

# My linemate Vinnie

*Damphousse teams up with Gretzky, Linden*

PAT HICKEY  
THE GAZETTE

Getting to Know You has become the theme song for members of the most productive line on the Canadian entry in the World Cup tournament.

Wayne Gretzky, Trevor Linden and the Canadiens' Vincent Damphousse have been the standout line for Team Canada, which was generally listless in a 4-1 quarter-final victory over Germany last night.

"We're learning to play with each other," said Linden, who scored his first World Cup goal. "In a tournament like this, chemistry is very important. You don't have a lot of time to fine-tune things.

"I think we work well together and we're getting into the flow. Wayne, of course, is one of the best players ever and Vinnie has lots of skills. I'm out there because I'm a big, strong guy and I'm at my best around the net."

The line produced 11 of Canada's 43 shots last night, with Linden and Gretzky scoring goals. It was the third of the tournament for the Great One.

"(Gretzky's) easy to play with because you always know where he's going to be," said Damphousse, who was a late addition to this team after Mario Lemieux decided not to play. "He likes to set up behind the net and I know that if I throw the puck back there, he's going to be there."

While the top line was called on to talk about their success, they also had to deal with questions about what many have perceived as disappointing performances last night and in last Sunday's 3-2 cliffhanger against Slovakia.

"I think there is a tendency to play down to the level of the competition," Linden offered. "There's pressure when you're expected to do well but the important thing is that we're through to the semi-finals (against Sweden tomorrow night in Philadelphia)."

"We dominated them," Damphousse said. "We didn't want to get into a position like the one we were in against Slovakia where they scored two quick goals and we were down 2-1. We missed some chances and their goalie made some good saves, but we dominated them."



Wayne Gretzky (99) and Eric Lindros look for rebound from goalie Josef Heiss. CP

The game was a dream come true for German goaltender Josef (Pepi) Heiss. He was outstanding and was selected as the game's third star as Canada outshot the Germans 43-16.

"I was very nervous, but I always dreamed about playing here in Montreal," the 33-year-old veteran said. Heiss received the call on the strength of two previous performances, a 5-1 win over Canada at the world championships earlier this year in Vienna and a 7-1 win over the Czech Republic that earned the Germans their quarter-final berth. "I'm happy. I made a few bad mistakes but it was a great experience."

That was the case for most of the

Germans. They weren't expected to get this far with a lineup that last night featured only one player - Stefan Ustorf of the Washington Capitals - with National Hockey League credentials.

The game drew only 13,422 fans and Linden said he would have preferred to play before a larger crowd. But he said the size of the crowd didn't affect the Canadians. "We all played hard out there," he said.

"I think the crowd was so small because of the Germans," Damphousse said. "The fans don't know their players. It would have been better if we played the Czechs or the Finns. But the next two games here are in the finals and they're sold out."