

tions or enterprises, such as sports stores. Guy, who was husky and fast, was soon on the Pee-Wee All Stars, the pick of Verdun. At twelve he was a bantam, and at fourteen, a midget.

The move after the midgets is the major one. Guy Charron jumped to the junior league, passing by the juveniles. Most future pros do. "If a boy goes to the juveniles, he will have to improve a great deal in the next year. If he goes to the juniors after a year, he will be competing with players his own age who already have a year's experience in the league."

The professional clubs watch the midgets and the juniors (never glancing at the juveniles), and they earmark the most promising youngsters. The Canadiens "protected" Guy when he was a midget, which means they claimed him as theirs (if they ever should want him), though he didn't know it at the time. In Ontario and Quebec, juniors are now drafted, and the "protection" days are past; but the pro teams can still spot a promising western junior league fourteen-year-old and put him on the "protected" list the day he is fifteen.

Junior players are paid according to a fixed scale. None get rich, though fortunate ones may get occasional bonuses from the team's management. Some players earn extra pay from lenient part-time employers. Many of the Flin Flon Bombers in Manitoba, for example, work four hours a morning at surface jobs in the copper or zinc mines and draw a full day's pay.

Life in the junior Western Canada Hockey League is demanding: a nonstop bus ride across the Rockies from New Westminster, British Columbia, to Lethbridge, Alberta, can take twenty

hours in bad weather. Most western juniors drop out of school. In the east it is easier: the Ottawa 67s play in the Ottawa Civic Centre, which has, among other attributes, carpeted dressing rooms with stereophonic music. Ontario and Quebec players compete in their home provinces. Those who drop out of school do so by choice.

Guy Charron played with Verdun in the Quebec junior league and, then, with the Canadiens in the prestigious Ontario junior league. He finished the twelfth grade and dated a pretty girl named Denise who took hockey seriously. "On Saturday nights she'd come over to my place or I'd go over to hers and we'd watch the hockey game. Most of the time, after the hockey game her dad would take me home because I had an eleven o'clock curfew. That was the way we dated in the winter." They married when they were both twenty, after Guy turned pro.

The Canadiens placed him on their farm team, the Voyageurs, and brought him up for a half-dozen games at the end of the season. He started the next season with the Canadiens, played some twenty games and was traded to the Detroit Red Wings. His first game in Detroit was a triumph: he made a spectacular goal and was given a standing ovation. From Detroit he went to Kansas City, and when that franchise was moved to Colorado, he became a free agent and signed with the Washington Capitals.

In Washington he is the star. "All my career, since I left Montreal, what I was looking forward to was becoming the hockey player that I thought I could become. And I think that's what has happened in Washington in the last three years."

