

Veiled Anti-Ref Talk Heard

Red Wings' Playoff Success Baffling to Leafs' Fans

By REX MacLEOD

Unless those misunderstood referees reform they could be responsible for the heroic Maple Leafs losing their Stanley Cup semi-final series to the hated Detroit Red Wings.

At least that is the whole-some, unbiased impression one gets from unidentified Leafs' leaders as they await the fifth game of this series in the Gardens Saturday. The best-of-seven set is now tied, 2-2.

Leafs' unidentified leaders, of course, don't wish their opinions about referees to be published because the National Hockey League takes an extremely dim view of any criticism about its officials. Violators could be punished by heavy fines.

But Leafs were greatly outraged in Detroit on Tuesday because right-winger Ron Stewart was in the penalty box, serving a heinous hooking sentence when Gerry Melnyk scored the winning goal for Red Wings in overtime.

Stewart, they point out, was

also victimized in the first game of the series—which the Wings also won. Stewart scored a goal but it was disallowed because the referee had blown his whistle to signal a penalty—to the Wings.

It was referee Vern Buffey who whistled off Stewart in Detroit Tuesday—for hooking Jack McIntyre. There was no doubt that Stewart was guilty but Leafs' leaders thought the offense should have been overlooked. The score was tied, numerous other indiscretions had been pardoned and their opinion was that Buffey should not have called anything short of shinny manslaughter. That was the modus operandi of referee Frank Udvari in the third game of the series, also in Detroit.

Whether the referees were a trifle impulsive or not does not seem to be the principal issue in this little discussion. Many observers have been greatly perplexed that Leafs should have been so unimpressive as to require overtime against Wings, a team that had to

scramble furiously to finish in fourth place.

Throughout the season Leafs, in 14 games, won nine from the Wings. And before the playoffs started Leafs' manager-coach George Imlach, in a charitable forecast, suggested the series should not go more than five games—with Leafs winning of course.

Leafs' strategy in this series has been directed mainly at stopping Gordie Howe, the great right-winger of the Wings. And they have done quite a commendable job, sometimes reducing Howe to merely great instead of magnificent.

But, ironically enough, Leafs have been blatantly ignoring some of the other Detroit hired hands. And it has been a peculiar line of Len Haley, Val Fonteyne and Melnyk that has caused Leafs acute embarrassment. Haley scored the winner for Wings in the first game and Melnyk took care of the chore in Detroit Tuesday.

Imlach, who still figures that Leafs will win the series, admits that Wings have given him more

trouble than he anticipated.

"I would have to say they have been tougher than I thought but mainly because we haven't been playing as well as I thought we would," he said. "I thought some of our guys would give out with a better effort than they have. Maybe they don't like money any more."

Notes: Leafs arrived back in Toronto yesterday and held a light workout in the Gardens. Several players were excused because Imlach thought they didn't require any practice. . . Bert Olmstead, Allan Stanley, Ron Stewart, Bobby Pulford and Billy Harris were the absentees. . . Wings, who will not arrive here until tomorrow had a morning workout in the Detroit Olympia and coach Sid Abel will drill them there again today. . . Jack Adams, general

manager of the Wings, figures that Wings would be leading the series by at least 3-1, if it weren't for the superlative play of Johnny Bower, Leafs' goalkeeper. . . "Bower has never played better goal in his life than he did in those four games," said Adams. "How long can he keep it up?" . . . Imlach and his chief assistant King Clancy were in Rochester last night for the American Hockey League playoff game between Rochester and Cleveland. . . Imlach has indicated that he might promote one or two Rochester players to Leafs if it can be done without interfering with Rochester's playoff arrangements. . . Jack McKenzie, Wings' aggressive forward, who has missed the first four playoff games, while recovering from an injury, may be back in the lineup here Saturday.

Hawk Pilot Ponders: Could Switch Lineup

Chicago, March 30 (UPI) — Toe Blake, coach of the Stanley Cup champion Montreal Canadiens, refused to count the Chicago Black Hawks out of the 1960 cup struggle today, though his team holds a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven series.

"There's always life for those guys," he said. "Far from it for them to quit. They gave us two terrific games in Montreal, and they're all pretty proud to be in the National Hockey League."

"In this game you can't be a little too cocky because there's always somebody ready to step on you, and I've seen too many coaches or managers who've had to eat their words. We know we're going to have a battle, and we'll be going to try, a little harder."

The Canadiens could close out the semi-final cup series tomorrow with a fourth consecutive win over the Black Hawks, who finished third in the regular season race, and Blake said he would appreciate such a finish.

"It would be good to win," he said, "because then we'd get a little rest before we would go into the final series. Definitely we'll try to end it all."

Coach Rudy Pilous of the Hawks, though downcast, said he couldn't rule his sextet out. "They're too good a hockey club to just sit and take it," he said. "They know they played poorly last night, and they know that

it's not just a case of making the puck roll for you, that you've got to work for it."

"We're not going to change our strategy, and we still can go all the way. We'll just try to be sane and do the right things and get some good results."

Both teams worked their reserves today and gave the regulars who played last night, when the Canadiens won a 4-0 shutout, a rest. Tomorrow Pilous planned a morning drill but Blake said the Canadiens wouldn't be on the ice. "We never work the day of a game," he said.

Pilous, who last night said he contemplated possible lineup changes, said today that tomorrow's drill would make up his mind. "I don't want to do things in haste, so I'm reserving judgment. If everybody looks like they're on the move, I won't make any. If the few I have in mind aren't doing the job, then there could be forward line changes or a defense change."