

TOWNSHIP OF TERRACE BAY

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W. Hanley,
Clerk-Treasurer.

SPORTS SLANTS

- By Ray Shank

They no longer have a super star like Gordie Howe, but Detroit Red Wings are currently getting along just fine without one.

Don't get me wrong. I haven't suddenly turned into a Red Wing fan. I never liked the Wings and probably never will, but, after all, since they're now just across the pond from where I live, I have to say a few nice things about them. Give credit where credit is due, I always say.

As of Feb. 15th, the Wings, coached by former NHL ironman Johnny Wilson, were tied for that all-important fourth place in the east division with the hot-cold Buffalo Sabres.

Around Christmas time, the Red Wings were in fifth place, a distant 13 points away from the then-high-flying Sabres. Then somebody injected some life into them and they suddenly became a team to reckon with.

The man mainly responsible for Detroit's sudden run at a playoff berth is the coach himself, Johnny Wilson. It was he who put his foot down when the Wings were in troubled times before Christmas and laid the law down that he didn't want any prima-donnas on his team.

Even though the Wings weren't beating anybody, Wilson told Marcel Dionne probably the team's key forward - one day at practice that if he (Dionne) didn't like the way he was running the team, he could bloody well pack his equipment bag and go.

Dionne did go, but he was back within a few days and since then the team has been flying.

Wilson, actually, was rumoured to be on the brink of losing his coaching job when the Wings weren't doing so well. But after that tiff with Dionne, the club owners gave him (Wilson) a vote of confidence and everything's

been hunky-dorry since.

From Jan. 23 to Feb. 15, Wings had picked up 18 out of a possible 24 point points, winning eight, tying two and losing two.

The secret of Wings' recent success has been due to the fact that they've been able to handle the team they have to beat out for that fourth playoff spot -- the Sabres. They did it to them Jan. 20, 4-2 at Detroit Olympia and they shellacked the Punch Imlach-managed Buffalos 5-2 just a couple of weeks ago, right in Buffalo, where the Sabres have been almost invincible all year.

Another key victory for the Wings was that one Sunday, Jan 28, in Montreal, where the Detroiters manhandled the Canadiens 4-2. While it was probably the dullest game I've watched all season, have to say Canadiens looked worse than Detroit.

I picked the Wings to finish sixth this season, behind Toronto and/or Buffalo.

A few weeks ago I was raving about how well those Sabres were going and how they would probably take that fourth playoff spot. Just goes to prove how wrong I usually am when I prognosticate.

Well, there's still 1½ months to go in the schedule, we'll see what happens from now until April 1 - the last day of regularly scheduled games.

DIS 'N' DAT: Probably the first pro hockey player to reach the magic (well, it used to be magic) 50-goal plateau this season will be New York Raiders' Danny Lawson. Lawson, as of Feb. 15, already had 48, tops in either the NHL or the WHA. Lawson probably has his 50 goals by the time you read this ...

The March issue of Playboy magazine has an interview with ex-world heavy-weight boxing champ Joe Frazier. It's obvious Playboy, when it did the interview, wasn't counting on Frazier losing his title to George Foreman. Neither did Frazier, for that matter. The magazine refers to Frazier as THE champ. The interview must have been cut by at least half, because it's short as compared to other Playboy interviews, and I don't think Smokin' Joe mentioned Foreman once in the interview.

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