

Legit Leafs no laughing matter

by Alex Chamberlain

For those of you who are still referring to them as the laughs (or Laffs), it's time you save yourself from drowning in that filthy residue left of the Ballard years and open your eyes to the new spirit of the Gardens. The Toronto Maple Leafs are back once again! It's been a long time coming, but the Leafs have finally built a team worthy of everyone's respect. The Leafs were up and down for most of the first half of the season, however, a steady trend has revealed the true potential this team possesses. I strongly believe that the Leafs, following in the footsteps of their brothers of October, have become more than a legitimate cast to capture their Stanley Cup this May.

It has been the timely acquisition of a few outstanding individuals that has fuelled the Leaf's attack of the NHL and has landed the club its best unbeaten streak since most of us even understood what these guys on blades were doing. The Leafs went unbeaten in ten games (9-0-1) in February and are now 10-1-1 in their last twelve games. The Leafs fell just short of the club record of eleven consecutive unbeaten games set in November of 1950.

With the acquisition of former Montreal head coach Pat Burns, the Leafs have been taught and forced to play a system which focuses on check-

ing and defensive aspects of the game. While they have consistently allowed one of highest goals-against averages for over a decade, the Leafs are now posting the second lowest average in the league, next to the division rival Blackhawks.

Undoubtedly the greatest acquisition made by respected GM Cliff Fletcher was his trade for Doug Gilmour half way through last season. Enough can not be said about this guy. Last year, before the blockbuster trade which sent Gary Leeman and others to Calgary, the Leafs were 10-25-5. After the trade, Gilmour led the Leafs to a 20-18-2 record, putting the team over .500 for the second half of the season. While the Leafs fell short in their pursuit of a playoff position, Gilmour vowed that things would only get better this year. And so they have.

Doug Gilmour was named player of the week in the midst of the Leafs unbeaten streak and leads the team with an unbelievable 102 points in sixty-nine games. His incredible efforts have made him a strong candidate for the Hart trophy. Though the Leafs have built quite a good team around him, they would not be a serious threat without him. Even Gretzky says "Gilmour should probably win the Hart". Gilmour is also a shoe-in for the Selke trophy as the league's best defensive forward. Be-

lieve it or not, he will achieve this while scoring in the area of 120 points.

It is important to note a couple of other key acquisitions. Rookie goaltender Felix Potvin has been nothing short of sensational since getting into the groove of the season. Potvin posts the league's best goals against average, hovering around the area of 2.00, an almost unheard of number in the 90s. This makes Potvin the leading candidate for the Vezina trophy, which honours the goaltender with the lowest goals against average. There is also the possibility that he could be voted rookie of the year, though Winnipeg's Teemu Selanne's record-breaking performance makes him look like the favourite.

In acquiring Dave Andreychuk from Buffalo, the Leafs have found the perfect goal-scorer to play alongside Gilmour. Since becoming a Leaf, he has had a goal in every game he has played except one, and is second in the league in power-play goals. Gilmour and Andreychuk look like they've been playing together for years, and their chemistry will be a big factor in the team's post-season hopes.

At the time of writing, the Leafs are a mere five points behind Chicago, who pose the greatest threat to getting to the semi-finals. With a strong finish to the season, however, the team could finish first in the Norris giving them home ice advan-

tage for the first round of the playoffs.

Since the power structure has shifted away from the Smythe Division in recent years, they no longer pose the threat they once did in post-season play. In fact the Leafs are 10-4-1 against Smythe teams this year. The point here is that if the Leafs can get out of their division, they will go to the Cup. And it is in the Stanley Cup Finals, when you have a darkhorse team on fire like the Leafs, that miracles are bound to happen. Whether they face Pittsburgh or Montreal, the Leafs magic will carry them to that long awaited goal.

Whatever happens in the playoffs, no one can deny that Toronto is a team on the rise. Laugh no more!

The Leafs are on fire, and as long as they continue to play with the discipline and determination that propels them today, no one will be putting that fire out. Their hockey is some of the most exciting the team has demonstrated in years. As Martin Luther King taught, "Everything that is done in the world is done by hope." Hope gave us the Jays and hope will bring Toronto a Cup. Here's to the Leafs, and don't be surprised if we are all dancing in the streets in May singing "Na na na na, Na na na na, Hey ey ey, Goodbye".

Thurs night is fight night

by Bones, Spark and Dump

Professional boxing returned to Halifax last Thursday night at the Multi-Purpose Centre. It was an entertaining evening climaxing with Laurie 'Pit Bull' Grosse winning the Super Middle Weight Championship of Canada.

Seven amateur fights made up the undercard, all 3 round tilts. Anthony Upshaw opened the Cabaret with a sweeping left hook knockout of bloody Matt Arbique. The punch sent the Citadel boxer across the ring and ended the fight. Next up Real Boudreau and Allan Morrison both won unanimous decisions. The sentimental highlight of the night pitted 70 pound year 2000 hopeful Buddy Askri against little Danny Stephens. The two fighters looked all of 10 years old with longer gloves than arms. Danny backed Buddy into the corner in the third round and peppered him with a stupendous flurry, tickling his opponent and winning the fight. The crowd went crazy.

Next up Jeff Henwood of Halifax beat Clement Bolduc of Quebec. Shaw called the fight this way: "Henwood impressed with nice movement around the ring and superior combinations". Randy Grant then used 'body blows' to hurt Frederic Poirier for 3 rounds. The last amateur fight was excellent. The Commonwealth Gold Medal Champion David Defiagbon was a picture of

grace defeating London Ontario Champ Robert Gnay. Out of the red corner Defiagbon flowed around the ring mixing speed and power leaving de Pencier impressed: "strong and steady his good movement and early jabs set the stage".


The three professional fights were power encounters with many shots landed and a tremendous knockout. Chris Tapper and Mike Jewers both making their pro debut at 175 pounds went all 4 rounds with Jewers winning unanimously 19-17, 19-17, 19-18. Next Gary Reynolds 1-0 chased Steve Surette 3-0 from Dartmouth for 6 rounds. de Pencier scored it 21-16 Reynolds.

At the intermission we all had a beer and waited for the Pit Bull. We didn't wait long and the fight was over in 2:34 seconds. A first round pulverization of Todd Nadon by new champion Laurie Grosse. The Pit Bull swarmed the ring hooking, jabbing, and cracking uppercuts during the mismatch. The first knockdown caught Nadon flush and he was down on all fours barfing up a lung. At the count of ten he stood-big mistake. Pit Bull was waiting and he charged in and a minute later landed the bomb, knocking 14-0 Nadon out cold. The red corner carried him back to his stool but he was gone. As the crowd went nuts Nadon slept on the ropes and Grosse hoisted the title.


Not for the weak stomachs, these fights were great. The swimsuit girls

weren't hard to look at either. Next time Shaw we have to look at what they're holding-we never knew what round it was. They'll do it all again April 22, so come out and watch the fights.

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Sessions include presentations by members of the profession.

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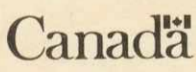

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