

# Bandy boys off to worlds

It's a game that **Goran Svensson** would rather not talk about but even the Canadian bandy team's coach can't seem to resist.

The Winnipeg-based squad left yesterday for the World Bandy Championships in Stockholm, Sweden, where the Canadians will compete in the B pool. While their pool includes Holland, Hungary, Mongolia and Estonia, the key game for the Canadians is next Friday when they wrap up their round-robin against the rival Americans.

"Everybody's talking about the big game against U.S.A. and I'll talk about it but I really don't want to talk about it," said the Swedish coach, who has guided the Canadian team for the last 11 years. "We have a lot of games before that and we have to put our hearts into the first game and don't have our thoughts on the last game."

Last year, Canada lost in the B pool final in a shootout to Belarus. Belarus then knocked off the Americans to earn promotion to this year's A pool championship.

Canada opens against Holland and Hungary next Wednesday with the finals on Feb. 4.

A sport combining elements of hockey, soccer and field hockey played on a frozen outdoor field, bandy is still striving to develop a following in Canada. In Europe, it's a different story.

"People go crazy when they see the sport (in Europe)," said forward **Brian Davis**, who helped Canada win silver last year and a bronze at the 2004 World Championships

in Budapest, Hungary. "It's loud when you're playing and the stands are full. It's a good atmosphere."

The Canadian squad will be joined by the veteran national team members **Brandon Ellement** and **Jason Neufeld**, who are currently playing for an elite team in Norway.

**ATHLETES OF THE WEEK:** **Caity Gooch** of the Glenlawn Lions girls' basketball team is the *Winnipeg Sun's* high school athlete of the week.

The Grade 12 captain is averaging 24 points and seven assists per game and was named the MVP at the Glenlawn Invitational and was an all-star at the Pembina Trails tournament last month. Gooch also scored 42 points in the opening round of the Wesmen Classic, the second highest single game total in school history.

**Jayla Bousquet** of the Portage Pats girls basketball team is the rural high school athlete of the week. The Grade 12 forward is averaging 24 points, 10 rebounds, five steals and four assists per game and led her team to two tournament championships.

**ON TO RUSSIA:** Winnipeg goalkeeper **Erin McNulty** came up with a big save in the dying seconds to preserve a 2-1 victory over Jamaica, Wednesday in the semifinals of the CONCACAF Women's Under-20 Qualifying Tournament in Veracruz, Mexico.

With the victory, Canada advances to today's tournament final against the United States and qualified for the FIFA Under-20 Women's World Championships in Russia this summer.