

NHL stars make appearance at tourney

Watch out for National Hockey League stars next month in Cambridge when the 54th edition of the Preston International Hockey Tournament gets underway. The event will take place from Jan. 20-22.

Each year, usually unnamed, NHL players show up at the tournament in support of a player or team. Sometimes a star's presence creates a frenzy for autographs and picture-taking fans.

All the young players want to be in a photo with a big league player. Many of the young players' mothers are anxious to get next to a

superstar and have their pictures taken as well.

On some occasions, when an NHL player has been unable to attend with his hockey-playing son, his wife accompanies the team. A unique and funny situation happened back in 2007 when Doug Gilmour, best known for his days with the Toronto Maple Leafs, was here to coach the Leaside Flames, a Triple A Novice team at the Hespeler Arena.

Here is how events unfolded for the famous hockey star: His

team lost the first game 6-3 to Durham Region's Clarington Toros. In the second round of the tournament, Gilmour's team dropped a 2-0 squeaker to the Niagara Falls Thunder.



Gilmour couldn't stay for the second day of the tournament, as he had to take his older son Jake to another tournament in Eastern Ontario. His

younger son Tyson played for the Flames. He left his wife Amy in charge of the novice team in Cambridge. Maybe Amy should have been coaching to begin with. In the third game she coached the young Flames to a 1-0 win over the Whitby Wildcats.

Last month, Doug Gilmour was honoured by being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. In the early 1970s, young Gilmour, playing for Kingston Minor Hockey, played in the Preston Tournament.

Here are some of the other big-name hockey players that have attended the Preston International Hockey Tournament and the teams they were most famous playing for: Pierre Pilot, Chicago Blackhawks; Curtis Joseph, Toronto Maple Leafs; Scott Walker, Carolina Hurricanes; Dean Prentice, New York Rangers; John Ferguson, Montreal Canadiens; Mario Lemieux, Pittsburgh Penguins; and Vern Kaiser, Montreal Canadiens.

Peter DeBoer, coach of the New Jersey Devils and former coach and general manager of the Kitchener Rangers attended the tournament on numerous occasions. When DeBoer coached the Florida Panthers, his son Jack came to Cambridge with the Florida Junior Panthers.

The NHL DeBoer called the Preston International Hockey Tournament "one of the best minor hockey tournaments in the world" and has encouraged American teams to participate in it.



HALL OF FAMER: NHL star Doug Gilmour, recently inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame, chats with Cambridge referee Ted Kempffer.

WALTER GOWING, SPECIAL TO THE TIMES