

The Gateway's serious NHL picks

by Greg Whiting

Well, the N.H.L. is about ready to take another shot at us. Put on your goalie mitts and get ready to catch some predictions for the 1986-87 regular season.

St. Patrick's Division

Pittsburgh Penguins: After a 2-10 start, the Pens will announce a logo change, with Opus from Bloom County replacing the current flightless waterfowl. Attendance will double overnight and the squad will respond to the increased support with a resounding 60-2-6 finish.

New York Rangers: New GM Phil Esposito will reactivate Bobby Orr to replace Barry Beck. Orr will lead the Blueshirts to second place while protecting his few remaining records from Paul Coffey.

Philadelphia Flyers: The Flyers' lack of confidence in Bob Froese will be emphasized midway through the first game of the season when Chico Resch is sent out in full padding to play "defense." The Flyers will finish in third place, having set a new record for scoreless ties with 79 in one season.

Washington Capitals: The injury-plagued Caps will lose 795 man-games to broken fingernails, swollen taste buds, and stuffed sinus passages. However, Bengt Gustafsson will return near the end of the season to propel Washington past New Jersey and into the playoffs.

New Jersey Devils: The Devils will need a win in the last game of the season to make the playoffs but won't be able to score while Froese, Resch, and Darren Jensen are all in the Philadelphia net at the same time.

New York Islanders: The Isles' performance without Al Arbour will be pathetic. The entire team will be traded to Detroit just before the deadline, but it won't do any good since Steve Yzerman won't be effective in all six positions for sixty minutes a game.

Adams Family

Montreal Canadiens: The ghosts of Howie Morenz and Georges Vezina will continue to play hockey like they did in last year's playoffs. The Habs will be undefeated at home but will lose a few on the road because the ghosts are not used to catching airplanes.

Hartford Whalers: A healthy, talented, young squad, a lot of hard work, and the total collapse of the rest of the division will combine to propel the Whalers to their highest N.H.L. finish so far.

Buffalo Sabres: A freak weather pattern will snow out twenty straight home games. The league will decide that the games can't be made up without ending the playoffs during next year's exhibition season, and the Sabres will finish in third place with a 20-37-3 record.

Boston Bruins: Pat Riggins will demand to be paid in "real money" (Canadian dollars) and will be traded to Quebec for a net and ten pucks. Team morale will increase tremendously, but a run of bad luck will keep the Boston squad in fourth place. Even the Flyers will beat them 1-0 on a freak goal (Resch from Jensen and Froese) in the last game of the season.

Quebec Nordiques: The Nords will take it easy during the regular season in order to be relaxed and in perfect health for the playoffs. They won't lose a single playoff game. Pat Riggins will demand a trade to an English-speaking team and will be sent to the North Stars for Bill Masterton's N.H.L. rights.

Norris by Norriswest Division

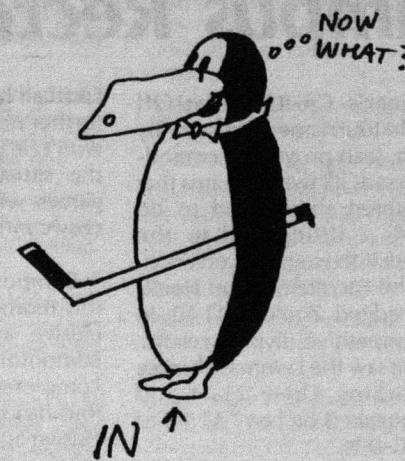
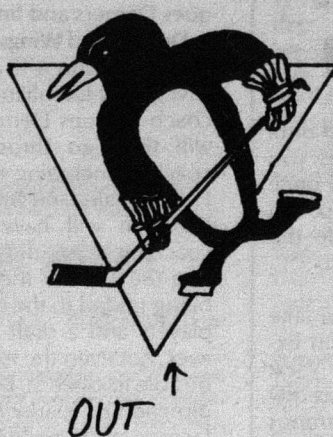
Chicago Blackhawks: Inspired by the Ranger example, Bobby Hull and Stan Mikita will reactivate themselves. In this division, it'll work.

Toronto Maple Leafs: Harold Ballard will name himself coach midway through the season, scaring the players so badly that they actually play up to their potential. The Leafs will finish 37-35-8, good enough for second place.

Minnesota Norris Stars: Lou Nanne's traveling halfway house for egocentric star-potential players will do its average job and will make the playoffs despite finishing in 18th place overall.

St. Louis Blues: After a 2-54-3 start, the Blues will reacquire Jac-

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