

Abel Confident But Odds Favor Leafs Tonight

Apart from an incendiary dressing-room oration or two, still to be delivered, Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings are reported all set for the re-sumption of their Stanley Cup semi-final in the Gardens tonight.

The series is tied, 2-2, with a sixth game in the works for Detroit Olympia tomorrow. And should a seventh game be necessary it will be played here on Wednesday. The winners will be offered to Montreal Canadiens in the Stanley Cup final.

Wings, who have been working out at home for the past three days, flew into town last night. Leafs also spent the past few days at home, regrettably passing up their Peterborough retreat. Farthest Leafs ventured out of town was a safari to the Ted Reeve Arena in the east end yesterday for a practice.

Latest word from this paper's Gambling and Games Editor is that Leafs are favored to win tonight's game. They were also favored to win the first game—but they didn't.

But it has been explained, meticulously, too, that if you wish to wager on Leafs in tonight's game you must give 1½ goals at even money or plunk down \$11 to win \$5.

Speculators who prefer Detroit will get ONE goal at even money or they may bet \$5 to win \$9. If you don't feel in the mood for betting you may still use the money to purchase refreshments and watch the game on television.

Leafs showed unusual vigor in their workout in the T. Reeve rink yesterday but that could be misleading because it was cool there and maybe they were merely trying to get warm. But their worried leader, George Imlach, expressed mild satisfaction with their energy and he is quick to recognize the symptoms of a change in attitude. And he has been hoping for a change.

Some inside analysts have suggested that Imlach is fretting about two problems: (a) Whom to employ on right wing with Red Kelly (centre) and Frank Mahovlich (left wing) and (b) whether to give more ice time to his irreverent line of Gerry James, Duke Edmundson and Johnny Wilson.

As for (a) that might not be as serious as it looks. Mahovlich might provide the answer. If he feels in the mood to gallop like he can and if Kelly can guide him out of the corral with those feathery passes, Leafs can get by with a hobby horse on the right side. And said hobby horse might even collect a few scoring points.

That (b) might be more difficult especially since James, Edmundson and Wilson seem to have their own cheering section

in the Gardens. Their exhortations for their heroes sometimes interfere with a coach's profound thinking.

Perhaps it would be most prudent for Imlach to save this exuberant trio for spot assignments, a system he used successfully throughout the season. They seem to work better when they aren't used regularly.

Also, it is hoped that Imlach may be able to resist the temptation of ordering oxygen if his troops get that tired-out feeling. Should that emergency arise, merely sic James, Edmundson and Wilson over the boards. They're better than oxygen—and roughter, too.

All of which, of course, Mr. Imlach, is respectfully submitted.

Notes: A dispatch from Detroit said that Sid Abel, Wings' coach, was "confident" as he departed with his team for Toronto for tonight's fifth game.

"I feel that we can take a game from the Leafs on their own ice and win the big one at Olympia on Sunday, too," said Abel. . . . Here are other quotes attributed to Confident Sid: "We've had a pretty good road club this year and I feel just as confident about playing on Toronto ice as I would at home." . . . "Our big problem all season has been the tough luck we've had around the net. In this series we've had 165 shots at Johnny Bower and scored only 10 goals.—One of these nights we're going to get lucky and snow them under." . . . Incidentally, during the schedule, in seven games in the Gardens, Wings won one, lost five and tied another. . . .

Rangers' defenseman Bill Gadsby's remark on TV from Chicago Thursday night that Canadiens "could be had" in this year's final seemed to lack conviction. . . . Canadiens had just finished eliminating Black Hawks in four successive games and they didn't allow the Hawks one goal in two games on Chicago ice. . . . If that indicates that the Habs can be had it should be explained by Mr. Gadsby. Did he mean for one game—or one period?

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Goalie Credited For Speedy Win Over Chihawks

Montreal, April 1 (CP) — Goalie Jacques Plante was the talk of Montreal Canadiens' fandom today after slapping the horse collar on Chicago Black Hawks twice in succession to waltz his club into its 10th consecutive Stanley Cup final.

Plante's 4-0 and 2-0 shutout performances in Chicago, after two 4-3 wins here last week, knocked the Hawks from the National Hockey League playoffs in four games. The elimination of Chicago gave Montreal a boost up the ladder toward a record fifth cup championship in a row.

While Canadiens' supporters were busy swapping stories of Plante's phenomenal saves and trips outside his goalie's crease, there came word from his wife that Jacques predicted Thursday's shutout win.

After Tuesday night's game, Mrs. Plante told a reporter, Jacques called home and asked if she was proud of him.

"I told him I was very proud," she said.

"We'll win the next game by another shutout," Jacques told me.

She said she watched last night's game on television but had to leave the room in the last three minutes because she said she could not stand the excitement.

It was Plante's ninth shutout in Stanley Cup play. His first was in 1953 in Chicago Stadium in his first playoff game as a substitute for Gerry McNeil.

During the regular season, the 31-year-old goalie scored only three shutouts as he won the Vezina trophy for the fifth successive year, by a slim margin over Hawks' Glenn Hall. The trophy is awarded to the goalie on the club with the best goals-against record in the 70-game schedule.

"Plante is without doubt, the best goalie in hockey," said Coach Toe Blake after last night's game. "I don't want to take anything away from Hall, but Plante is better than he is, especially when the chips are down."

Canadiens were due for a few

days' rest and light drills while awaiting the winner of the second semi-final between Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings, now tied 2-2 in games.

The start of the final series is indefinite if either Toronto or Detroit win both weekend games in Toronto tomorrow night and in Detroit, Sunday night, and end the series.

NHL President Clarence Campbell said he will have to consult with the teams involved and may have an announcement about the final series' dates during the weekend.

However, he said that if the Toronto-Detroit series goes the limit, to a seventh and deciding game in Toronto next Wednesday, the final series will start in Montreal next Saturday night. The first two games of the best-of-seven final will be in Montreal.

Blake declined to make any predictions about the final or say which team he would prefer to meet.

"A few days' rest will do us good," he said. "We'll be ready for either Toronto or Detroit."

During the regular schedule, Canadiens had slightly greater success over the second-place Leafs than over the fourth-place Red Wings. Against Toronto, they won 10, tied two and lost two. Against Detroit, they won seven, lost two and tied five times.

Canadiens outscored Leafs 51-28, in their 14 meetings and Wings—30-20.

Johnny Bower Proves He Belongs in NHL

By REX MACLEOD
It has taken Johnny Bower 15 years, countless stitches and numerous teeth (but no grey hairs) to prove to everyone's satisfaction that he belongs in the National Hockey League.

And it is ironic that Bower, a scarred 36-year-old goalkeeper, should reach the peak of his career at an age when most hockey players have either retired or should have.

Bower will seriously consider retiring at the end of the season, despite his current heroics for Maple Leafs in their Stanley Cup series with Detroit Red Wings. The games, he says, are getting longer all the time. Leafs, of course, might change his mind.

"I won't decide about retiring until I get back home," said Bower, who returns to Prince Albert, Sask., each spring. "If I can get a good job during the off season I may retire. I'd like to get my kids in school and quit moving around."

"At any rate I'll wait until I receive a contract from Punch Imlach (Leafs' manager-coach). I don't think I'm good for 70 games anymore. I get awfully tired. If I return I would prefer to be Leafs' second goalkeeper."

Poor old decrepit Bower, the records show, played a mere 66 games for Leafs this season. Among the NHL regulars only Jacques Plante of Canadiens and Glenn Hall of the Black Hawks played more games. Also, the only two NHL goalies with better goals-against averages than Bower were Plante and Hall.

Bower's journey to the NHL was a long, tedious one although many observers think (and thought) this was a colossal mistake on the part of NHL coaches and managers.

Bower broke into professional hockey with Providence of the AHL in 1945-46. He hasn't missed a year since, whether it was the AHL, the Western Hockey League or the NHL.

Bower's goals-against average this year, for instance, was 2.73. Last year, his first with Leafs, it was 2.74. But, away back in 1953-54, when he labored a season for New York Rangers, his average was 2.60—and Rangers finished in fifth place. Bower's reward for that performance was demotion to the minors—

Vancouver of the Western Hockey League.

Even last year, Bower's first with Leafs, Imlach was seriously considering sending

him back to the minors at mid-season. He relented and, naturally, he's happy now that he did.

Jim Hendy, general manager of Cleveland Barons, of the American Hockey League, has been one of Bower's most faithful boosters down through the years. Bower played nine years for the Barons.

"Bower should have been in the NHL for keeps at least seven or eight years ago," said Hendy. "Even NHL players said he was as good as at least half of the goalies in the NHL."

"I don't know why he didn't make it sooner. He has the ability, the temperament and the guts. I've seen him cut for 18 stitches in the mouth and still keep playing. And there was never a better-liked player on our team."

Hendy recalled that Leafs could have had Bower back in the 1949-50 season. At that time the Cleveland club had both Bower and Al Rollins. And Leafs were looking for a successor to Turk Broda.

"Squib Walker, Leafs' scout, stayed with us for six games," said Hendy. "We played Bower one night and Rollins the next. After six games Walker told us he wanted Rollins. It took them

several more years before they got Bower in the draft."

Bower apparently doesn't hold any grudges because NHL teams ignored him for so many seasons. He didn't even want to leave Cleveland when Leafs drafted him two years ago. A two-year contract was the big selling point.

But Bower may be reminding many NHL scouts of their faux pas with his brilliant play in Leafs - Red Wings series. This semi-final is tied, 2-2, and only, some observers insist, because Bower has been uncanny in blocking shots.

"I said before the series started that Leafs could win the Stanley Cup if Bower keeps on playing the way he has recently," said Wings' general manager, Jack Adams. "And I didn't see anything in the first four games to change my mind."

"He beat us in that first overtime game when we out-shot Leafs, 60-52. I didn't believe some of the stops he made, even though I saw them. But, how long can he keep it up?"

That's a question Bower would like to answer or have answered for him. With the series renewing here tonight he can feel the pressure piling up because he realizes so much is expected of him. And the first few minutes of the game will be the worst.

"It means a lot to a goalkeeper if he stops the first few shots," said Bower. "Then you feel a lot better. But if they score on you early then it's rough. I know it makes me nervous."

"I was jumpy in that first game of the series when Detroit got away to an early 2-0 lead. Whenever that happens the puck seems to start bouncing the wrong way no matter how you play it. It's an awful feeling."

Best tranquilizer for a taut goalkeeper in Bower's opinion is for his team to give him an early lead. That's mighty relaxing medicine, especially in playoff games where one goal quite often is the difference between a win or a loss.

And that might be a clue for Leafs if they wish to reward their honest, old goalie for services already performed in this series. Go out and get him a few goals. The odds are that Bower will take it from there.



Johnny Bower's Smile Belies Tension but It Could Be Different Tonight. Veteran goalkeeper is key figure as Leafs-Red Wings renew series.