

HOME IS WHERE THE HOCKEY IS

Hockey events always draw the best fans. Maybe you'll meet a 'super fan', ringing a cowbell or beating a drum with their face-painted and wearing a ridiculous national-themed costume. But if you're really lucky – you'll get to meet Scott McKenzie – the Canadian nomad that is making his case to be the sport's purest – and most well-traveled – fan.

You'll get to meet "Dad", as his friends affectionately call him, as he stops in at the World Hockey Championships in Kyiv later this month. Just one stop on his epic 6-month, 9-country tour that will see him catch 60 games at 9 events in 8 countries. In fact, this isn't even his first stop in Ukraine on the tour – he popped into the country to catch a couple of Ukrainian Premier League games in January. The cordial Canuck is always happy to "talk puck" – especially over a beer – so if you see him in Kyiv, here's what you need to know.

Becoming a "super fan"

Scotty has never been very far from the game. He grew up playing defence in Edmonton during the dynasty days of the Edmonton Oilers – Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier, Jari Kurri et al brought 5 Stanley Cups to Edmonton in a 7-year span. He learned how to play the game and how to watch it. Canadians wear their teams' jerseys to the game, often paint their faces, and can usually be found with a beer (or three) in their hands. Those lessons were well placed when he attended his first international tournament in Mannheim, Germany in 2010. He fell in love with the fans, the German beer halls, and the community aspects of the tournaments. Soon he found himself at more and more obscure tournaments in more far flung places, like the World Championships in Minsk, Belarus, the Spengler Cup in Davos, Switzerland, the World Junior tournament in Ufa, Russia, the Ivan Hlinka U18 event in Breclav, Slovakia, or even the Challenge Cup of Asia in Bangkok, Thailand. But perhaps his most interesting experience was in Druzhkivka, Ukraine on January 29th.

Hockey in a War Zone

Sandwiched between Germany's outdoor DEL Winter Game and a couple of KHL games in Belarus, Scotty managed to make a stop



Lee Reaney and Scott McKenzie

in Ukraine to catch home games in Bila Tserkva (Bily Bars) and Druzhkivka (Ukrainian champion HC Donbas). Traveling to Ukraine's east is simply a no-go for most foreigners, but Scotty is always on the lookout for a good game of puck. Rocking his trademark long hair and Canadian jersey, he quickly earned the name 'Metallica' and became an instant celebrity – taking photographs with the locals, signing autographs for the kids, doing interviews for the media, and even meeting with the players after the game. The best part, for him, was the post-game skate with the kids in Bila Tserkva and the post-game ceremony in Druzhkivka, "Bringing kids down for pictures with the team, giving them gifts, inviting the cadets for pictures, the post-game skate was fantastic!", he said. "Every junior team in Canada should do the same thing." He didn't find out that nearby Avdiivka was bombed while he was at the game until the train ride back to Kyiv.

"Home is where the hockey is"

He doesn't quite know what to expect from the Ukrainian team at the championships in Kyiv, but he is looking forward to meeting the fans. "I think the #1 thing that excites me is to see the fans", he said. "And also to watch the guys we met with in Druzhkivka represent their country on home soil." For Scotty, the hockey is what draws him to a place, but it's the people that make the memories. And Scotty is the one that

makes the memories for everyone else. From handing out Canadian flag temporary tattoos to the kids, to exchanging his Canadian jersey for a local one with a 'super fan', to enjoying a beverage with the parents of the players or the scouts – everybody remembers Scotty McKenzie. "No matter what country I'm in, or how far from home I am, or how few people I know – so long as there is a hockey game going on, I feel I'm home". The stories come from there, and he'll be sure to share them with you – from watching hockey in a war zone to playing hockey with his hometown hero Jari Kurri – Scotty McKenzie is as pure a fan as they come.

Lee Reaney, Editor of Lviv Today

