

LOOKING BACK

By: Scott Brooks

Rose and Joan fishing with their father, Albert Brooks, at a local creek during the late 1940s.
- Photo Credit: Brooks Collection



SPORTS TALK

A tale of two Champions

It is no longer news that the Washington Capitals lead by Alex Ovechkin won the Stanley Cup this past week by beating surprise finalist, the Vegas Golden Knights who, by the way, have been in existence for all of 15 months.

Last week also produced a less than surprising NBA champion. The California based Golden State Warriors annihilated the Cleveland Cavaliers by four games to nothing in their best of seven games championship series, making this the most one-sided NBA finals in recent history. It wasn't helped by the recent roster upheavals at Cleveland.

The real back story to both winning teams has to do with their leading players; Alex Ovechkin, who has got probably more than his fair share of mentions on this column in recent weeks, and Kevin Durant, respectively.

Both leaders won the finals MVP in addition to their team titles. Ovechkin won the much-coveted Conn Smythe Trophy, awarded annually to the most valuable player during the Stanley Cup Playoffs. Named after Conn Smythe, the long-time owner, general manager, and head coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

By
Michael Oke

The interesting tale for me was how both players arrived at this point. Both were

highly sought after and talented professionals from day one. While Ovechkin decided to stick with an underperforming team for 13 years until his moment of triumph came this year, Durant, on the other hand, jumped ship after nine years with the Seattle Supersonic franchise—which later moved on to become the Oklahoma City Thunder—to a winning team, the Golden State Warriors.

One could say both were eventually justified in their decision with the end probably justifying the means, but it speaks volumes to the state of today's professional sports. While some may be content with just making more money than they will ever need, others are laser focused on legacy—i.e. winning championships.

I would never criticize any athlete making decisions either way. At the end of the day, fans and sponsors pay to watch them compete at the highest level possible.

There is however a long list of professional players who never get to win any championship ring throughout their careers, and they can in no way be regarded as failures.

JUST A THOUGHT

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By
Trish Bell

As I sit here writing this column, I find myself surrounded by the constant action and antics of nature in full bloom. Squirrels scurrying, chipmunks chittering, raccoons rummaging, birds bolting this way and that; it is a literal hullabaloo of activity not all that unlike the political news of the past week or so. Whether it was Trump's tweets, the worthiness of the G7, the US-North Korean deal—or non-deal—Iranian relations, Cannabis legislation, the Yemen humanitarian crisis, migrant ships sent away from Italy and Malta, trade wars or the election of a PC majority in Ontario under the helm of relative political newcomer Doug Ford, it has been one heck of a week for politics. Even the most die-hard political analysts are scratching their heads, attempting to make sense of policies and people that are anything but logical. Yet, in the midst of all these head-spinning headlines, one story caught my eye and lingers with me as a kind of anti-climax and example all in one.

No, it wasn't about Trump. This story actually involves a group of Canadians here in the north end of Toronto. According to reports, 15 Canadian Geese—yes, those big grey and black birds who are famous the world over—were found mutilated. Only one lone bird—a gosling—surviving the attack, despite puncture wounds and two broken ribs. It was lucky. The bodies of the others showed vast cruelty. Some had their wings torn apart. Others had their legs ripped from their bodies. Necks were snapped on some while others were

actually decapitated. It all sounds like a gruesome animal attack. And in some ways it was, but the gruesome animal was human. Police are convinced that all the evidence suggests that humans are responsible. That's right, someone out there just like you or me, actually choose to maim, torture and kill those birds. Let that soak in. Perhaps the person you are having coffee with or sitting beside in a meeting; the CEO of your company, the kid in your basement, the coach of your softball team—somewhere out there amongst us all are people willing to commit that kind of atrocity. And while some of you are surely thinking, come on Bell, it's just those annoying nasty geese, I beg you to recall their size and ferocity: it takes a great amount of energy and purpose to commit such brutality. Heads don't—as the old childhood rhyme might suggest—pop off. This wasn't for protection, safety or food. This was just an evil act done out of malice and thrill. And, make no mistake, animal abuse is a huge precursor to bigger issues. Some studies have shown up to 70 per cent of the most violent prisoners had repeated histories of animal abuse, compared to the five to six per cent of the general public.

So, what does this teach us about what is going on in our world today? I don't mean

to understate the importance of trade relations to the well-being of our nation, but my momma did tell me that only I could let others hurt me with words; sticks and stones and all that, and frankly, it looks like we Canucks worry an awful lot more than we should about what truly amounts to nothing more than another Trump Twitter tirade. I mean where is the same demand for justice for one of our nation's most iconic creatures, murdered in our own backyard? Let's face it; his are just words from a guy, most of us don't believe is worth the time. President or not, we don't have to engage him—you might have noticed an absence of discussion about him in this very column. And as a nation, we don't have to allow such destructive tendencies to break us down either. In fact, Trump has been nothing if not the great Canadian collaborator because nothing binds people more than a common enemy. Trudeau of all people is likely secretly singing the man's praises; he went from questionable rusty pipeline purchases and public vacation schemes to a Canadian trade hero, showing just how fickle we are on what matters. Today's drama will simply become tomorrow's forgotten meme, and while people say they strive for cohesion, their self-centered, popularity contest makes us all a little less global. Frankly, if you want to fix what ails the world, we all need to try a little perspective. After all, how can we have a global society if we can't even find room for compassion and understanding for a goose.

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