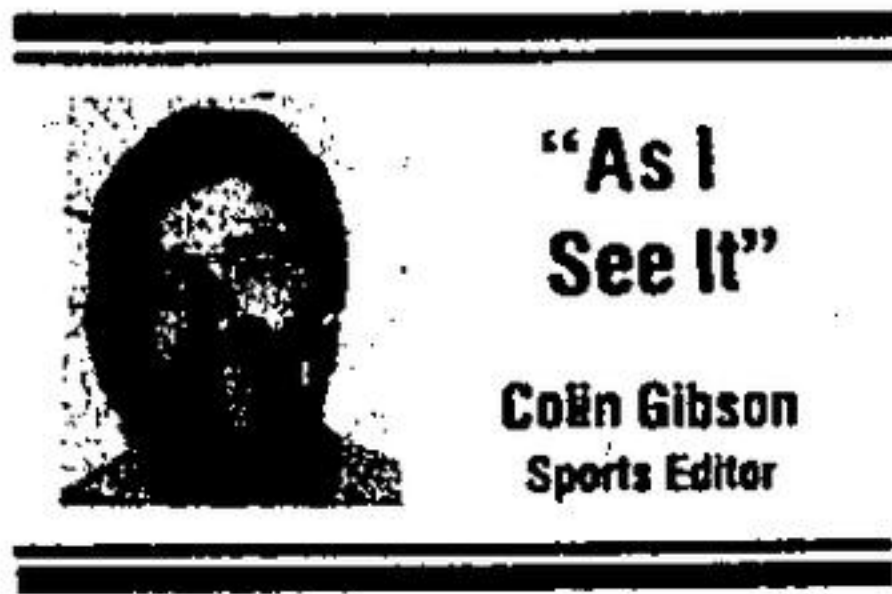


Lewis fine choice



"As I See It"

Colin Gibson
Sports Editor

In the opinion of this humble scribe, the NHL powers-that-be made a fine choice in selecting Georgetown's Bryan Lewis as their new Director of Officiating.

Lewis succeeds the much-respected and highly thought-of member of both Georgetown, in particular, and hockey communities in general, John "Gus" McCauley, who died in June of complications following surgery.

Lewis' professional hockey accomplishments speak volumes on his knowledge of the game. He is entering his 22nd year of association with the NHL.

He began his professional officiating career in 1967 as a referee in the Central, Western and American hockey leagues. He worked his first game as an NHL referee in the 1969-70 season. When he hung up the blades following the 1985-86 season he had worked in 1,031 games; refereed in four Stanley Cup Finals series; handled the 1981 All-Star game in Los Angeles and officiated in the Canada Cup.

Following his retirement, Lewis joined the NHL Supervisory staff for the 1986-87 season as Coordinator of Development and his responsibilities included the recruitment and development of minor league officials.

These accomplishments being noted, it is also fairly accurate to point out that very little is known of Bryan Lewis, the person.

I first became acquainted with

Bryan Lewis during my first go-round as Herald Sports Editor in the mid-1970s. I was obviously aware of his NHL connections, but our relationship dealt mainly with his involvement in the local sports scene and at that time, in particular, his role as Convenor of the Georgetown Industrial Men's Fastball League.

He made this neophyte sports writer's entry into the local sports scene all the more easier with his cooperation, availability and patience in answering what I am certain must have been extremely naive, if not actually stupid, questions.

I also got to know a little about Bryan Lewis the person. He has a wry, put-on sense of humor and unless one is aware of this, he can be intimidating at times.

He also provided this tyro writer with what I still consider one of the greatest thrills of my life.

He casually sauntered into the Herald offices one morning and in an off-hand manner asked if I would be interested in tagging along on one of his weekend refereeing jaunts.

After I had carefully removed the typewriter from my foot and the pencil from my ear (where it had become mysteriously imbedded) I equally off-handedly said, "Sure." At least I thought I said sure. Bryan says something got lost in the translation and my reply sounded very much like "Holy" Arrangements were made and I

trekked along with Bryan to assignments in Buffalo and Cleveland. A companion on the trip was veteran NHL Linesman, Leon Stickle, of Milton.

Stickle is a character in his own right. His on-ice hang-dog expression belies a sense of humor and comedic timing that can best be described in a family newspaper as "Off the wall."

Stickle has retired from the on-ice NHL wars but it's good to know he will be working in some capacity for Lewis out of the NHL Officials offices in Toronto.

The Cleveland Barons will go down as a brief hiccup in NHL annals but they played out of perhaps the most luxurious of venues, Ritchfield Colosseum.

There were only about 150 people at the game I attended and the highlight of the game for the fans was the tumble taken by some poor soul down the steps with popcorn, pop and holddogs cascading around him as he finally came to a crunching halt. I think he was chosen the game's second star.

As stated, Ritchfield Colosseum was gorgeous, but huge. I got lost twice. Amazingly, I was rescued on both occasions by the same gracious and beautiful usherette. I attempted to get lost a third time but her boss quietly and firmly escorted me to the press pit.

In Buffalo, Lewis introduced me to Scotty Morrison, at that time, the man in charge of NHL referees. I also met John Ferguson and erstwhile Ranger goaltender - and current broadcaster - John Davidson.

Lewis arranged a seat for me in the penalty box and I couldn't have been much closer to the action without stepping on the ice.

I was almost beheaded by an errant stick thrown in disgust by Sabres' star, Gilbert Perreault, who had just been assessed a minor penalty by Lewis. Needless

to say, I didn't introduce myself to Perreault as a friend of the referee's.

On this sporting sojourn, Lewis went well out of his way in making sure I enjoyed myself. If I needed information, on anything, and Bryan didn't know the answer, he put me in touch with the people who could give me what I needed.

This giving side of Bryan Lewis, is a side the general public is rarely allowed to view.

He is Chairman of the Halton "Make A Wish" fund, Treasurer of the Hornby Minor Softball Association, and was honored by the Ontario Hockey Association for his work in minor hockey during the 1988-89 season.

Born in Alliston, Lewis, now 42, moved with his family to Georgetown when he was five years old. His mother also still resides here.

Wife, Elaine, is active in Georgetown minor hockey circles. The couple have three children. Janelle, 19, will be entering her freshman year at Wilfrid Laurier University. Duane, 16, plays in the Georgetown minor hockey system and Alyson, 11, is entering her first year at Stewarttown school and plays softball out of Hornby.

Lewis embarked on his officiating career, while in his early teens, in the Georgetown minor hockey system. Officiating was secondary to playing, however, at that point in his life.

He was good enough to play Junior "B" hockey for three centres and toiled for teams in Burlington, Brampton and Dixie. It was while playing for Dixie that he met his wife-to-be, Elaine. Her father owned the team and with tongue firmly in cheek, Lewis still lists this (his marriage) as perhaps his greatest sacrifice to the game.

After unsuccessful tryouts with Junior "A" teams in Toronto and Niagara Falls, Lewis realized his

only ticket to the NHL "Big Pond" would be stamped with black and white stripes and turned his energy and enterprised into hockey refereeing.

His potential as a hockey official was first really recognized by then OHA Referee-in-Chief, Pat Patterson, and Lewis began the long climb up the hockey ranks. Minor hockey, Junior "B", Junior "A", Senior "A", Intermediate - basically, every level was touched.

Lewis even worked in the old two officials Intermediate games, so he has paid his dues. He was also the Referee-in-Chief of the first Georgetown International Bantam Hockey Tournament.

He has already been huddling with other fellow NHL Rules Committee members and suggested that "five or six minor changes" will be implemented during the upcoming NHL exhibition season.

Basically, his position as Director of Officiating involves the day-to-day overseeing of officials under the direction of the league's Vice-President of Hockey Operations, Jim Gregory.

But there is more to the job than meets the eye. Aside from officials currently working in the National Hockey League, Lewis will be keeping tabs on officials working in the American Hockey League, the International Hockey League, the Central Collegiate Hockey Association, the East Coast Hockey League and the three Major Junior hockey leagues.

He will be on hand and no doubt on the ice, when approximately 67 current and potential NHL officials attend training camp scheduled for Sept. 7 at Etobicoke Centennial Park.

It promises to be an exciting and challenging year for Bryan Lewis, but one small voice from this corner says he will handle it with the style that marks the man.

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