



RON ELLIS

**Ron Ellis**

**Leafs - "laughing stock of N.H.L."**

**Speaks out**

By Jim Thomas  
STOUFFVILLE — "The Toronto Maple Leafs are the laughing stock of the N.H.L.," ex-right-winger Ron Ellis told a breakfast meeting at the Stouffville Missionary Church, Saturday, "and nothing will change until there's a change at the top."  
Speaking and answering questions for more than an hour, the 17-year Leaf veteran told of the stimulations and the frustrations of playing hockey in a city like Toronto.  
"The pressures are unbelievable," he said, "and some can't cope."  
The speaker was highly critical of the Toronto media. "It's become a contest among writers and broadcasters as to who can be the most cutting." He noted that castigation of teams wasn't vented only against the Leafs but against the Argos and Blue Jays too.  
Most people, he said, look on professional hockey as a very glamorous career. However, he explained, what you see on television is only a small part of what actually goes on.

The life of a professional hockey player in Toronto is never private, he said. Questions like why haven't you won in the last ten games or why haven't you scored in the last fifteen games? "There's nothing very glamorous about that." Then, he said, there's always the roar of 16,000 people booing at you from the stands. "Nothing very glamorous about that either."  
Claiming "I'll be a Maple Leaf forever," Ellis admitted that losing has become a serious problem for Toronto teams. He suggested, however, that he foresees little chance of a turnaround for at least ten years. "We've gone from one of the strongest franchises to one of the weakest. You're going to have to be patient," he said.  
Ellis described the Leaf organization as one that, through the years "has become very comfortable"; a "built-in success machine," he called it. Now, he said, it possesses a non-existent farm system, with only ten players that are actually owned by the club.  
Allowing players like Trotter and Bossy to be passed up in the draft and dealing away men

like Lanny McDonald, Jerry Butler and Pat Boutette has hurt the franchise, he said.  
What's worse, Toronto is no longer a place where players want to play — except as visitors, Ellis stated. There was a time, he recalled, when they'd take a cut in salary, just to become a Maple Leaf, but not any more. He noted that for himself, playing "on the road" was much preferred to playing at the Gardens. "At times, sitting in the dressing room, getting stitched up, I'd wonder which team had scored. The roar from the crowd was just as loud for the opposition as for us."  
Denying that "I'm crying in my milk," Ron Ellis criticized the management's handling of some players. He recalled only one "retirement night" in Toronto and that was for King Clancy. "Gordie Howe had four or five," he joked.  
"We're human and it keeps building up like a snowball," he said. He expressed no doubt that the management would like to deal Darryl Sittler. "He cares about the team," he said of the Leaf captain and he's not afraid to speak out. But he's also fed up and I don't blame him". He said

there's also some talk of getting rid of Borje Salming.  
"There has to be a change upstairs before there's a change in the team," he stated. Imlach, he said, while a knowledgeable hockey man, still tries to "deal from fear." "That worked twenty years ago, but not today." The Players Association has changed all that.  
He denied that it's the Association's desire to have the players run the teams but "to be successful, the players must be a part of what's going on."  
The speaker was also critical of the kind of hockey played by some teams, "smash, bang type hockey," he called it. "Maybe that's what you like, but I don't," he said. He also criticized the "shoot and chase" type of plays where there's little passing and stickhandling is non-existent. He feels all arenas in the N.H.L. should be the same size and larger, like in Europe. This, he said would give talented players like Lefleur and Perreault more room to skate.

**"Born again"**

**New way of life**

STOUFFVILLE — Ron Ellis is a born-again Christian. He's not embarrassed by it. He's proud of it and tells of this transition in his life at every opportunity. He was the guest speaker, Saturday, at a men's breakfast in the Stouffville Missionary Church.  
"You don't earn Christianity. The Lord has done it for us. He is the key," he told a packed audience, many of them young boys. "Invite the Lord into your life," he urged.  
Holding his own personal Bible with the Maple Leaf emblem emblazoned on the front, he recounted some of the changes that had occurred since his acceptance of Christ.  
"I was a very selfish person. I was concerned only about me," he said, "and this attitude was extremely hard on my wife and family. Hockey was everything. My home was a fort. I had no time for my children. It was a case of doing my own thing and it was sad."  
"Don't get caught up in the 'I generation' because that's where you'll end up," he warned.  
A 17 year veteran in the N.H.L., all with Toronto, the soft-spoken Ellis told how an organization called "Team Ranch" had introduced him to the Christian way of life. He told how, following team practice, the players returned to the dressing room to find a Bible outside every locker. "They all have one and they cherish them," he said.  
The introduction of a program known as "Team Chapel" was described as "a tremendous break-through" in the National League. It was accepted by the Leaf management, he said, "with certain strings attached", but it was a start. On occasions, he said, it wasn't uncommon to have as many as 14 players meeting together in a hotel room, with a special speaker brought in from outside. Ten teams are now taking part, he said, including the Stanley Cup champion New York Islanders.  
He praised the support received from Mr. Zeigler, President of the N.H.L., but was highly critical of his former boss, Harold Ballard and quoted him as saying "religion is ruining hockey."  
"I feel that's one of the reasons I'm not playing anymore, because I'm a Christian," he said.  
However, he stressed the fact that the Christian beliefs he holds, is spreading throughout the National League. He cited people like Paul Henderson, Dean Prentice, Boom-Boom Geoffron, Paul Baxter, David Shand, Doug Jarvis, Mike Crombie and Ed Kea as examples of players who have taken a Christian stand and made a tremendous impact on others.  
"There are about fifty and it's growing," he said.  
"Like developing into a professional hockey player, the transition to Christianity "has taken a lot of hard work and a lot of help from people along the way," Ellis said. "It doesn't come from wearing a cross around your neck or having a Bible in your home. It's a personal commitment that you yourself must make."  
The speaker recalled how, on the verge of a mental breakdown, he was forced to retire from hockey. "Later, he made a comeback. "Then, I was in control of my life," he said.

**Acton-here to stay**

STOUFFVILLE — forward although Does a hockey veteran like Ron Ellis know an N.H.L. rookie like Keith Acton?  
Despite the fact they played on separate teams (Ron with Toronto and Keith with Montreal), the former Leaf star expressed a personal interest in the Canadiens'

**90th birthday**

**Honored**

Mrs. Alice May Marson of Ballantrae was the guest of honor, Saturday, at a dinner party in The King's Restaurant. The occasion was her 90th birthday. Among the many people in attendance were Mrs. Jessica Church and Mrs. Jennifer McInnis of Vancouver Island; Mr. and Mrs. James Glover, Ballantrae; Joan Marson of Peterborough; Mrs. Sylvia Carr and John, Conal, Michael and Deirdre Carr of Conn., U.S.A. and Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Glover, Drae and Devon of Ballantrae. Messages of congratulations were received from Buckingham Palace and from Prime Minister Trudeau.

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