

WINTER OLYMPICS

Team USA upsets the Canadians in front of home crowd



Team USA celebrates a goal scored by Brian Rafalski (28) against Team Canada. Team USA defeated the Canadians for the first time in 50 years at Canada Hockey Place on Feb. 21.

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sports editor

The United States expected stellar performances from people like snowboarder Shaun White, skier Lindsey Vonn and speed skater Apolo Anton Ohno, and they got them.

But it's the success of the men's ice hockey team that very few expected.

Team USA has propelled itself into the semi-final round of the Olympic tournament and posts a 4-0 record.

Team USA made it through the preliminary round with a 3-0 record.

Their most impressive win came against the home fa-

vorite, powerhouse Team Canada.

When the U.S. and Canada took the ice on Feb. 21, Canada Hockey Place was bursting at the seams with Canadian supporters who were hoping to see the Americans run right off the ice. Well, it was not the game they expected to see.

Team USA came out playing with passion, and 40 seconds into the game, defenseman Brian Rafalski found the back of the net, giving the Americans a 1-0 lead.

After the goal, both teams picked up the play, and a back and forth, hard hitting contest unfolded. Seven minutes later the Canadians

scored, tying the game at 1-1.

Less than a minute later, Team USA reclaimed the lead at 2-1 on Rafalski's second goal of the game.

The second period saw a goal from each team, and the game intensified.

Team USA doubled their shot total from the first period, and the Canadians continued their offensive assault on goaltender Ryan Miller. The second period ended with the U.S. leading 3-2.

The third period may have been the most breathtaking of the game. Less than 10 minutes in, Team USA captain Jamie Langenbrunner picked up a goal when a

shot from Rafalski deflected off his skate and past Canadian goaltender Martin Brodeur.

With a 4-2 lead, Team USA controlled the rest of the third period, until there was about four minutes left to play.

Back-to-back U.S. penalties led to a power play goal for the Canadians from Sidney Crosby with just over three minutes left to play, cutting their deficit to just one goal at 4-3.

The Canadians were in desperation mode for the final minutes of the game, doing everything they could to tie the game and send it to overtime.

Head coach Mike Babcock

pulled Brodeur from the net, giving the Canadians an extra attacker.

Pulling a goaltender is a high-risk, high-reward situation, and U.S. forward Ryan Kessler was able to get the puck in the empty net with 45 seconds to play, giving the U.S. a 5-3 lead.

The Canadians continued to assault Miller, tallying 12 of their 14 third period shots in the final two minutes of the game. Miller stood tall though, and the US defeated Canada for the first time since 1960.

Miller was the saving grace for Team USA, stopping 42 of 45 shots from Team Canada.

"It was one of the biggest

games I have ever played in," said Miller. "Hopefully it provides the confidence we need moving forward."

Team USA will play Finland in the semi-final on Feb. 26. If the Americans win, they will move on to the finals and play for at least a silver medal. A medal of any color would be an amazing accomplishment for this young team, but they believe they will win gold.

The other semi-final matchup will feature Canada and Slovakia. Should Canada and the US win, hockey fans could get a rematch for the ages, as the two teams would meet again, this time for a gold medal.

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