



Milt Dunnell

Nothing funny about losing

A MAN WHO COACHES a hockey club which has managed 11 victories in 61 games has to be careful. If the customers don't take out a contract on him, he's likely to develop a sardonic sense of humor.

Tom McVie, who walks a break beat behind the Washington Capitals' bench, thinks the Washington fans are wonderful. Even when he takes the long stroll across the pond to the dressing room — after yet another loss — there is scarcely a hoot or hiss.



TOM McVIE
The wounded don't cry

"They seem to sense that this team is trying," McVie suggests. "When we score a goal, they practically blow the roof off the building. We've been averaging better than 11,000 per game. Philadelphia plays in Washington tomorrow night (Sunday) and you can't buy a ticket."

All of which indicates — although McVie doesn't say so — that Washington could be a hot hockey town if it hadn't been

thrown all the bric-a-brac from the NHL cellars and attics in 1974, when the league opened the door to Washington and Kansas City in its last spasm of expansion.

By that time, about all a new franchise purchaser got for his money (supposedly \$6 million) was an invitation to the annual Lester Patrick awards dinner.

"When I came to the Washington club," McVie hastens to say, "I made two resolutions. I wouldn't complain about the expansion draft and how badly the new clubs were treated. Nor would I cry about injuries. I don't want any of my guys, who are with the club to feel they wouldn't be here if somebody else hadn't got hurt."

"I must say, though, I had to chuckle when I heard a Colorado radio man lamenting how the Rockies had lost 68 man-games through injuries. If we don't lose another one, for the balance of the season, our total will be 308 man-games. That includes our captain — the guts of our club — Yvon Labre — who has played one game for us."

A toughie at Port Huron

McVIE'S SENSE OF HUMOR has survived the strain of failure and frustration. It has become tinged with irony, though. When it is mentioned that his goalies have played well, McVie has a stock answer: "They should. They get plenty of practice."

Actually, he believes the Capitals got lucky when they picked Jimmy Bedard of Niagara Falls in the sixth round of the amateur draft. Bedard had played goal for the Sudbury juniors.

"The first year this guy came to our camp (1976) we played him for 30 minutes of the games and he did not allow a single goal," McVie recalls. "So we sent him to the Dayton club."

"Last fall, it was the same procedure. He hadn't allowed a goal. Somebody in the camp cracked that if Bedard would allow even one goal, we could send him to Hershey. We had a game against the Cincinnati club of the WHA — and it happened. Jimmy allowed a goal. We sent him to Hershey."

They soon sent for him to come back. That was his 28th game for the Caps when they got zapped, on Saturday night, at the Gardens. Bedard made one of his few bad moves since rejoining the club, when he got far out of his cage and allowed the Leafs' Jimmy Jones the freedom of the house.

There's another prospect in the minors whom McVie hasn't forgotten. That's Archie Henderson, a 6-foot-6 right winger from Calgary, now playing for Port Huron.

"Henderson is so tough," Washington scout Billy Taylor needles, "that Tommy was afraid to tell him he was being sent down."

McVie grins and adds: "I made the mistake of rooming him with Bryan Watson. Bryan kept reminding him he had to be tough in this league. Henderson started punching out people in practice."

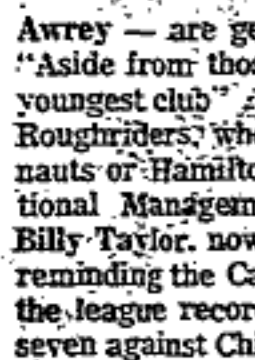
Fergie's betting on youth

THUMBNAILED TALES: One man who can say: "I told you so," today is John Ferguson, who has been getting his share of barbs as general manager of the New York Rangers. Ferguson has been contending, all along, that the Rangers had a lot of young talent, on the verge of moving up to help the Blueshirts. One of them was Hardy Aastrom, the Swedish goalie who stopped Montreal Canadiens' unbeaten streak at 23 on Saturday night. There's another goalie in the minors on whom Fergie is equally high. He's Dong Soetaert of Edmonton. . . . Here are some of the other young players, who could be moving up to Madison Square Garden: Benoit Gosselin, a forward who was drafted from Trois Rivieres. Mario Marois, a defence player. Mickey Keating, a left winger. Brad Becker, a right winger from University of North Dakota. . . . The Rangers have a tag on three good players still in college: Lance Nethery of Burlington, Ont., who's at Cornell, John Bethel of Boston University, and Alex Jeans, University of Toronto. . . . Only three Rangers — Phil Esposito, Dallas Smith and Don Awrey — are getting long in the tooth. Says Fergie: "Aside from those three players, we have the league's youngest club."

FERGUSON



PETTERSEN



Leif Pettersen of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, who is asking for a trade to either Argonauts or Hamilton Tiger-Cats, has signed with International Management Group (Mark McCormack). . . . Billy Taylor, now a scout for Washington Capitals, kept reminding the Caps, when they were in town, who holds the league record for assists in one game. Taylor had seven against Chicago, March 16, 1947.



SPECTACULAR CRASH: Montreal Canadiens' Guy Lafleur and a teammate slam into New York Islander net during first period of their NHL tussle last night. Fortunately for Habs, the puck

entered net before the players, who were unhurt. Montreal edged New York 2-1, in battle between NHL's two best teams, point-wise. Larry Robinson scored game winner; Clark Gillies for Islanders.

Leafs use the muscle on Hawks

By JIM KERNAGHAN
Star sports writer

CHICAGO — It's always helpful to have a player with the proportions of Jack Valiquette for a National Hockey League game the likes of last night's dock-brawl here.

The 6-foot-2, 200-pound centre won his battles in the trenches and in so doing, scored a pair of goals, assisted on another and created enough turmoil in front of the Chicago Black Hawks' goal to spark Toronto Maple Leafs to a 5-3 victory.

It was a no-quarter struggle from the start, with Hawks keying on Toronto leaders Darryl Sittler and Borje Salming.

"Sure, they ran at Sittler and Salming," said Toronto coach Roger Neilson. "It's pretty good strategy, after all."

It backfired, however, as Sittler not only beat Stan Mikita on nearly all the faceoffs, but took the upper

Maple Leafs 5, Black Hawks 3

hand in the bitter feud they had going and also scored a pair of goals.

For Valiquette, it was a particularly gratifying night. He had been sent down to the minors for a couple of weeks and this was his fourth game back. He does, naturally, have something to prove.

"I guess you could say it certainly does help," smiled the 21-year-old veteran in his fourth pro season. "On that first goal, I was going to go past him (Chicago netminder Tony Esposito) in front of the net, then shoot. I had to close in, though, and his leg came out and I flipped it."

Valiquette opened the scoring with a rebound of Lanny McDonald's drive after 4:40 of play. Then Ron Ellis smacked a 33-foot drive on the glove side to give Toronto a 2-0 lead within a minute.

Ivan Boldirev clicked for Chicago before the period was out.

Sittler, with Valiquette jousting for some space in front of Esposito, put Toronto two goals up again with a second-period power-play score. Then Grant Mulvey, with a late goal, gave Chicago new heart before the second intermission.

Hawks put extreme pressure on Toronto goaltender Mike Palmater from the opening whistle of the final period and J. P. Bordeleau finally clicked, cracking a shot in off the goalpost.

Then Valiquette cashed in a neat three-way passing play from Sittler and Ellis for the winner. Sittler con-

Last goal 19:17

nected again with 43 seconds remaining to play on a carom shot that struggled down the ice and into the Chicago goal, vacated for an extra attacker.

"I didn't even intend it to go that far," said Sittler afterward. "I put it out on that angle just to get it past one of their guys. If it hadn't been on the net it would have been icing."

Two Leafs who had big nights were defencemen Brian Glennie and Mike Pelyk. Glennie, particularly, stone-walled the Hawks' attack with an array of solid hits, neat poke-checks and skate stops at the Toronto blueline.

"How about a few words for some unsung heroes," crowed Tiger Williams. "Glennie and Pelyk were terrific tonight."

Sittler, who took a stick across the chest from Keith Magnusson, plus sticks everywhere else from the remainder of the Chicago roster, was pleased with his dominance over Mikita.

"Usually, I have a lot of trouble with him on face-offs," said the Toronto captain, whose two goals lead him 37 for the season and the team goal-scoring lead. "Maybe I was bearing down a little harder tonight."

Jets' new owners ready to pay \$2 million to keep Swede stars

WINNIPEG (CP) — Anders Hedberg and Ulf Nilsson, Swedish-born superstars of the World Hockey Association, are the big winners in the bidding war for their services, but it now appears the pair will remain with the Winnipeg Jets.

Jets are about to change owners and the new partners say they have matched a contract offer from New York Rangers of the National Hockey League.

Rangers had offered Hedberg and Nilsson close to \$2 million in two-year contracts and to retain the pair the Jets had to come within \$20,000 of the offer.

Offer matched

"We believed it necessary to protect the value of this team so the offer had to be matched," said Bob Graham, chairman of the board for both the previous and the new owners. "The most attractive thing we have to offer is the calibre of the team on the ice and these two play a dominant role."

The offer was revealed at a news conference to



ULF NILSSON
Staying in Winnipeg



BOBBY HULL
Part-owner of Jets



ANDERS HEDBERG
A home in the WHA

announce that major league hockey's only publicly owned franchise was being bailed out by private interests.

A group of eight Winnipeg businessmen — some of them representing a group of investors — have offered to take over the team to ensure it can finish the season but mainly to pursue an NHL franchise.

While the change of ownership was being announced, it was the Hedberg-Nilsson situation that was of the prime

importance. Two of the brightest young stars in professional hockey, Hedberg and Nilsson, had appeared destined for New York.

Now they remain in limbo. The offer and the new financial situation of the Jets will be studied by arbitrator Fred Dunsmore who may insist the club put up half of the total contract offer in escrow.

"Hopefully, by that time we'll have some favorable answers from the NHL that might indicate to us that we have a plus 50 per cent chance of getting in," said Jets' leftwinger Bobby Hull, who is one of the new owners. "The big concern was keeping Anders and Ulf. Without them the franchise is not as viable."

'Not settled'

Neither Hedberg nor Nilsson appeared overly pleased with the counter offer.

"It's not settled until April 9," said Nilsson. "That's when they have to come up with the money. I guess it's a good business deal for them but . . ."

"I guess there are advantages to going to New York and advantages to staying here," said Hedberg. "But we don't have the luxury of the choice."

Nilsson said the choice isn't up to the players but at least the pair will have the security they were seeking.

"When we signed with the Jets three years ago we wanted the security of a long-term contract. But, at that time, we didn't know how good our abilities were or our value. We wanted to be able to se-

Graham, Hull, Dr. Gerry Wilson and local businessmen Michael Gobuty, Harvey Selter, brothers Barry and Marvin Shenkarow and John Shanski.

"The first reason for investing was to save hockey for the remainder of the season," said Hull. "and to give the city the chance to get into the NHL. If this team was abandoned and the players went their various ways there wouldn't be a snowball's chance in hell of getting into the NHL."

Five conditions

The takeover offer contained five conditions, all of which have been met or agreed to, including one that the public corporation resume ownership if an NHL franchise is not obtained by Aug. 15.

Graham said the new owners are willing to invest whatever is necessary to obtain an NHL franchise, but they are not interested in operating in the WHA.

Great sweater debate

Names make Leaf boss blue

CHICAGO — Maple Leafs' president Harold Ballard is enough to make anybody's brown eyes blue.

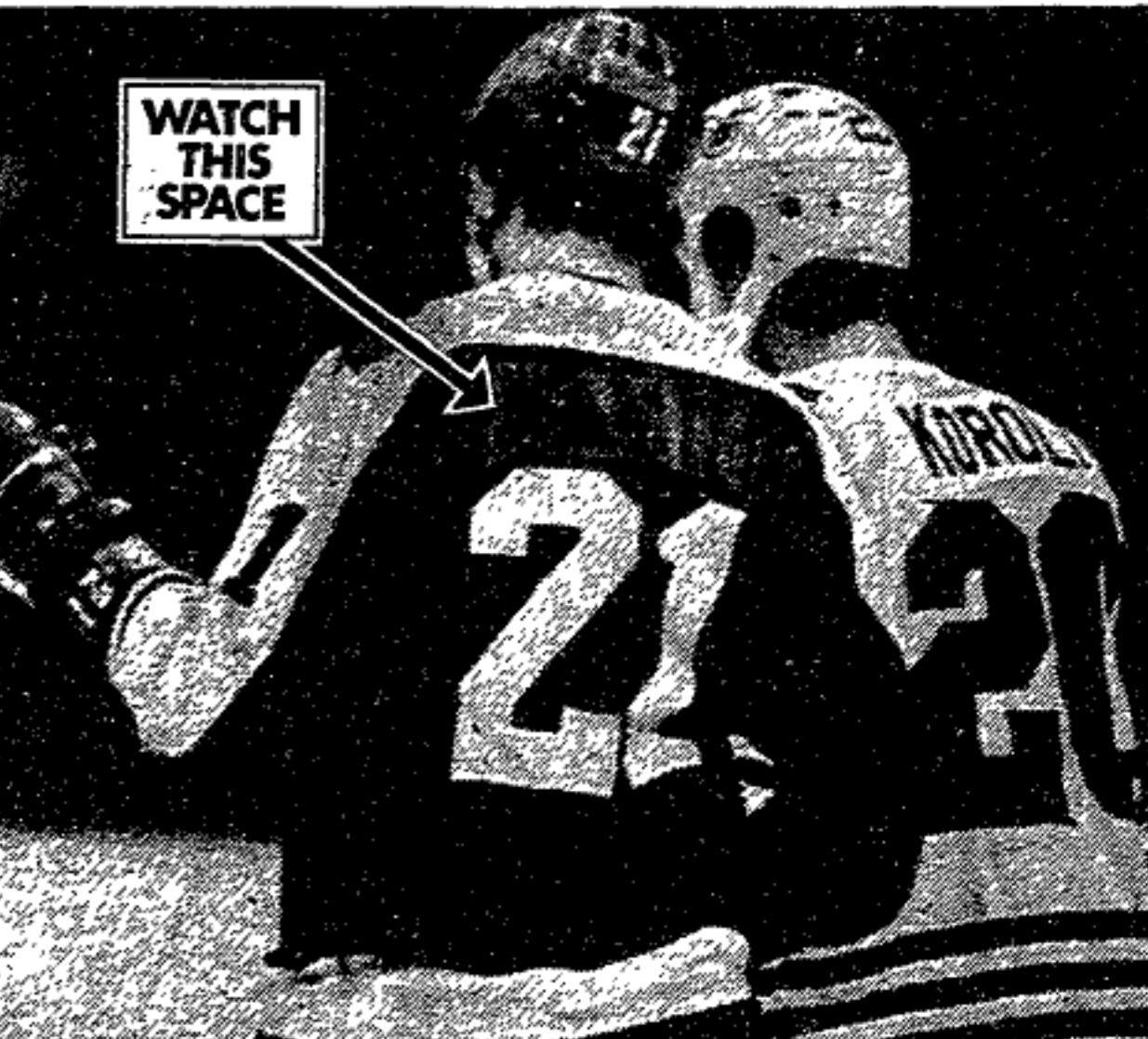
He was ordered by National Hockey League president John Ziegler to have surnames of his players sewn on their sweaters for all road games.

Ballard was miffed, but complied — more or less. The names were sewn on to Leafs' blue road sweaters — in exactly the same color of blue. In other words, no names were discernable with their blue-on-blue format.

"Can't you see those names?" Ballard asked in mock horror. "You'd better get your eyes checked. They're regulation all the way."

Ballard already has been fined \$2,000 by the NHL for failing to have his players' names on their sweaters during a televised game in Buffalo two weeks ago.

—Jim Kernaghan



NO MATTER how hard you look, you won't see Borje Salming's name on the back of his sweater, thanks to Harold Ballard's blue-on-blue lettering scheme. Leafs wore (?) their names on their sweaters after an edict from the NHL office.