

# SPORTS SLANTS

- By Ray Shank

The year was 1945. Yes, it was 28 years ago that Gordon Howe left Saskatoon Lions Club Juveniles to make his debut in professional hockey.

Howe had been a whiz in the minor ranks. But who would have thought this six-foot youngster from Floral, Sask. would end up playing 25 years in the National Hockey League and wind up with his name on four Stanley Cups and in about one-third of the NHL record book?

Well, Gordie was such a hot shot kid from the start that it really wasn't all that surprising that in his 25 years with Detroit Red Wings, he set scoring and endurance records that may never be eclipsed.

But it was kind of surprise about two weeks ago when it was rumored that Mr. Hockey would come out of retirement and sign up with Houston Aeros of the World Hockey Association.

In a way, I have to contradict myself and say that it wasn't really a surprise. I mentioned just before the start of the Stanley Cup playoffs this year, after the Red Wings fired coach Johnny Wilson, that Howe would likely leave the Detroit Organization, because he really wasn't doing anything in his so-called executive capacity and that Jim Bishop and Ned Harkness were only using him as a figure head.

As of last Tuesday night, Gordie was only 99 per cent sure of severing his ties with the Red Wings. He had gone to Houston and talked to the owners about a possible comeback. One thing was sure, though. His two sons, Mark and Marty, had signed a four year contract to play for the WHA Aeros, and only a few details had yet to be ironed out before Gordie would also agree to put his John Henry on a Houston contract.

It's been Gordie's life-long dream to play pro hockey with his two sons. Well maybe not a life-long dream, but he's thought about it ever since Mark and Marty looked like fine prospects to follow in their famous daddy's footsteps.

"Those dreams started when they (Mark - 17 years old -

and Marty - 19 years old) began to show promise about five years ago," says Gordie. "Everytime anybody would take a look at them they'd ask me if I thought I could hold on long enough to play with them."

Gordie realizes that if he waited until Mark and Marty were old enough to play in the NHL, he'd be 47 years old. Houston Aeros have given him a chance to play alongside his two offsprings at age 45 -- he may be over the hill at 45, but he certainly would never put the skates on at 47 (when the two boys would be ready for the NHL), except maybe for an oldtimers' game.

Gordie is also thinking of his, and his sons' future. No doubt he's got it made, continued page 9 .....

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