



## Sidelines by Garry Forbes

# Leafs unBearable

The Midland Mountain Bear is as playful as the Koala, — particularly when in the company of females — light-colored like the Polar, smaller than the Brown (though, when provoked, as dangerous as the Grizzly) and, when surprised by a sucker swipe, may on occasion sport dark areas around the eyes which bring to mind the Panda.

Not surprisingly, the MM Bear is an endangered species. There is, and always has been, only one. It's not entirely clear how this unique animal developed, but there certainly are those who wish it hadn't.

It is an individual, free-thinking, free-wheeling beast — just the sort of animal which totally unnerves the more sterile, predictable, conservative elements of our society.

Though wild by nature, the Midland Mountain Bear has voluntarily learned enough skills to survive in urban Southern Ontario, particularly in and around its native habitat of Midland. It speaks English, drives a tractor trailer once in a while, and, with its quick paws and aggressive nature when fitted with skates, has been trained to perform as a hockey goaltender.

### Unleash the Bear?

Considering the Bear's high-spirited disposition, some might have thought it a mistake to unleash the beast and take it along for a visit to Toronto for a recent Maple Leafs-Canadiens game. Looking back, there does seem to be a barnful of possibilities for misunderstanding in and around the environs of Maple Leaf Gardens and Yonge Street.

But there were no misunderstandings. The Bear enjoyed himself and everybody enjoyed the Bear. Maybe it's just the season, but on this particular day, freedom of the wild reigned supreme. As it should.

Now, the whole point of this excursion was to take in a hockey game. Being a goaltender, the Bear thought it just a nifty idea to shake loose the reins and get a closeup gander at the pros.

So nifty an idea, in fact, that the Bear dug up a jar of his favorite food to take along.

Potential for misunderstanding: being wild, the Bear didn't seem to understand that when your favorite food is Peppermint Schnapps, you can't enjoy your favorite food on a packed southbound Yonge Line subway car. But that he did.

The other passengers had never seen a Midland Mountain Bear before, let alone a Midland Mountain Bear casually lapping

Schnapps and reeling off mild jokes and having just a fine old time. But they relaxed.

The train became The Peppermint Schnapps Express. And everything was fine with everybody, especially with the knockout in the seat right across from the Bear. She was sporting a bear-skin coat — or something like that — and instead of being offended, the Bear fell in love. At least as far as the Carleton stop.

### Weird place

We had arrived. The game beckoned.

There's no place like the streets outside Maple Leaf Gardens on hockey night. Milling about is every conceivable type of character ever created. It's an interesting place, and the Bear, being one of a kind, could only make it that much more interesting.

But again, up popped another potential for misunderstanding, this in a royal blue uniform and known as the Usherette of the Section B Boxes. She eyed us as we sat down five feet from where Canadiens goaltender Sevigny was being punished in a warmup.

"Cute," intoned the Bear. She smiled. No misunderstanding, here. She left, returning moments later with cups, and the Bear was lapping again.

The game, the game.

The Schnapps was gone by the first intermission. And so, nearly, was the Bear. But he managed to make his way to the hot dog stand, from where he spotted another unique beast just up the hallway. We approached.

Dick Beddoes stood placidly next to an unidentified young lady who resembled the bear-skin knockout from the subway train. The Bear kept one eye on her as Beddoes chatted to us about a whole lot of things, of which I don't recall a one. But I do recall, as did the Bear, that Beddoes is, or was, a much more easy-going sort than you might guess from his stage act. Then again perhaps his favorite food is Schnapps, too.

### Nice to see 'ya

Strolling back to the game, the Bear and I chanced upon Ontario Industry and Tourism Minister Larry Grossman and referee Bruce Hood, neither of whom either of us had ever met in our lives, but both of whom seemed happy to see us. Maybe it was the way we greeted them, like they should know us, like

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## SCHMIDT

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finishing in the top 20).

There are eight more World Cup races this season, but Schmidt isn't absolutely sure yet how many more she'll go for. The goal, she says, remains above all the World Championships. That's what she's trained for, that's what she's aimed for, and, at this point, everything else can only supplement that goal.

"I wasn't planning to go on the trip for these races," Schmidt said this week at her home at Mountain View Ski Resort in Midland. "I was really planning to get into the World Cup races after the World Championships, but since I felt good in the qualifying races, I figured I might as well make the trip."

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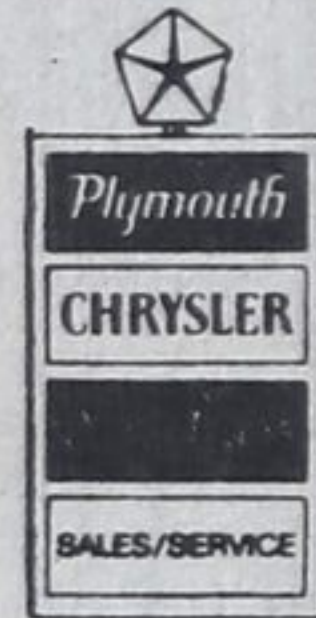
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