

'Grand old hockey man' attending Preston tourney

They come from all over the country and some from beyond our borders to play in the Preston International Hockey Tournament.

The big event takes place in arenas in Cambridge and Kitchener, from Jan. 21 to 23. Canada's grand old man of hockey, Walter Gretzky, father of Wayne "The Great One", will be here to coach a couple of All-Star games at the Preston Auditorium on Sunday, Jan. 23.

He always takes time to sign autographs and chat with the young hockey players.

This will be the 53rd annual tournament and about 2,000 young hockey players in the eight- to 10-year-old age group will be participating in our local links.

The senior Gretzky and his sidekick Bob Coine of Brantford have been honorary chairmen of the tournament for a couple of decades.

Wayne, now retired from the National Hockey League after breaking just about every record in hockey, had

had the Florida Junior Panthers here to play.

On the team was the son of Peter DeBoer, current coach of the NHL's Florida Panthers and former coach of the Kitchener Rangers.

This year, another exciting American team is coming from Springfield, Mass., a city with a population of 160,000.

Coaching this team is John Barron, with assistant coaches Bill Crawford and Kevin Hervick. Mike Gaylor is team manager.

The city has some exciting hockey with the Springfield Falcons playing in the America Hockey League. The city has also a Junior A team, the Olympics.

Springfield has had professional hockey teams since the 1920s.

There is more than hockey in Springfield.

It's the birthplace of basketball and has the Basketball Hall of Fame.

And for those who love Dr. Seuss's characters, they are there at the Dr. Seuss National Memorial at the Springfield Museum.



played in the Preston tournament in the late 1960s.

His tournament record of scoring the most goals and getting the most assists still stands.

In his last season of pee-wee hockey in his home community of Brantford, Wayne scored 378 goals.

Before the Preston tournament all-star games are played, Walter Gretzky will pass on to the players some of the techniques of scoring goals and assisting on goals as the young players prepare to take to the ice.

Last year, the tournament



Walter Gretzky, in a humorous hockey moment, offers his glasses to the referee during an All-Star game he coached at the Preston International Hockey Tournament. WALTER GOWING, SPECIAL TO THE TIMES