

Frank Boucher, Man of Parts



Frank Boucher, general manager and coach of the New York Rangers, gentleman farmer, member of several Stanley Cup winners, creator of many National Hockey League rules, and seven times winner of the Lady Byng Trophy as the N.H.L.'s most gentlemanly player (from 1927-28 to 1934-35), at one time belonged to the Mounted Police.

Boucher startled the customers three years ago by returning to active major hockey competition. He participated in 15 games, registering a point a game on the average which compared favourably with the leading scorer that season, but apparently decided the pace was a bit too swift for a man over 40. Therefore by his own decision he is an old-timer and thus qualifies for a place in this column which as a rule is reserved for young fellas a little older than that.

Back in 1919 Boucher and a pal of his, the popular Bill "Dubbie" Kerr, their minds aglow with cowboys, Indians and Western adventure, decided to forsake their clerk's job in the Imperial Ministry of Munitions, Ottawa, Ont, and join the Royal North West Mounted Police.

However, in stature Frankie didn't quite measure up to standard and was turned down. Kerr, determined not to let it stop there, wrote a letter. He pointed out that Boucher would grow and like his football-star father was destined to be a big man; the Force, he made it clear, would be the poorer if it didn't avail itself of this golden opportunity and sign his friend on. It goes without saying that the letter was a convincing one, for on May 16, a few days later, both young stalwarts received notice to report at R.N.W.M.P. headquarters, Ottawa, where they were told that their applications had been accepted.

That night they left for "Depot", Regina, Sask., to take their training. Recalling his experiences of those first weeks, the hard-riding Boucher is reported to have summed up his impressions by declaring recently that the riding master "would say, 'You take that horse, Boucher', and we'd get up on those half-broken beasts and the instructor'd belt 'em across the flank and whooie, that was it'".

In due course Reg. No. 7684, Cst. Francis Boucher was transferred to Lethbridge, Alta., and performed police duties that were fairly peaceful in peaceful communities of peaceful southern Alberta.

On July 16, 1946, Reg. No. 7685, Cpl. William Grant Kerr retired to pension after an enviable record of service, characterized by exemplary conduct, mostly keeping watch and ward over the Eskimos in Canada's Eastern Arctic where for months on end he was the only policeman.

But to get back to Boucher. One day he was appointed detective which then meant, as it still does, extra pay and a plain-clothes allowance. He and a detective sergeant toured about the country in an open-air Ford, the Nemeses of narcotic addicts, smugglers and bootleggers—mostly the latter. They slept in farm houses, and if their host was in poor financial circumstances the two plain-clothes men paid their way, but—as was the custom of all itinerant law-enforcers of those bygone days—at well-to-do homes they naturally didn't insult hospitality by broaching pecuniary matters.

At the time he enlisted, Frank was a likely candidate for the Ottawa Senators—1920 world hockey champions—and meantime he was gaining fame as a hockey player on amateur teams in Lethbridge and