

## Mourning in the Morning ? Canada settles for Silver in 2 ? 1 OT loss to USA



The Gold Medal Watch Party at Wicked Eats was the place to be on Sunday morning, if you wanted to enjoy the marquee event of the 2026 Winter Olympics with over 100 passionate hockey fans.

The north-end eatery was standing room-only for the Canada-USA puck drop at 8:10 a.m. EST, and it stayed rammed right through the OT until American forward Jack Hughes ruined the Watch Party with his gold medal-winning goal.

Red-clad hockey fans filled every seat at Robert Stewart's restaurant. Hot breakfast platters, featuring waffles, bacon, scrambled eggs, hashbrowns, and toast, were served all morning by the proprietor's hospitable serving staff of four.

It was also a great demographic mix on hand to watch the Clash of the Hockey Titans.

Two teams of Aurora Tigers'18U and 15U'took up one of the long tables. I was hoping that these teenagers, who were miraculously awake at the crack of dawn to join a public gathering, would experience what millions of Canadians enjoyed collectively in 1972. Paul Henderson's goal with 34 seconds left on the clock vanquished the Soviet Union in Moscow and set off celebrations across Canada.

The rep players that were assembled at Wicked Eats were either too young or not even born when Sid the Kid's Golden OT Goal sunk the US team and unified the nation in Vancouver in 2010.

A number of older guests took turns touching the glass of the framed Henderson jersey at Wicked Eats as a kind of Sunday morning veneration toward a national hero whose goal clinched the Summit Series.

We were hoping beyond hope that Newmarket's Connor McDavid would deliver a decisive Golden Goal in Milan to give these young Tigers that kind of timeless historical moment.

Alongside the rep hockey players were dozens of fun hockey moms and dads'some in vintage Team C jerseys including a red Getzlaf. These were full-throated supporters of Team C ? accustomed to cheering their teams during the early hours of the weekend in arenas across Ontario. They were born ready for this!

The service clubs had their own booths. Young families dotted the outer tables. Those gathered around the bar developed ?Cheers?-like camaraderie.

Mayor Mrakas enjoyed the festivities with close friends and stayed for the duration in the comfy confines of the packed neighborhood bar.

With the USA up 1-0 on a first period goal by Matt Boldy, the pro-Canada crowd showed a mix of trepidation and bravado when the puck dropped to commence the middle frame.

Every scoring opportunity by the Americans and big save by Canadian goaltender Jordan Binnington caused some degree of anxiety as John Cooper's troops looked for the equalizer.

One of the great equalizers at Wicked Eats on Sunday morning was the availability of alcohol for the early morning showdown. There's nothing like sipping a steaming hot cup of Earl Grey Tea enhanced with a shot of Fireball and a shot of Grand Marnier to take the edge off another chilly February day. The concoction created some patriotic fervor in this popular neighborhood pub, as did the more conventional pints of ale that were being enjoyed by the of-age customers, thanks to Premier Doug Ford's special events legislation.

Spending the morning with over one hundred like-minded local sports fans living and dying with each missed scoring opportunity by the red-clad Canadian team created memorable moments for our community. The final result was disappointing, but the experience was enriching.

Binnington's big save at 14:05 elicited a raucous cheer from the assembly, as the kid from Richmond Hill rebuffed the Americans and kept us in the game.

Every missed shot by a Team C player, every save by Binnington, and every call not made by the officiating crew was met by deep sighs or lusty cheers by the lively assembly.

Alas one of the factors that doomed Team Canada took place in the middle frame when our elite professionals were gifted a 5-on-3 power play. The prospect of Canada's best players being given more space and time to take apart the USA PK was as delicious as the hot breakfasts being delivered around the pub. Unfortunately, the USA PK had been up to that task throughout the Winter Games and Sunday's game was no exception. As Connor McDavid intoned after the game, "We had millions of chances." That was TSN Turning Point 1.

After the white-clad Americans fought off our national team's power play, the mood got a wee bit surly.

Some anti-Gretzky catcalls emanated in the room and so many golden scoring opportunities were squandered. Another big save was made by US goaltender Connor Hellebuyck, but the ensuing scrum got the crowd rolling again.

All the missed shots were forgiven when Canadian defender Cale Makar the Bobby Orr of this era created space and rifled a wrist shot from between the circles that beat Hellebuyck with three minutes left in the period. The big goal was much to the delight of the Wicked Eats patrons one of the fans roared "good things happen when Canada shoots the puck."

It was hard to disagree with the wisdom of this statement as Makar's laser shot tied the game 1-1. Hope filled the room.

Lots of raucous applause greeted a period-ending dustup at centre ice and it appeared Team Canada had the momentum to create some Magic in Milan.

After the fans did their leg-stretching and chin-wagging between periods, a rapt audience gasped in disbelief when Devon Toews missed a goal mouth scoring opportunity less than two minutes into the final period. We actually celebrated the goal that wasn't, as Hellebuyck got a millimeter of his paddle on the puck to deflect the blue ice shot by Toews.

The Avalanche star could be haunted by that missed shot for decades. Canadian fans will be.

Somewhere in the dark recesses of my mind, a line from Colonel Walter Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now* resonated: "The horror. The horror." That was TSN Turning Point 2.

I was emboldened to soldier on when my hot breakfast arrived to complement my muscular and medicinal Earl Grey concoction.

When Hellebuyck foiled Celebrini's breakaway five minutes into the third period, there was a primal sense of dread emerging from the good folks at the eatery. That was TSN Turning Point 3.

Another missed scoring chance by McDavid on the doorstep was a gut punch to the ardent sports fans assembled as our best player and tournament MVP failed to turn off the lights on USA. That was TSN Turning Point 4.

However, in a show of spirited resilience, "Let's Go Canada, Let's Go" started to sweep through the room—started by a quintessential quartet of female fans that were all-in on the gold medal game. With flags waving and in full voice, they cheered through another goalmouth scramble where the Canadians just could not muster the knockout punch.

All looked lost when Sam Bennett got the gate for a four-minute minor at 6:34, but the Canadian PK killed off the 240-second infraction. The roller coaster ride and joys of the collective public sports experience manifested itself again—especially when Bennett's bonehead penalty elapsed with no damage done. Seconds later, Jack Hughes's high-sticking penalty put Team C's power play back on the ice with the chance to put the US away at 3:23.

Would the headline be "Morning Magic in Milan: Golden Moment for Team Canada" or "Mourning in the Morning: Canada settles for silver in 2-1 OT loss to USA"?

So many chances, but the USA maintained its pristine penalty killing at the 2026 Olympics and 3-on-3 overtime hockey loomed. This was TSN Turning Point 5.

It was all over—suddenly and mercilessly—when Jack Hughes ripped a shot in OT from the left faceoff circle past Binnington to silence the assembly. Many averted their gazes in abject disappointment.

With all of Trump's anti-Canada remarks and tariffs over the past year, losing to the USA in the Gold Medal game in 2026 was painful. Imagine if Canada had lost to another adversary—the Soviets—in 1972. The only applause that could be heard in the eatery was for the US Captains who paraded a Johnny Gaudreau USA memorial jersey around the ice. Canadians are so classy—even in the darkest moments—and Gaudreau was saluted posthumously by the disappointed gathering.

Our next hockey gold medal will be even more enjoyable—having lived through the silver medal disappointments of 2026.

As the clearly-damaged Sid the Kid emerged to receive his silver medal, there were mixed feelings about his absence expressed by the remaining diehards, but one voice offered solace to us all:

"At least we can curl."

Amen.

By Jim Stewart Local Journalism Initiative Reporter