

Punch, King Nurse Leafs' Slim Hopes

By REX MacLEOD

Even allowing for such phenomena as tidal waves, earthquakes, a subway shutdown or other acts of God, Montreal Canadiens are expected to win their fifth Stanley Cup in a row in the Gardens tonight.

That is the consensus of visiting and some resident shinny dignitaries who were consulted yesterday. Some visitors were interviewed at travel desks where they were having problems trying to confirm reservations back home. And few in-

cluded Montreal in their itinerary.

Canadiens, leading the best-of-seven final, 3-0, have won seven successive playoff games in the past few weeks and the general feeling is that they won't relent now. Leafs, they say, have about as much chance of getting through as an American quarter in a downtown bar.

Canadiens own almost every record in the book but one has eluded them and it is causing them some embarrassment. They haven't won the Stanley

Cup in a minimum of eight games. They are determined to correct that little oversight this time.

Leafs, the popular impression is, have played the best hockey they are capable of in the past two games. Yet, they lost each game—by scores of 2-1 and 5-2. That can be mighty damaging to any team's morale and the guessing is that Leafs will make a respectable exit in the Gardens tonight.

Naturally, there are still a few defiant outposts, manned by such intrepid characters as George Imlach, Leafs' silent leader and his fearless assistant and counsellor, King Clancy. They won't concede anything to Canadiens unless it is to point out graphically that they (Canadiens) are the luckiest (censored) so-and-so ever to play hockey.

Herewith are a few eloquent quotes about the outcome of this series which might be lost to posterity if they weren't reproduced immediately.

King Clancy: "Anybody who thinks Canadiens can beat us four games in a row is absolutely crazy. They've got every break so far. They scored the first goal in every game. Watch and see what happens if we get the first goal and I think we'll get it in the next game. We're due for a few breaks."

Milt Schmidt, Boston Bruins' coach, who was seeking transportation to Boston: "I don't see how Canadiens can lose. They're too powerful in every department and they don't seem to care how much pressure you put on them. But I would like to see Leafs get the lead just once—to see how Canadiens react."

Toe Blake, Canadiens' coach: "I wish this was a best-of-five series. Then it would be all over and I could start worrying about next year."

George (Punch) Imlach, a local oracle: "We've got our backs to the wall and we can't retreat any farther. It's time to start moving ahead. It's been done before and we can do it again."

Tommy Ivan, general manager of Chicago Black Hawks, who was also checking flight departures—to Chicago: "Four games looks like a reasonable bet right now but I think I'll run down to Montreal anyway. There's a Junior game there Friday."

Alfred Pike, New York Rangers' coach: "I think Canadiens will win in four games and I'm not trying to detract from Leafs. It wouldn't make any difference who was playing Canadiens—not even Rangers and we beat them six times during the season. I thought Leafs were a little lucky to get by Detroit. They can't be lucky forever."

Ken Reardon, vice-president of Club de Hockey Canadiens: "Those new grey seats in the Gardens are terrific. A wonderful panoramic view. The hospitality of Toronto and the Leafs has been outstanding. They can't seem to do enough for us."

Scott Young, distinguished sports columnist: His solemnly worded reply was being recorded and might be ready for the next edition.