

Bettman Re-Thinking NHL Hiatus for Olympics

Written by Matthew Collier
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What made the USA victory in 1980 over U.S.S.R. special wasn't just the political turmoil, it was that all the USA players were college kids. They faced up against mighty U.S.S.R. pros and took them down, resulting in the greatest upset and greatest game in the history of American sports. Now, pros play pros and even an upset such as Czech Republic's Olympic victory in 1998 still featured the NHL's best including Dominick Hasek, Jaromir Jagr and Robert Lang. The NHL's commissioner Gary Bettman would like to take it back to 1980 and keep the NHL's biggest stars out of the Olympics.

[Bettman said Thursday](#) he planned on "discussing the issue" with the Players Association. "It's difficult for any business, any league, to shut down for two weeks with the attendant loss of attention and everything that flows from that," Bettman told reporters after speaking to a business audience in Calgary, where three players from the NHL's Flames will compete in Vancouver. "And there are competitive issues. Our teams send a varying amount of players to the Olympics and so a team that sends eight or nine players may come back a little more tired and banged up than an NHL team that sends none or one or two."

The current rule began with the Czech's shocker in Nagano, Japan in 1998. Major League Baseball does not allow its players to compete in Olympics, which the NBA does. The NBA's season, however, is not interrupted for the Olympics as the NHL's is. The only other professional league that sends players in the middle of its season is the WNBA. Bettman's concern is that some teams send several players while other teams keep their best fresh.

Bettman did note the importance of the NHL's players playing in Olympics hosted in North American cities, but said he wasn't sure if the same stood true for Olympic games in other hemispheres. "So the question is, is it worth it? I don't have an answer for that yet and it's fortunately something we don't have to decide right now," he said.

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