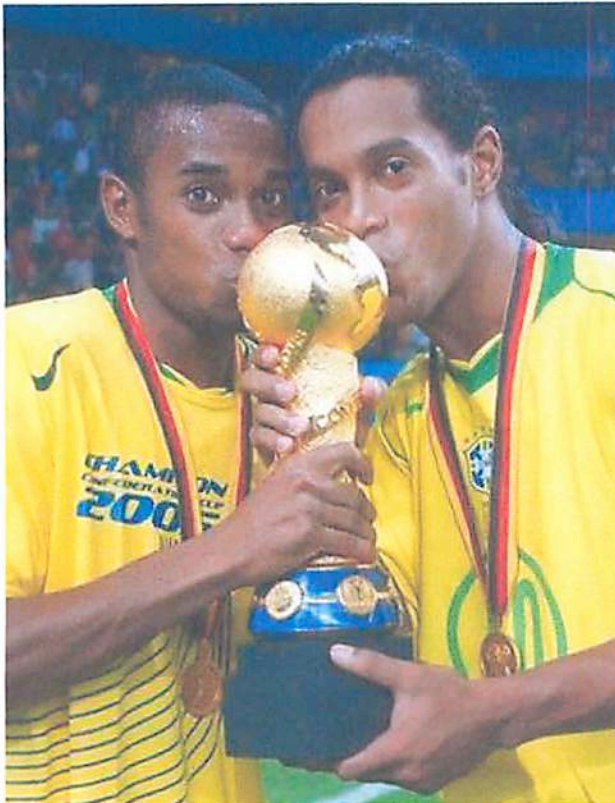


Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan

By Paul Navarrete

Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan lived in a big city in Brazil called Rio de Janeiro. They were best friends; and had been since their first day of school, when the teacher called out “Ricky T.!” and they both answered “What?”

Every other boy in their neighborhood dreamed of one day being a fantastic soccer player. They had posters of Robinho and Ronaldinho on their walls, they wore the Brazilian yellow and blue, and they all got excited for the world cup. But Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan had a different passion; they loved ice hockey.



When they got home from school, Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan would practice shooting pucks at each one another. They nailed short rulers to meter sticks to make hockey sticks; they filled Ricky Tan's cat Wayne's old tuna tins with sand to make pucks. They draped an old fishing net over two wooden posts to make a goal, and wore the biggest sweaters they could find.

On Ricky Tikki's ninth birthday, his father announced that he would be taking the boys to an ice-skating rink. They were beside themselves with excitement! Neither Ricky Tikki nor Ricky Tan had ever ice-skated before. They had tried playing hockey while riding skateboards in the street, but Ricky Tan fell off his board and scraped his knee, and his mother told them never to try that again.

Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan rented figure skates, because the skating rink didn't have hockey skates. They hobbled out onto the ice, the anticipation building with each wobbly step. Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan counted to three and then together took one long stride onto their first ice rink.

Ricky Tan got the toe of his skate stuck in the ice and fell headfirst into the ice. OUCH! Ricky Tikki's feet slid forward, but his body went crashing to the surface, falling right on his rear. OWW! It was not quite the started they had expected.

Ricky Tan figured out that if they clung to the wall they could get around the rink without tripping all the time. They were embarrassed to be the only ones slowly making their way along the edge.

"How can we keep from falling down without holding onto the wall?" Ricky Tikki asked a friendly looking man with a very big moustache.

"Walk like a penguin," the man answered.

“Which one? Sidney Crosby? Jarkko Ruutu?” asked Ricky Tan.

Ricky Tan was thinking of his favorite hockey team, the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Now that he thought about it, he had never really seen them walk before.

“I just mean take short steps and try to keep your balance. Who’s Sidney Crosby?”

“Never mind,” said Ricky Tikki.

The boys slowly got the hang of ice skating, and by the end of the day they could make it around easily without falling. Since they didn’t have any goals or pucks or sticks, they would bump each other and yell “BODY CHECK!” It was a great day.

Three weeks later was Ricky Tan’s ninth birthday. When he and Ricky Tikki came inside from a long day of slap shots and pad saves in the street, Ricky Tan noticed a thin rectangular present sitting on the table. It looked like a book; Ricky Tan was disappointed.

“My parents always try to get me to read. I just want to play hockey!” said Ricky Tan.

He sheepishly tore off the wrapping paper.

“What is it?” asked Ricky Tikki.

“It’s...SLAPSHOT MAGAZINE!! CANADA’S NUMBER ONE HOCKEY PUBLICATION!!”

Ricky Tan’s parents came into the room, and he hugged them and thanked them profusely.

“Look inside, Ricky,” said his mother.

“As a new subscriber to SLAPSHOT, you have the chance of winning a trip for two to Toronto, including two tickets to an NHL game between the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Pittsburgh Penguins. You will also receive free admission to the Hockey Hall of Fame in downtown Toronto. The winner will receive notification within two weeks.”

“GADZOOKS!” Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan cried in unison.



Every night the boys prayed that they would win the trip to Toronto. They worked extra hard in school so that they could take the days off. They played hockey until it got too dark to see the tuna tin. It was the only thing that kept their minds off the excitement.

A week went by, and then a few more days, until finally the boys were starting to give up.

“Oh well,” said Ricky Tan. “At least this way Wayne won’t get lonely.”

“I guess maybe we were too young to go anyway,” said Ricky Tikki.

Finally the last day had come. It was exactly two weeks since Ricky Tan’s birthday. The boys still hadn’t heard anything from SLAPSHOT magazine. They were both sleeping at Ricky Tan’s house just in case something happened. Just before they went to bed, Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan heard the phone ring.

Ricky Tan’s father answered.

“Ricky, it’s for you.”

The boys exchanged an excited glance.

“Who is it?” asked Ricky Tan.

“It’s your grandmother.”

Ricky Tan’s face fell. So did Ricky Tikki’s.

“Hi, grandma.”

“Excuse me? Is this Ricky Tan? This is Dennis Schlumberger from SLAPSHOT magazine. You’ve won a trip to Toronto!”

Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan would leave for Toronto in one week. They packed all their favorite clothes and pencils and books into one big suitcase. It was so big that Ricky Tikki had to push it from behind while Ricky Tan pulled it from the front. They loaded it onto a huge white airplane with a red maple leaf on it.



Neither of the boys got any sleep on the flight to Toronto; they were much too excited. A taxi was waiting for them at the airport, and the driver took them straight to their hotel, which was right next to the Hockey Hall of Fame. Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan ordered pizza from room service and watched a show that was all about hockey for hours until they had both fallen asleep.

The next day Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan woke up to find that it was only fourteen degrees Fahrenheit. They didn't need many jackets in Brazil, so Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan put on all their pants and sweaters. Ricky Tan was wearing three pairs of shorts and Ricky Tikki was wearing six hats. They crossed the street and found themselves in front of the most fantastic building they had ever seen – the Hockey Hall of Fame!



They spent a whole day at the Hall of Fame. They saw Wayne Gretzky's Oilers jersey from his final game in Canada, they saw Gordie Howe's stick, and they saw Brett Hull's ice skates. They got to take shots against a video simulation of a real goalie. And of course they saw Lord Stanley's Cup.



That night was the hockey game. Another taxi driver drove Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan from their hotel to the Air Canada Centre, which had the same big maple leaf on it that Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan saw on the airplane, only this time it was blue.

Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan found their seats, which were right behind the Pittsburgh Penguins' bench, which made them very excited. They called out to the players, and a couple of players turned back and waved to them. When the Toronto Maple Leafs took the ice before the game, the lights went out in the arena and everybody cheered as loud as they could. The Penguins won the game, four to one. Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan thought the goals were the most exciting part of the game, but the other fans got really excited when two of the players got in a fight. The man sitting next to Ricky Tikki kept yelling "Mash him! Mash him!"



After the game, Ricky Tikki bought a big hat shaped like a hockey puck and Ricky Tan bought a Toronto Maple Leafs bowl for his cat, Wayne. When the boys got back to Brazil, all their friends seemed very interested in the trip to Toronto, but after a few days they lost interest. Ricky Tikki and Ricky Tan were by themselves again, shooting Wayne's old tuna tins into the fishing net, and they couldn't have been happier.

THE END