

SPORTS SLANTS

- By Ray Shank

And here I thought this was going to be my last hockey column for a couple of months. Yes folks, I, and most hockey fans in North America figured it would be game over for Chicago Black Hawks last Tuesday night and by Wednesday morning the names of the 1972-73 Montreal Canadiens would be inscribed on the Stanley Cup.

Matter of fact, rumour is that a Cup trustee left Lord Stanley's lovely piece of silverware at a Montreal jeweller last Tuesday afternoon to start the engraving.

That's how sure everyone was that the Canadiens would wrap it up in the Forum.

What happened? Don't ask me! Even Scotty Bowman and Billy Reay couldn't explain the 15-goal barrage (a new series record) that got by Ken Dryden and Tony Esposito.

Dryden is supposed to be the best netminder in the league and Esposito is rated a close second. Now if you happen to be from Kentucky or Arkansas, where they don't play hockey, and you watched that 8-7 Chicago victory last Tuesday, you'd have a hard time being convinced that Dryden and Espo are the best in the business.

Most NHL sportswriters will tell you that game was probably the worst ever played in a Stanley Cup series.

Defensively, it was!

But offensively, it was fabulous!

Two records were broken and one equalled in the contest - most goals in one game (15) and most goals in one period (8). And Yvan Cournoyer's tied Frank Mahovlich's individual scoring mark of 14 goals in a complete series. He's (Cournoyer) likely to wind up with the new record.

Only one of the previous four games between the Hawks and Canadiens had been worthwhile watching, really. That was the game the previous Thursday, in Chicago, where the Hawks surged to a 5-0 lead, then saw their lead dwindle to 5-4 in the dying minutes of the third period.

And if Frank Mahovlich could have found the handle of what appeared to be a sure goal in the last minute of play, that would have been a tie game and would have made for an exciting period of overtime hockey.

Last Tuesday's game was so full of action that you didn't risk going to the kitchen to pour yourself a shot of 'milk' for fear you'd miss a goal ... or maybe two.

Although it was the highest scoring game ever in modern day Cup playoffs, I sort of enjoyed it. And guys like Dave Kryskow and Len Frig, two unknowns who joined the Hawks for the finals after their Central League Dallas Hawks were eliminated, probably were tickled pink with the result.

After all, they each scored a goal and if it hadn't been for their goals, the score would have been 7-6 for Canadiens and the series would have been all over.

It was probably also an exciting brand of hockey for non-hockey fans, who happened to switch to an NBC channel in the U.S. Let's face it, everybody likes to see a lot of runs in baseball, a lot of touchdowns in football and plenty of field goals in basketball.

Why not a lot of goals in hockey?

The people who wouldn't appreciate an 8-7 game are Tony Esposito and Ken Dryden, most die-hard Hab fans, Sammy Pollock, Scotty Bowman and the majority of the NHL writers.

Me? I love it, even though I had to delay collecting all those bets.

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