

Sports Slants - cont'd

Canadiens tick and it's about time he received recognition for his invaluable hockey savvy.

People (mainly anti-Canadiens, and there are a lot of them) slap Sam's fingers for the the oodles of players he had sitting on the sidelines this season, and for the monopoly of talent the Club de Hockey Canadien has in its farm system.

But can you blame him? After all, isn't winning the name of the game? It certainly is, and it's been a Montreal trademark for decades.

There was a time when the Canadiens had first claim on any hockey player born in the province of Quebec. That was changed when expansion came about.

The Canadiens have always been such a powerhouse that it was they who forced the inauguration of the rule which stipulates that a penalized player (minor penalty) will return to the ice if a goal is scored by the opposition. The Canadiens were so strong in the 50's that they would score two and three goals during an opponent's two-minute penalty.

Sam Pollock is a guy who couldn't make it as a player and, once he got into the management part of things with the Canadiens, vowed he would deal, no matter how, in such a way that the Canadiens would always be a winner.

The Canadiens were winners before Sam Pollock became their general manager and vice-president. But he's made sure that the trend stayed while he was in the team's employ.

In the past 30 years, Canadiens have finished below third only twice. In that period they've had 15 first-place finishes, eight seconds and five thirds.

Two years ago the Canadiens surprised everyone, even the staunchest Montreal fan, by eliminating Boston Bruins in the Cup quarter-finals. The Bruins were supposed to be The team, but the Canadiens came through. It was anticlimactic when they beat Chicago in seven games to win the Stanley Cup.

Last year, after the Bruins won the Cup, everyone was talking about the Boston dynasty, how the Beantowners could probably win Lord Stanley's cup for the next four or five years.

The Bruins were hurt by the WHA raid, no doubt. But even when the playoffs started this year, many felt the Boston boys could retain their championship ... or at least get by New York Rangers.

They did neither.

But the Canadiens, who lost only 10 games all season, have come through as their fans expected them to.

The reason Montreal Canadiens have gone so far is that they have a fellow like Sam Pollock

If it wasn't for his wheeling and dealing, they wouldn't have that tremendously polished team of regulars ... and those star 'bench-warmers' who would be stars in their own right on any other NHL club.

Did you know that there were 35 players who played on other teams in the NHL this season who were once Montreal property? Only two teams - Toronto and California - didn't have ex-Canadiens on their teams. And look where they finished !!!

Hip, hip, hooray, Sam Pollock for the Conn Smythe!

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