

By Scott Young

Who's Crozier? Now We Know

THIS was in a dressing room corner that normally isn't used. The rest of the Leafs have their regular places on the benches that run around the walls, but Joe Crozier, the journeyman defenseman, had been given this empty place beside the blackboard. The room was like the King St. subway station at 5 p.m., the crowd of hand-shakers causing Tim Horton, on his way past, to remark: "You'd think we won tonight." Which they had, of course, but was a little dig at the fact that there's always lots of room in there when they lose.

Beside the blackboard, someone shook hands with Crozier and told him he'd played well.

This was true, and had been ever since the first murmur of "Who in — is Joe Crozier?" sounded through the Gardens one week before.

Up from Rochester, he was, and is on his way back there now.

The whole story of professional hockey as a career is in records like his—up from Brandon Wheat Kings to turn professional with San Francisco 11 seasons ago, up from Denver in the United States Hockey League, Vancouver in the Pacific Coast League, eight years with Quebec, other goes with Springfield and Providence before Rochester.

Now 31, and never in the National Hockey League until nine days ago.

"THANKS," Crozier said to the man who had complimented him. He has the scars on his face and close-cut scalp to show for his life in hockey since he was a boy on his first skates in Winnipeg. "I can play in this league," he said. "I think I'd be good for four or five years up here, if I get a chance."

He had played good defense in Johnny Bower's 1-0 shutout against the great Bobby Hull, the good rookie Red Kelly, and the rest of the NHL's hottest late-season team, the Chicago Black Hawks.

He hasn't much speed, but showed the deftness of experience in checking and clearing and generally helping to guard the spry old chap in goal. Hits well, and is a superior puck-stopper of the second goalie type—sliding into point-blank shots to break up many a dangerous play. He was exceptionally good in Leafs' 6-2 win in Montreal last Thursday. That was a game he wanted to play well, because for eight years he'd been playing before Forum crowds in the Quebec League, and it was nice to show them he belonged up higher.

"I know I'm improving every game," he said. "The young guys improve, so why not me? When you first come in you don't want to make a mistake, because one mistake and you're back on the bench. I'm getting more confident all the time. I just got here a little late, that's all."

A CURIOUS thing, said his coach, Mr. George Imlach, "he plays better up here than he does in Rochester."

"The guys up here check better," said Crozier. "I find it easier to play here than in the other leagues."

What are his chances? "I think he'd make a good fifth defenseman in this league," Imlach said. "If he does as well in training camp in the fall as he looks now, he'll give some of those guys a real run for it."

Another curious thing is the way Crozier was chosen in the first place to come up as an emergency replacement due to Leaf defense injuries.

"Whoever I bring up from Rochester under the emergency replacement rule," Imlach said, "once the emergency is over and I return him, I can't call him up for another 14 days."

"Steve Kraftcheck is the best defenseman in the American Hockey League—but if I bring him up and send him back, and we get another injury on defense, by the time I could get Kraftcheck back we'd be six games into the playoffs."

"Same with Al McNeill, who you have to rank right next to Kraftcheck. I didn't want to disqualify either of those guys, so I took Crozier."

Crozier and Imlach were together in Quebec for years, as co-owners of the franchise there. "One advantage from that," Imlach said, "is that he knows what I want him to do."

Crozier won't show again here this season. He isn't even on the Toronto list of 25 players eligible for playoffs.

Today he rejoins his wife and their eight-year-old son in Rochester.

Whether he'll make it next year, for a little while or a long while, remains to be seen.

At 31, he has left it late, as he says—maybe a little too late.

But if it means anything to him (and, talking to him, one gets the idea that it does), when he finally did get here he looked as if he belonged.

BRIEFLY: I didn't think Vern Buffey called a very good game Saturday. Missed a couple of excellent chances to call penalty shots—although no official in the NHL will give him a black mark for that. It's a phoney rule, left in the rule book by a bunch of phoneyes. . . . I thought Tabloid's St. Patrick's Day show was tip-top excellent, especially Kildare Dobbs in the pub scene—although I've never seen that many people SMILING in a real Irish pub. . . . If anyone saw two men changing a tire on a '32 Meteor on Queen St. E. early Friday a.m., it was Bob Cunningham Jr. and S. Young, celebrated panelists (with Cookie Gilchrist, Angelo Mosca and Len Back), returning from the Balm Beach Beach Club's sports night. Some day I must get a newer car, such as a '53 Meteor. . . . How are we going to retaliate for the southern accents in that underwhelming ballad, Sink the Bismarck? How about Noel Coward singing the Star-Spangled Banner?

Leafs v. Red Wings; Habs v. Hawks

Bobby Hull, Plante Win Big Trophies

National Hockey League teams battled through the last games of the schedule last night before playoff positions and winners of the Vezina and Art Ross Trophies were determined.

When the curtain fell on the 70-game season, Montreal Canadiens prepared to meet Chicago Black Hawks and Toronto Maple Leafs got set to face Detroit Red Wings in the Stanley Cup semi-finals.

Canadiens' goaltender Jacques Plante won the Vezina Trophy for the fifth consecutive time, establishing a NHL record, and centreman Bobby Hull of Chicago Black Hawks edged out Bronco Horvath of Boston Bruins by one point to claim the scoring championship and the Art Ross Trophy.

The Stanley Cup playoffs will open Wednesday in Toronto and Thursday in Montreal.

Toronto Maple Leafs 3-2 victory in Detroit last night left Red Wings in fourth place, two points back of Black Hawks, who tied the Bruins, 5-5, in Boston. In the other Sunday night game, New York Rangers stopped the Canadiens at Madison Square Garden, 3-1.

In Saturday's play, Leafs downed Chicago, 1-0. Detroit trimmed New York, 6-3, and Montreal won, 5-1, to eliminate Boston Bruins.

Leafs settled the playoff issue before the Chicago-Boston game was completed.

Plante entered the game in New York tied with Glen Hall of Chicago in the race for the Vezina cup, which he won by a two-goal margin, 189-178. At one point in the season he held a 29-goal advantage. Plante previously shared the Vezina record of four successive wins with Bill Durnan, Canadiens' star of the 1940s. Durnan, won the trophy six times, but had his string broken in 1947-48.

Andy Bathgate led Rangers to victory with his 25th and 26th goals of the season. Barry Culen got the other New York goal. Maurice Richard was the Canadiens' marksman.

The scoring championship wasn't settled until the 13-minute mark of the final period of the wide-open game at Boston. Hull was credited with an assist on the Hawks' fifth goal by Eric Nesterenko, while Horvath sat on the Boston bench nursing an injured jaw.

Horvath, who saw his one-point lead vanish on a goal by Hull in the second period, was hurt a few minutes later and sent to hospital for X-rays. He returned to the Boston bench but did not play in the third period.

Hull's goal was his 39th of the season and his assist brought his total scoring points to 81. Horvath had 39 goals and 41 assists. Hull is the first Chicago player to win the championship since Roy Conacher turned the trick in 1948-49.

Glen Skov, Ken Wharram, Ed Litzenberger and Eric Nesterenko were the other Chicago snipers. Doug Mohns got two goals, Charley Burns, Vic Stasiuk and Don McKenney one apiece for the Bruins.

In Montreal Saturday, after a goalless opening period, Canadiens moved in front with a power play goal by Don Marshall and followed with goals by Phil Goyette and Henri Richard. Dick Moore and Goyette scored in the final period.

Guy Gendron, enjoying his most productive season of his career, counted his 24th goal for Boston in the second period.

A crowd of 12,248 in Detroit Olympia Saturday saw Dean Prentice score all three New York goals, but the Wings, with Norm Ullman and Murray Oliver scoring twice each, had little trouble in counting their first home ice victory over New York since the opening night of the season here. Gary Aldern and Alex Delvecchio fired the other Detroit goals.

Imlach Chooses Peterborough As Hide-Out

Peterborough, March 20 — Toronto Maple Leafs of the National Hockey League arrive here Monday morning by bus to stay a week, commuting to Toronto on Wednesday and returning until Saturday to hold practices at the memorial centre for their Stanley Cup semi-finals.

Coach Punch Imlach wanted to get the Leafs away from social and family connections for playoffs and he chose Peterborough as being far enough away and having good hotel and arena accommodations.

The Leafs have trained in Peterborough the last two autumns, stopping at the Empress Hotel and working out daily in the local million-dollar memorial centre.

In Toronto Saturday night Imlach refused to tell the press where he was going to hide out his team.



Acrobatic Gerry James Performs Head Stand After Body Jolt by Pierre Pilote. Leaf's hardrock winger was upended during frustrated attack on Chicago goal.



Bobby Hull . . . wins scoring title. Jacques Plante . . . keeps Vezina Trophy. Bronco Horvath . . . has jaw bruised.

Toronto, Detroit Here Wednesday; Bower Is Star in Motor City Game

By REX MacLEOD
Globe and Mail Reporter

DETROIT, March 20—Johnny Bower's incredible goalkeeping ensured a 3-2 win for Toronto Maple Leafs over the determined Detroit Red Wings in the final game of the National Hockey League schedule here tonight. It was the second outstanding performance for the 34-year-old veteran in as many nights.

Saturday, in Toronto, he shutout Chicago Black Hawks, 1-0, in a game in which he even had the goalposts working for him. On several occasions the Hawks hit posts with gaping portions of the Toronto net as inviting as a wide-open billiard table side pocket.

Tonight's game turned out to be a preview of one-half of the Stanley Cup semi-finals. Wings will visit Toronto Wednesday and Saturday for the first two games of their penultimate playoff performance.

Wings, with one of their most vigorous offensive games of the season, should have won. They assaulted the Toronto goal, sometimes for minutes at a time, outshooting Leafs, 45 to 25. But Bower, kicking, grabbing, diving and sweeping with his stick, defied most of their desperate efforts to score. And the crowd of 14,019 groaned in frustration.

It was Johnny Wilson, a former Red Wing, who scored the winning goal with fewer than two minutes left in the game. Leafs had a 2-0 lead at one time, but Wings fought back to tie the score.

Leafs seemed to be wilting late in the game under a prolonged Detroit siege and they were holding onto a tie merely because of the frantic acrobatics of Bower.

Then Gerry James pushed the puck over the Leafs' blueline, trapping four Wings down the middle with only defenseman Warren Godfrey back to help goalie Terry Sawchuk.

Wilson flew into formation on the left flank and, just inside the Detroit blueline, James fed him a lateral. Wilson who had scored only one goal since Christmas, pelted a shot from about 25 feet out. The puck hit Sawchuk's right elbow and ricocheted in the net.

Frank Mahovlich and George Armstrong were the other scorers for Toronto. Defenseman Pete Goggin and rookie-of-the-year candidate Murray Oliver were Detroit scorers.

In Toronto Saturday night, it

Mikita. He was admitted to hospital with head injuries suffered in the first period.

Mikita suffered a broken right cheek bone when he was hit by a deflected shot. He underwent surgery Saturday night. Eric Nesterenko came out of a level crossing collision with Kelly with a concussion but went to Boston for a game tonight.

Bower, in gaining his fifth shutout of the season, was just as impressive as Chicago's Glenn Hall. Each goalie stopped 28 shots. Bobbie Hull, who played on two lines and logged more than 28 minutes' playing time, gave Bower his most nerve-racking moments.

Pierre Pilote, most underrated defenseman in the league, was a standout for Hawks in a game that had occasional flurries of high-speed action, excellent goalkeeping, fine defensive work plus solid bodychecking for the approval (or disapproval) of a crowd of 14,015.

MAPLE LEAF GARDENS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23

8.00 p.m.

N.H.L. PLAYOFF

(1st Game)

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DETROIT RED WINGS

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