

Sports Slants - continued

Canadiens probably won't win the Prince of Wales Trophy simply because they've been too inconsistent. The Habs only lost 10 games all last season. As of last Tuesday they'd lost 15, probably half of them right in Montreal.

Let's face it, a defending Stanley Cup champion just can't lose to a team like Atlanta Flames (3-2) right in the Forum and still expect to finish on top. Except for games against the Bruins, Canadiens' big down fall this year has been in games against expansion teams.

The only expansion team that hasn't beat them or tied them are the New York Islanders (remember, this column was written before Canadiens' game against the Islanders in New York Feb. 19). The Stanley Cup champs have lost twice to the Flames this year. They've also lost twice to St. Louis Blues, by ridiculous scores of 5-0 and 8-4.

And what about those two one-sided games against the Bruins and Toronto Maple Leafs? The Leafs crushed them 9-2 in one game and the Bruins literally bombarded them 8-0 in another contest.

Now just let somebody tell me that the Canadiens haven't missed Ken Dryden. Dryden may have had a few bad games last season, very few I might add, but he'd never allow eight or nine goals in a game.

Anyhow, it looks like my prediction that the Habs would finish first and the Bruins second might have gone out the window.

But looking at the rest of the league, my other predictions don't look all that bad. I picked the Leafs for third and the Rangers for fourth in the east.

As of last Tuesday, the Rangers were five points up on Toronto, but the Leafs certainly aren't out of the running for third spot.

As for the remainder of the east division, again my prognostications don't look too far-fetched. I picked Buffalo for fifth, New York Islanders for sixth, Vancouver for seven-


th and Detroit for last.

At this writing, the Sabres were in fifth, where I picked them to finish. The Wings, meanwhile, were sixth, but just four points up on the Islanders and six ahead of Vancouver. It's surmisable that the current positions could go the way I forecast them in the next two or three weeks.


The Canucks, for a while, got hot, winning four, tying two and losing only one in a seven-game span. The Islanders also had a flash of grandeur, winning four, tying two and losing two in eight games. The Wings, meanwhile, are the worse club in hockey right now. They haven't won a game in eight tries.

It's the way I picked them in the first two slots of the west division; Philadelphia first and Chicago second. Most experts picked the Hawks over the Flyers. The Flyers have enough good hockey players, combined with four or five 'animals', to hang on until the end of the season and beat out the Hawks, in my mind.

I picked Minnesota third and Los Angeles fourth. Up until a month ago, things looked pretty grim for both the North Stars and the Kings. continued page 8 .....



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