

SPORTS SLANTS

- By Ray Shank

"It's Bernie Parent we have to worry about."

That quote was credited to Bep Guidolin, coach of Boston Bruins, prior to the start of the 1973-74 Stanley Cup finals between the Bruins and Philadelphia Flyers.

Truer words were never spoken. In the end, when the Flyers had polished off the Bruins and won the Stanley Cup, it was due mainly to the acrobatics and the pudgy, French-Canadian goaltender that the smart-aleck, over-publicized Beantowners had not won their second up in three years.

Parent won the Conn Smythe Trophy, As Most Valuable Player in the playoffs. Did anyone have any doubts about who would win the trophy? Or the new car that goes along with it?

I'm happy the Flyers won the Cup ... for two reasons: 1. I managed to get back some of the money I bet on the Canadiens and 2. It's the best thing that could happen to pro hockey (I mean about an expansion team winning all the goodies).

It took expansion clubs seven years to prove they belonged in a league with the biggies (Montreal, Boston, Chicago, Toronto, New York and Detroit). And the Flyers looked so good in doing it this year that I doubt if anyone will ever again refer to teams in the west division (albeit Chicago) as "expansion clubs."

You have to hand it to coach Fred Shero for making that team jell like it did ... and in only three years. Shero's boys were called Broad Street Bullies, hatchet men, butchers, etc. But face it, when it came down to brass tacks, when they had to play scientific, close-checking hockey, the Flyers were still the best unparalelled, even by the Bruins.

The Flyers' victory ignited a celebration Philadelphia had not seen since 1950, when the baseball Phillies' Whiz Kids, who the previous year had played for Toronto of the International League, won the National League baseball championship.

Philadelphia, a large U.S. city with teams in all the major sports, had not had a North American champion since 1967. That's when the basketball 79ers, led by Wilt Chamberlain, won the National Basketball Association crown.

The baseball Phillies have wound up in last place most of the last 10 years in the National League. The 79ers haven't come close to a championship since Chamberlain left them in 1969.

And even the hockey Flyers weren't much to look at until Shero took over the coaching.

They finished first their initial year of operation, but immediately got knocked out of the picture by St. Louis Blues.

The Blues were the pride of expansion those first few years. Then Chicago was moved to the west division. But the Flyers, last year, with guys like Bobby Clarke, Rick MacLeish, Dave Schultz, etc., displayed they could be a power to reckon with. They finished second behind the Black Hawks and gave Montreal Canadiens a good run for their money in the play-offs before bowing out in five games.

This year, though, the Flyers had Bernie Parent, a cog they lacked in their big wheel last year. Parent did it all. He led them to a first place finish, tying Chicago's Tony Esposito for the Vezina Cup and consistently coming up with the big save when the Flyers' defensive corps needed him most.

And of course you can't forget Kate Smith. Certainly, Kate is big enough to cover two nets. That she admits herself. Kate, though, would be flat on her rear (a big rear at that) if she ever laced on a pair of skates. But she was an inspiration to the Flyers, and their fans with her rendition of God Bless America.

It may all be superstition, but Big Kate made Bobby and Bernie and Freddie and Davie think she was a good omen to them. As it turned out, she was.

If Kate decides she wants to quit singing and play for Philadelphia next season, she'll still have a hard time beating Parent for the job. But no matter what, Miss Smith knows she has a job with the Flyers.

But getting back to Fred Shero. He may have a dynasty going. He's going to Russia to further his hockey knowledge. Boy, I'm tempted to start taking bets right now that the Flyers will win the Cup again next year.

Well, I best wait. Maybe my Canadiens will come up with something good in the off season. They might fire Scotty Bowman.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The winner of the Legion Bowling Roll-off "Giant Puppy" Draw was won by Mrs. Jean Fisher of Terrace Bay.

The Legion Bowling would like to thank all those who helped sell tickets and especially to those who bought tickets.

Emil Hamann
Chairman.