



Olympic hockey camp underway in Calgary

CALGARY – Canadian men's Olympic hockey head coach Mike Babcock was in good spirits prior to the start the opening day of the orientation camp taking place at the Pengrowth Saddledome in Calgary.

Media from all parts of the country, a total of 170 accredited, were in attendance to capture the early moments that will soon form the squad that Canadians hope will bring a gold medal at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

Mind you this orientation camp is exactly that as Canada's team will not be selected until December. So why have the camp now?

With 46 players invited to camp, Babcock and the coaching staff will be working with a massive talent pool. "We are not building an all-star team," Babcock remarked. "This process has its challenges."

The Detroit Red Wings bench boss noted that trust is key when playing with out the puck. "In international competition and with intense situations you have to have trust." As the team is being assembled Babcock reiterated, "All areas of this team is up for grabs."

The message for the players is clear. Babcock and company are looking to build a foundation through simple principles of work ethic, structure and skill.

And while the coaches are doing their due diligence the players are working out the kinks of the long summer layoff while familiarizing themselves with each other.



Head coach Mike Babcock fields questions at the press conference held just prior to the start of the Canadian men's Olympic hockey orientation camp in Calgary.

Photo: Bruce Rakoczy



Canadian men's Olympic hockey coach Mike Babcock explains a drill during day one of Hockey Canada's orientation camp in Calgary.

Photo: Bruce Rakoczy

Younger players such as Thunder Bay's Patrick Sharp and Marc Staal are getting to know veterans such as Dryden's own Chris Pronger or Jarome Iginla over this 4-day camp.

Babcock feels that this talent mix creates a wide open atmosphere and poses many challenging decisions for the coaching staff as to what the final roster will be. All players will be closely watched through December.

One thing is for certain, veterans or newer players will be asked to do things a little different from what they have been used to doing before. The coaching building blocks are in place.

It is now up to the players to put their passion, emotion, skill and leadership on the line to carry out the vision of Babcock and the coaching staff.

The highly anticipated Red-White inter-squad scrimmage will take place Aug. 27 at 7 p.m. CT at the Saddledome. There the building blocks will be put to the test and the grading pencil will be out. "We are looking to build a great team," said a passionate Babcock.

And so are 33.5 million Canadians.