

GEARS ON ICE

Gear Technology's bimonthly aberration — gear trivia, humor, weirdness and oddments for the edification and amusement of our readers. Contributions are welcome.

Saginaw, Michigan, may be home to the only gear operation in the world that requires the use of a Zamboni® machine. It may also be the only place in the world where teeth on the Gears are optional.

The Saginaw Gears are a professional hockey team in the United Hockey League.

The history of the Gears in Saginaw goes back to the early 70s, according to Mark Thompson, director of media relations and the team's radio play-by-play broadcaster. The Saginaw Gears were originally a team in the International Hockey League from 1972–1982, during which time they won two Turner Cup championships and became very popular with the fans.

The original team got its name through a contest in which the fans voted for their favorite name. The Gears won, and the name stuck, says Thompson.

The original Gears changed their name in the 1980s and eventually left Saginaw. For a while, there was no professional hockey in town, until the



Gearilla, Mascot of the Saginaw Gears.



Chatham Wheels crossed the border from Ontario to become Saginaw's franchise in what was then the Colonial Hockey League, precursor to today's UHL.

After stints as the Saginaw Wheels and the Saginaw Lumber Kings, the team changed owners. The new owners wanted to try to capture some of the old excitement, Thompson says. After the 1997–98 season, the team changed its name to the Gears.

Although the name change hasn't brought much success in terms of the team's record, they've certainly captured the enthusiasm of the fans. "It really hasn't been a great run for the Gears over the past two years," Thompson says, "but the fans just won't let it go."

The Gears have struggled because of the loss of their goalkeeper, Darren Madeley, a former NHL goalie, due to an injury at the beginning of this season. As of the first week in December, the team was 6-15-2, in last place by a wide margin.

But the hockey is still fun to watch, Thompson says. The United Hockey League includes players with a wide variety of age and experience, including the young players just coming up out of junior hockey along with many players filtering back down from the IHL and NHL ranks.

Information on the Saginaw Gears is available on their Web site, including

TEAMS IN THE UHL

You can see the Gears in action in these UHL cities.

Eastern Division

Adirondack Ice Hawks, Glen Falls, NY
Asheville Smoke, Asheville, NC
B.C. Icemen, Binghamton, NY
Mohawk Valley Prowlers, Utica, NY
Knoxville Speed, Knoxville, TN

Central Division

Flint Generals, Flint, MI
Fort Wayne Komets, Fort Wayne, IN
Muskegon Fury, Muskegon, MI
Port Huron Border Cats, Port Huron, MI
Saginaw Gears, Saginaw, MI

Western Division

Madison Kodiaks, Madison, WI
Missouri River Otters, St. Charles, MO
Quad City Mallards, Moline, IL
Rockford Ice Hogs, Rockford, IL

full team statistics, schedules and highlights, as well as pictures Gearilla, the team mascot. You can also order tickets online or shop for Gears jerseys, hats or other merchandise. Visit www.saginawgears.com or call (517) 753-4801 for more information. ⚙

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