. He was a fun guy."
DON GILLEN: "When you first got to know Dieter, you felt like you knew him all your life. He was the kind of guy you met at training camp and you felt like you grew up with him. He was a guy that you made an instant connection with." » pbergson@brandonsun.com » Twitter: @PerryBergson

and a charley horse he couldn't shake or a thigh problem. If he had been a year older and the player he was the next season in the fall of '78, that would have made a big difference, especially when Perovich got hurt. I loved Donny Dietrich. He was always cackling."
RICK KNICKLE: "Dieter was an unbelievable person. We hung together and did a lot of things together because of being one year younger (than the team's 19-year-old core)."
DON GILLEN: "Dieter never changed. He was always a teammate."

STEPHEN PATRICK: "We had a party at Christmas, and what that song from Grease, White Lightning, came on and he started dancing to it. It was very, very funny. Dieter was the first guy I saw in high-top runners and painter pants. He had a lot of skill. He was good with the puck, and could shoot the puck. He had a good career and was a real good guy. Dieter and I were there (two years later) as 19-year-olds together. I really, really liked him."

DAVE CHARTIER: "Donny is my brother. Him and I got drafted the same year. Donny went to Chicago and I went to Winnipeg. I knew Nadine very well, I knew his kids very well, I tried to keep him touch with him. Donny was the biggest gentleman in my history ... He played good, he wasn't a dirty player, he played the game like it was supposed to be."

TIM LOCKRIDGE: "Donny was younger and Kelly (Elcombe) was a year younger too ... I think it was just inexperience with the two of them at the time. Maybe Dunc didn't have quite the confidence in them maybe because they were both

Wheaties, Oil Kings are set to begin series

BY GREGG DRINNAN

This story originally appeared in the Nov. 22, 1978 edition of the Brandon Sun.

Someone once philosophized that "familiarity breeds contempt." If that statement is, in fact, true there are goings to be some strange happenings in Edmonton by the time Monday night rolls around.

The Western Hockey League's 1978-79 schedule is full of quirks, but as far as Brandon Wheat Kings and Edmonton Oil Kings are concerned the kinkiest part has arrived. Oil Kings, of coach Norm Ferguson, are in Brandon for two games — tonight and Friday — with the high-flying Wheat Kings. As if that wasn't bad enough, though, the teams then head for Edmonton and games Sunday and Monday.

"I hate playing the same team four times in a row," moaned Brandon coach Dunc McCallum on Tuesday night, "or even twice in a row."
 What it all means is that only the Oil Kings, for the nonce, stand in the way of Wheat Kings' incredible assault on the WHL record book.
 Wheat Kings, still cruising along unbeaten in this Western Hockey League season, will attempt to make it 22 in a row, or 42 if you prefer, tonight at the Keystone Centre.

In case you tuned in late, Wheat Kings are in the midst of a fierce attempt to rewrite the regular-season portion of the WHL record book, practically from front to back. The only records the Brandon boys may leave untouched are those dealing with losing, something Wheat Kings haven't experienced since Feb. 10, 1978 when New Westminster Bruins dumped them 4-2 on the West Coast.

The unbeaten string started the next night with a 4-2 win in Victoria, and now it's reached 41 games, including the first 21 of this season. The 41-game skein, obviously, is a league record. But, it doesn't mean that much to the Eastern Division-leading Brandonites. You see, Estevan Bruins held the unbeaten record of 22 in a row and they did it in one season — 1967-68. So, as far as Wheat Kings are concerned, if they get past Edmonton tonight they will have tied the record.

And, a 'record-tying' performance tonight will set the stage for a 'record-breaking' attempt on Friday night against these

same Oil Kings.

Then, on Sunday and Monday nights in Edmonton, Wheat Kings can add to a WHL record they set on Sunday night in Saskatoon.

When Wheat Kings hit the ice tonight, they will again be without forwards Dave Chartier (knee) and Brad Kempthorne (collar bone). And joining this pair on the sidelines will be defenceman Mike Perovich, who sustained a cracked bone in a hand when he stopped a shot Sunday night.

So, McCallum will not have to sit anyone out to get newcomer Steve Patrick into the lineup. Patrick, who joins Wheat Kings from St. James Canadians of the Manitoba Junior League, will spend most of the night skating with centre Dave Stewart and left wing Dave McDonald.

"For the next couple of games we're going to be moving some guys around," said McCallum, who will be working with four complete forward lines, something he doesn't necessarily enjoy. "It's tough to promote your 19-year-olds when you work four lines regularly. The only time four lines are convenient is when you are playing on consecutive nights, like when we make our West Coast swing."

McCallum will, of course, leave the line of Laurie Boschman between Ray Allison and Brian Propp intact, and you can expect Patrick, Stewart and McDonald to be together a lot of the time. That leaves Walt Poddubny, Larry Roberts, Don Gillen, Brant Kiessig, Kelly McCrimmon and Darren Gusdal. The latter three, along with Stewart, handle the penalty-killing chores, while McCrimmon and Poddubny, normally wingers, will be seeing some playing time at centre.

Despite the juggling, McCallum says he expects his club to return to its free wheeling style of play tonight, something it didn't do Sunday in Saskatoon, despite the fact Wheat Kings won 10-3. "We played a pretty close-checking game in Saskatoon," McCallum said, "but that's not likely to happen at home."
 Prior to tonight, Wheat Kings and Edmonton have met three times this season, all at the Keystone Centre. Brandon has emerged triumphant on each occasion, by scores of 6-0, 6-3 and 3-1. Wheat Kings have hit double figures in seven games this season, but have had their problems against Oil Kings.

Prior to tonight, Wheat Kings and Edmonton have met three times this season, all at the Keystone Centre. Brandon has emerged triumphant on each occasion, by scores of 6-0, 6-3 and 3-1. Wheat Kings have hit double figures in seven games this season, but have had their problems against Oil Kings.