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Mike Rodden Tells of Many Hockey Incidents in North

Refereeing the Toughest Job in the World, he Says. Has Acted as Referee for Many Northern Games. Thinks Fans Take it More Seriously than Players.

By M. J. (Mike) Rodden
 In Maclean's Magazine
 You robber! Kill the referee! Throw him out! You'll never referee in this town again. You're crooked!
 Yes, you've guessed it—it's a hockey crowd yelling at a referee who's made an unpopular decision—the voice of a mob in a frenzy.
 I don't know, but I do know that hockey refereeing is the toughest job that sport has to offer. In fact, I'll go even further and say that it's the toughest job in the world.
 I can see thousands of eyebrows raised in skepticism at that statement. But I'm sticking to it. I've been through the mill as an official in hockey, lacrosse, football, baseball, softball, boxing and wrestling. I've refereed nearly 1400 hockey games—Stanley Cup games, Allan Cup, National League, International League, United States Amateur Association games, bush league games. And I'm sticking to my statement: Refereeing a hockey game is the toughest job in the world.

All a referee needs in order to be efficient is: (1) Knowledge of the rules; (2) experience; (3) courage; (4) impartiality; (5) indifference to criticism; (6) ability to make decisions in a fraction of a second; (7) the stivvity of a "Philadelphia lawyer"; (8) honesty; (9) alertness; (10) diplomacy; (11) the art of ruling firmly yet not tyrannically; (12) ability to handle high-strung athletes.
 One would think that veteran players could become capable referees, yet the reverse is the case. Names need not be mentioned, but some of the most helpless officials of all time were athletes who, having become accustomed to applause, could not stand up under verbal criticism when they went out there with a whistle. Their plight was pathetic.
 Great referees like Mickey Ion, Cooper Smeator and the late Lou Marsh never played professional hockey and very little of any other kind, but they knew how to handle men and were past masters in the art of understanding

mob psychology. They made mistakes—everybody does—but they had confidence in their own ability, were enthusiastic and never afraid.
 For the most part players are not squawkers, and they sympathize with officials. Some of them will argue, but only in the heat of hostilities. They are all contrition when a tough battle is over.
 One of the outstanding examples of this attitude occurred in Cleveland several years ago. Near the conclusion of that hectic game I handed a misconduct penalty to Doug Young, and when I stepped off the ice I was immediately surrounded by fans bent on mischief.
 One of these courageous individuals struck me from behind. In the melee that ensued I saw Young swinging his stick at everybody within reach. Manager Harry Holmes hit one of my attackers and then ordered a policeman to take the offender to the Cleveland dressing room. On reaching this destination, Holmes removed his coat and assured the indignant fan that the latter was about to see a real batter in action. The fan reneged. Later that evening Young said to me: "I hope you didn't miss the fact that I went to your rescue."
 So there you get the player angle. He may be riled, may object to decisions, may use rough tactics, but he is man enough to aid a referee, knowing that the latter is usually outnumbered about a thousand to one.
Bitter Enemies
 I made my debut as a hockey referee in a girl's game between Halleybury and Cobalt twenty-one years ago. That was a tough assignment to start with.
 It was eight years later, however, before anyone suspected that I might become a professional hockey traffic director, and I must say that Jim Sutherland, Kingston's famous hockey authority, was the man responsible for shunting me into the job.
 At that time the Sudbury Wolves, featuring the Green brothers, Alex McKinnon, Bill Duncan, Charlie Langlois, Sam Rothschild and Joe Ironstone, and the Soo Greyhounds, with "Bunny" Cook, "Babe" Donnelly, Stan Brown, "Flat" Walsh, Bill Phillips and others of ability, formed a two-team group that was the best of its kind in all the history of hockey.
 They were bitter enemies and had a penchant for making life miserable for the referee, so it came about that they couldn't agree on one. They appealed to Mr. W. A. Hewitt, the man behind

the O.H.A. and he was also in a quandary until Sutherland hove in sight with his bright suggestion that I be given the assignment.
 Without giving the matter serious consideration I accepted the appointment, and before I could properly gauge the importance of the situation I was on my way to the Canal City.
 I heard that several illustrious referees had fared poorly at the Soo arena and naturally I wondered what kind of a reception awaited me. However, I had never been in the Soo before, and as no one there knew me it looked like an even break.
 It wasn't anything of the kind. The great Soo machine, destined to win the Allan Cup one year later, was simply not in stride and the Wolves tore them apart to win by 8 to 3. A packed arena saw an unknown referee from Toronto calling the plays in a runaway game and some of them resembled such a tragedy.
 Later on that evening I strolled into a poolroom owned by the trainer of the Greyhounds, and heard an individual proclaiming that I had sold the game. I was on the point of raising an objection when Bill Phillips, star centre player for the Soo, went into action. Phillips didn't even know that I was a spectator, but he earned my undying gratitude for his sportsmanship.
 I ran into many thrilling experiences during the hectic ten-game series between the Wolves and the Hounds, but space does not permit me to enlarge on them. However, the players learned in a hurry that they had to play cleanly, and I was only called on to inflict two major penalties, whereas in the past there had been as many as sixteen fights in one game.
 In those glorious days I met at the Soo the two fine young sons of George McNamara, who was one of the famous "Dynamite Twins" of long ago. To-day these boys, one sixteen and the other a year younger, form the regular defence for the St. Michael's College O.H.A. team, superbly coached by the one and only Dr. Jerry Lafflamme.
 One night I ruled a Sudbury player off for five minutes, and he made an attempt to attack me but was held by George McNamara and "Shorty" Green. He tried to renew the feud at the Algonquin hotel, but when he detected that I hadn't fainted from alarm he desisted and after that he became one of my best friends.
 Then I remember that after a torrid duel in the Nickel City a spectator gave me a notice that I must catch the night train for Toronto or take the consequences. I had intended to leave, but altered my decision. The next day I held a conference with the object and discovered that he could not fight his way out of a paper bag.
 In 1924 I had a most interesting experience—one of many of them—at Iroquois Falls. The Greyhounds were the visitors, and it happened that in the first two games of the series they broke even, to the disgust of the home-town fans.
 During one boisterous outburst I was made the target of many missiles, and one of them missed my head by inches. Bill Phillips, the imperturbable Soo centre, picked up the "dud" and said, "I don't mind the vegetables, but when they start throwing cutlery, I object." The missile was an open knife.
 After the game a traveller from Toronto rapped at the dressing room door and told me that I was going to be attacked by three men and that the fans were awaiting my arrival outside. The noble trio entered, and all were astonished when I locked the door after admitting them. One of them asked, "Why are you bolting the door?" and I replied, "Because I don't want anybody else to get in, and I don't want any one of you to get out."
 We had a most interesting fistic session and each of the trio hit the floor. But my troubles were not over. After the door was opened a heavyweight defenceman on the Iroquois team came barging in and laid a strangle hold on my neck that still is painful, even if only from memory.
 Leaving the arena, I was surrounded by belligerent fans, but none of them tried anything drastic. Later that evening, however, a "gentleman" called me a foul name, but being cross-eyed, he was looking at Bill Phillips when he spoke, and "Thessalon Bill" beat him as badly as Jack Dempsey did Jess Willard at Toledo in 1919.
 I went back to Iroquois Falls later that season, was given most cordial treatment and received \$300 to referee two games, both of which were lost by the home team.
 That same year I had a lot of officiating in Pittsburgh, and thereby hangs a tale. The late Lou Marsh had been down that way, so following the first two games that I refereed there, the late Roy Schooley asked me how much I wanted per match. Now I had been informed that Marsh had received \$60 a game, so jocularly I said to Schooley, "If Marsh got that much, I'll take \$125." I expected to get the well-known rush, but to my amazement he handed me \$250 in cash.
 After that I always received \$125 a game in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, and I was given \$500 for the two playoff games between Eveleth and Pittsburgh. Billy Burch got half that amount, and for referees alone in the four-game series it cost the United States Amateur Association \$1250.
 If anybody tells you that officials are getting that kind of money to-day, have his head read.
 In the North, the Soo Club paid me \$125 a game, Sudbury \$100, Iroquois Falls as high as \$150.
 The late Roy Schooley, who went to Pittsburgh as a referee on a weekly salary of \$20, was the best friend officials ever knew—that is to say if you enjoyed his confidence.
Arrested!
 I had the rather doubtful honour of being arrested once, following a hockey uprising. It was all very comical and quite absurd. A learned judge entered the dressing room during the first intermission, and said to my confrere, Dr.

Lafflamme, "If I had you up before me, I would give you life."
 Jerry ordered him out. He wouldn't go. Jerry appealed to the police. They would not move.
 Then the judge said to me, "He cannot put me out. I am a director of this team."
 "Well," I replied, in my best Irish, "if that is the case you'd better depart. If you don't go I'll throw you out bodily."
 "You mean that?" he retorted. "Well, then I'll go."
 In the second period of the game I was the principal in one of the worst riots of my experience, and during the melee I struck, fighting in self defence, a prominent civic authority. Three weeks later, when I returned to the same city, I was arrested, no less than five detectives being assigned to the task. They must have thought I was Jesse James.
 I was held at headquarters long enough to prevent me from refereeing that night, but on Sunday, the following day, I pleaded guilty, my lawyer so advising. On Monday morning I was fined \$27 but I wasn't among those present to hear the verdict. That evening when I entered the Brampton arena to handle an O.H.A. game, Tracy Shaw and the rest of his Toronto players greeted me by singing "The Prisoner's Song."
 In 1928 I was coupled with Lou Marsh in refereeing one of the toughest Stanley Cup final series ever played, that between the Maroons and the New York Rangers at the Montreal forum. Each had won two games, and the last one was the most trying and thrilling of them all.
 In the third period Russell Outman shot the puck past Joe Miller, guarding the net for the Rangers, and apparently tied the count at 1 to 1, but there had been an infraction of a rule and I had blown my whistle. I called it no goal, and the riot that followed beggars description.
 I guess the fans threw everything they could get their hands on. It was 20 minutes before play was resumed. One man even hurled a chair at Lou Marsh while another tossed his hard hat and Lou promptly drop-kicked it off the ice.
 One of the protesting Maroon players said to me "Don't you know we each get three thousand dollars extra if we win?" and I replied, "No, I don't know anything of the kind, but even if you are going to get a million each I'll call those plays as I see them."
 Rangers won, 2 to 1, and thousands of fans waited outside the Forum for my appearance. Luckily I emerged by a side door, and nobody recognized me because I was wearing a hard hat for the first time in years. President Frank Calder, however, was not so fortunate. He was attacked, and when he asked the reason he was informed that he was equally guilty as he had appointed me.
 Early next morning I was the storm centre of one of the fiercest fights ever staged over a referee. It occurred in a downtown restaurant, but I do not think it would be good policy to tell the names of those who were participants. Nevertheless I might add that some of the Rangers players did the mopping up after the main hostilities had ceased.
 In the original melee Odie Cleghorn, famous referee, knocked down an

"It is good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it's good, too, to check up once in a while and make sure you haven't lost the things that money can't buy."
 —GEORGE HORACE LORIMER

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Englishman and the latter parted with his beloved monocle. The victim's wife clutched at Odie, demanding who he was, and Cleghorn replied "I'm Charlie Chaplin." The lady reached for a worried policeman and shrieked, "Officer, arrest him. He has admitted who he is!"
Referees Are Honest
 The following season Lou Marsh and myself handled a stern and merciless Stanley Cup series at Madison Square Gardens between the Rangers and the Americans. There was no score in the first game, and on the afternoon of the next Marsh was approached by a stranger who advised him to change to another dressing room. No altercation was made, however.
 They went overtime that night before Johnny Shephard of the Americans tallied. Marsh wasn't in good position to see any foul, so he skated for the exit and supporters of the Amerks were frantic with delight. They littered the place with missiles, they blew horns, they tessed their hats high in the air.
 Then their joy turned to grief of immense proportions when I ruled out the goal. They knew that the play had occurred at Marsh's end of the rink, and backed by American officials, they blamed Marsh. I might add that they have continued to do so until this day.
 I had given my ruling because Leo Reise had interfered with Goalkeeper John Ross Roach as Shephard fired the puck.
 About a quarter of an hour later Rangers counted, and their followers emulated the supporters of the Amerks by staging a celebration, but again I had to rule the goal out, and now I was as unpopular with one side as with the other.
 Eventually "Butch" Keeling got a counter according to the code, and Rangers were winners of the series by the only goal legally scored in almost three hours of play.
 It was Lou Marsh's valedictory as a National League referee, and I'm here to tell you that he never was more efficient than he was during these two stupendous struggles.
 I could go on indefinitely with pulse throbbing reminiscences, but what of that? It would all lead to the same conclusion.
 But I repeat that a referee's task presents no bed of roses. He walks by himself. He is not even permitted to travel on the same train as the players,

nor stay at the same hotel. He's a kind of an outcast who is never right, and he gets neither sympathy nor support from the club heads or the fans.
 Despite all the clamour ever raised this hockey referee is honest. He has to be to retain his position. He is always "on the spot." Just one bad game may cost him employment. He is not under contract like a baseball umpire; he is a lone wolf in his profession.
 There is, however, a definite need for improvement in the status of the hockey referee. If hockey is to live, referees will have to be accorded more support and protection than is the case to-day. Professional baseball magnates learned this lesson long ago, and thus paved the way for better sportsmanship and more proficient playing. In organized baseball the umpire's word is law. If he is found inefficient he is dismissed, but if he is capable he works in all cities despite protests made by the most powerful organizations or managements in the various leagues. The same should be true of hockey.

Globe and Mail: The employer, according to Mr. Wilfrid Heighington, is in danger of becoming the forgotten man. Workers generally seem to be satisfied if he turns up once a week to do his stuff on pay day.

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