

## Kellan Lain's unfortunate NHL debut, and some happier Oakville hockey stories

Saturday night couldn't have been how Kellan Lain always thought his childhood dream would come true.

Called up to the Vancouver Canucks from the American Hockey League's Utica Comets a few days earlier, Lain was about to realize a life-long goal: playing his first game in the National Hockey League.

Maybe Saturday was still special for the 24-year-old. It was undoubtedly memorable. But he surely deserved better than what he got.

If you follow the NHL at all, you're almost certainly aware of the five-ring (five fights) circus that took place at the start of the

Flames/Canucks game in Vancouver. Flames coach Bob Hartley chose to start the contest with his fourth-line forwards, including team penalty minute-leader Brian McGrattan. Vancouver's John Tortorella responded by starting a line of Tom Sestito (167 penalty

minutes in 47 games), Dale Weise and Lain.

The predictable ensued, with the drop of the puck almost simultaneously followed by the drop of Flames centre Kevin Westgarth's gloves. Lain, also a centre, would have been Westgarth's initial target, but Canucks defenceman Kevin Bieksa sensed the obvious and honourably took his second pro career faceoff in place of Lain. However, as everyone on the ice soon paired off, Lain — seemingly reluctant at first to get involved — was eventually left no choice but to answer the bell against Westgarth after all.

McGrattan and Sestito received fighting majors and gross misconducts. The other eight skaters to start the contest got majors

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and game misconducts — meaning Lain's NHL debut was over just two seconds after it started. He now owns the NHL record for fastest fight to start a career.

An unfortunate way for anyone to realize a childhood dream. But even more so for someone like Lain, who went undrafted by Canadian Hockey League clubs; was cut by several rep teams in his midget year; abandoned rep to play two seasons of high school hockey for the T.A. Blakelock Tigers; was content with the idea of giving up hopes of a professional career before blossoming with the Ontario Junior Hockey League's Oakville Blades; and underwent two surgeries and nine months of rehabilitation after slicing tendons in his wrist during a 2009 Blades playoff game.

Lain's parents, Jim and Sheila, and his brother, Brett, had flown across the country just to see Kellan's big moment. Brett had flown out Friday, uncertain if Kellan would play Saturday but not wanting to chance missing it. Whether you price their trip by dollars or by kilometres, getting two seconds in return didn't make for much of a bargain.

"I don't feel great about it at all, especially for Kellan Lain," Tortorella — later suspended by the NHL for barging into the Calgary dressing room area during the first intermission — told reporters after Saturday's game.

"That's my biggest mistake, to put Lainer

see Steve on p.26

C E L E B R A T I O N



Oakville Ice Dogs player Elias Najem celebrates after scoring his team's fourth and final goal in a 4-0 win over the Milton Winterhawks during last weekend's Frank Sabatino Memorial Tournament. The Ice Dogs went on to finish second at the annual Minor Oaks Hockey Association house league competition. Full results from the tournament will appear in tomorrow's (Thursday's) edition of the Beaver.

| photo by Graham Paine — Oakville Beaver — @Halton\_Photos

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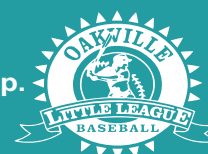
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