

## LIFE IN THE U.S.

## SPORTS

## Hockey violence means money

"From here on in the rules will be 'no penalties and limited substitutions.'"  
—Coach to players in Rollerball

During the early '60s, when I was playing high school hockey in Canada, the emphasis was on skating and passing. For years I awoke from my sleep hearing the coach scream "Rosenblum, move your ass out there!" But the game is different now. This change was symbolized to me by the Detroit Red Wings' recently introducing boxing competitions into their practices.

Violence is delivering a death-blow to hockey. This is not to say that hockey used to be a non-aggressive game, or to forget such "dirty players" as Eddie Shore, Ted Lindsay, Lou Fontinato and the discreet violence of Gordie Howe. While there have always been violent moments in hockey, it is only since league expansion in the '70s that violence has become an integral part of the game.

This trend is most evidenced by the play of the highly successful Philadelphia Flyers—alias the Broad Street Bullies—and has brought forth loud cries that hockey, as we used to know it, is disappearing. The Montreal Canadians, symbolizing speed and fluidity, are the only reminder of the past as the Flyers' violent intimidation has taken over.

"If it's pretty skating they want to see, let 'em go to the Ice Capades."

—Coach Fred Shero of the Philadelphia Flyers

The change in the game extends far beyond the professional leagues. Kids are influenced by NHL hockey on television and often urged on by their coaches, who stress headhunting as much as stick-handling and shooting as part of their repertoire.

After a terribly bloody Junior B game in April 1974, which required 14 police officers to restore order, the Minister of Community and Social Services for the province of Ontario directed a Toronto attorney, William R. McMurty, to hold a full-scale investigation into violence in amateur hockey. Not surprisingly, the National Hockey League was singled out as "the strongest influence contributing to increased violence in amateur hockey in Ontario," due to the NHL's "emphasis on winning and the use of violence as a tactical instrument to achieve that goal."

"When the evidence strongly indicates that there is a conscious effort to sell violence in hockey to enrich a small group of show-business entrepreneurs at the expense of a great sport (not to mention the corruption of an entire generation's concept of sport) then one's concern grows to outrage."

—William R. McMurty

The obvious question is what caused the change in hockey. Part of the answer lies in the simple fact that the new style of hockey is efficient—it produces victories and profits. Instead of utilizing the skills of stick handling and even passing, most teams are content to carry the puck to center ice, dump it into the offensive zone, and try to knock the retrieving team off it.

Skills such as holding, hooking, elbowing and cross-checking, plus the muscle to back it up, become major factors in a game where intimidation plays a major role in determining who wins and who loses. The "dump it in" pattern cuts the rink in half, all but negating the greater speed of today's skaters. It allows little continuity to the play because the puck is often left uncontrolled. This style is so simple and repetitive that it quickly becomes boring to the fan of the "old" hockey.

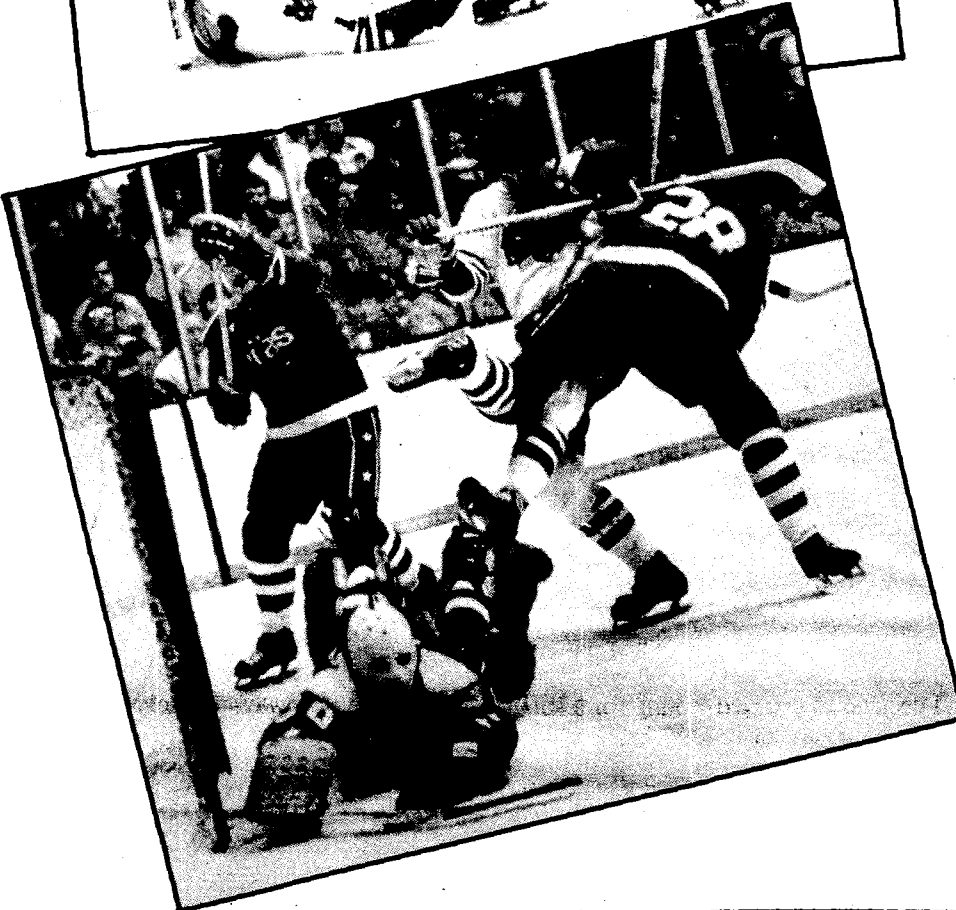
"I'm looking for guys you toss raw meat to and they go wild."

—Harry Ballard, president of Toronto Maple Leafs

An often heard explanation for the increase in violence in hockey is that blood thirsty American fans are destroying hockey. Supposedly the prospect of bloodletting is necessary to lure Americans to the rink, and a fight a night is necessary to keep them happy.

In order to be properly understood and evaluated, this argument must be put into perspective. In Canada, where hockey has been a way of life, the love of the game springs from a deep understanding of it. But as hockey critic Stan Fischler remarked, in the U.S. the NHL "was catering to a fan whose only previous connection with ice had been a highball."

Hardly anyone who goes to a hockey game in the U.S. has ever played the game and they have yet to fully grasp the essentials of the game. "The fans," said John MacFarlane, coauthor of *The Death of Hockey*, "are being used. Sure, some of them enjoy the violence, but that does not mean they would not prefer displays



**Kids are influenced by NHL hockey on TV and often urged on by their coaches, who stress headhunting as much as stick-handling and shooting as part of their repertoire.**

of the athlete's skill, for which it is so cynically substituted. What the owners are saying is: 'It doesn't matter whether we give the suckers a good hockey game as long as we give them a fight.'"

Rather than educating people about the skill and finesse in hockey, the owners in chase of the quick dollar are practically marketing brawls. In response to this criticism we get only the cynical opportunism of veteran hockey promoter Conn Smythe: "Yes, we've got to stamp out this sort of

thing or people are going to keep on buying tickets." Hopefully the owners are wrong and there are enough connoisseurs of the old fashioned amusement to make an effective protest. If not, hockey as it used to be performed will pass into memory.

—Simon Rosenblum

Simon Rosenblum is a Canadian currently living in the U.S. In five years of organized hockey his main (only) claim to fame was that he never received a penalty.

## Rocky, Muhammad Ali and Race

This year's movie hit *Rocky* is the most recent of several fine American films about boxing. *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, *The Great White Hope*, and John Huston's superb *Fat City* come to mind.

Prize fighting has always been a way up and out for underclass kids, but for every Sugar Ray or Carmen Basillio who makes it there are thousands who don't, so a frequent figure in boxing films has been the pug who blew his big shot or never had one. Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront* speaks for them all when he laments, "I coulda been somebody. I coulda been a contender."

Rocky Balboa becomes both a contender and, by his own measure, a somebody. A 30 year old club fighter and collector for a South Philly loan shark, Rocky is chosen by Apollo Creed, black world champ, for a short at his heavyweight crown.

Making a "snow white nobody" a contender, claims Apollo, will prove America the land of opportunity in the bicentennial

year. But Rocky, inspired by a new love (Talia Shire) and a sage manager (Burgess Meredith) refuses to play chump in the hyped fight. He trains furiously, gives as good as he gets, and becomes the first to go the distance with Creed. He loses a split decision but wins 150 grand, true love, and his self-respect.

Go see it. It's a delightful film, far richer than any summary can convey. But the story is simple.

And familiar. Apollo Creed is closely modeled on Muhammad Ali and the Rocky Balboa story obviously inspired by Ali's title defense against lowly Chuck Wepner in March 1975. Ali, fresh from his redemption in Kinshasa, had bestowed an unmerited opportunity on the eighth-ranked erstwhile bar bouncer. The Bayonne Bleeder hung tough, lasting until the final seconds of the 15th, winning general good will and the grudging respect of Ali.

Stallone's debt to Ali goes beyond these borrowings, however. *Rocky* would have

been inconceivable had not Muhammad been center ring for 15 years, sticking his jab into the beehives of American racism and bringing out the honey. Whatever the limits imposed by the nation, however tiresome his standard riffs have become, Ali's immense presence has altered the consciousness of millions of black and white Americans and created the context in which a film such as *Rocky* can signify.

Follow the motif of race through the film. *Rocky* is set in the city of brotherly love and Frank Rizzo, and shot mostly in the Italian south side. Blacks are seen only around Mickey's Gym where a distanced equality prevails: Rocky is pissed when a black comer is given his locker, but he can jive with the brothers at the door. The hero is not a honk. At the neighborhood bar he champions Apollo when the owner slanders him. Rocky is pleased by Apollo's skillful deflection of press questions about the racial matchup and the champ's projection of Rocky as his equal. He is pa-

tiently bemused when an officious black woman reporter prods him through an interview.

In the climactic fight scene Rocky does not play "white hope." The only folks he greets on his walk to the ring are some brothers from the Gym. He shares the crowd's affectionate amusement at Apollo's outrageous entrance as George Washington/Uncle Sam. At the end of the long fight both exhausted men are respectful victors. "Ain't gonna be no rematch," gasps Apollo. "Don't want one," answers Rocky. Apollo has been made mortal. Rocky has become a man. A just resolution as the age of Ali passes into art.

Blame neither Stallone nor Muhammad if part of the film's audience wants only to see the lippy nigger whipped. That is their problem, and ours.

—Jack Russell

Jack Russell lives in Detroit and writes on sport regularly for *In These Times*.



"But it was a tragically long time before anyone else was able to make it through the breach in the wall that Trumbo had made...."

## Blacklist

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resulted in the proscription) and there was a rumor that Nathan E. Douglas was a pseudonym for blacklisted writer/actor Ned Young. When the two men appeared on stage (and national TV) to claim their gold statuette before an audience of their peers, Young's cover was blown, and with it a chunk of the Chinese wall of blacklist.

Ned Young had also been the instrument—a few months earlier—of the first break in the blacklisting of actors. (Although there has been comparatively little said or written about it, this was a much crueler aspect of the blacklist than that applied to writers. Actors—and for that matter anyone who had to turn up for work in person—could not operate behind a "front.")

What happened in Young's case was an act of atonement on the part of Sterling Hayden, a rising star of the late '40s who had been persuaded to "give the Committee a few names" as the price of being allowed to continue his career. There is a story, partially substantiated in Hayden's autobiographical book, *The Wanderer*, that he went to one of the men he had fingered and said he meant to repent publicly for his cowardice, denounce the committee and take the consequences. He was advised that such dramatic action would do nothing for those he had injured, that if he waited and watched for an opportunity, he would some day find a way to make his apology meaningful.

The opportunity came when Hayden was casting a film in which he was to star and decided to use Ned Young for a small part. Young had been on the brink of stardom as a "replacement" for the late Humphrey Bogart when his defiance of HUAC made him an untouchable. There was no one on the set who did not recognize him the first day he showed up for work.

In no time at all Hedda Hopper was on the phone to Hayden. The lady was accustomed to using her gossip column in the Hearst press as a nightstick to police the industry, and she threatened the actor/producer with dire punishment for his breach of the unwritten law. But Hayden had prepared himself to resist.

He reminded Hopper that MGM had just released an expensive Elvis Presley feature called *Jail House Rock*, with Ned Young's name on the screen as author of the original story. (It was not legally possible to remove the name of a writer responsible for original material.) "You get MGM to take Young's name off their pic-

ture, and I'll take him out of mine," he told her. Young played the part, and there was no cannonade from Hopper, no picket lines at the box office.

Thirdly, there were other individual challengers of the blacklist. If any single champion were to get credit for victory on this front, a good case could be made for Ben Barzman, a writer who was in Europe when the blacklist was instituted and who chose not to return until it was ended.

(Barzman had been named by at least one informer, which qualified him for blacklisting even though he was never subpoenaed. One did not need to refuse to cooperate on the witness stand. To have "evaded" or failed to respond to a summons was enough.)

The film on which Barzman was working when the blacklist hit was a film version of *Christ in Concrete*, directed by Edward Dmytryk, the member of the Hollywood Ten who later turned informer. That film, retitled *Give Us This Day*, was shown in the U.S. in the first days of the ban against the work of blacklisted professionals.

A few years later, in 1956, Barzman and writer/director Jules Dassin (whose status was similar to Barzman's) wrote the screen play of *He Who Must Die*, (chiefly remembered for its introduction of actress Melina Mercouri). The film was chosen by France as that nation's entry in the Cannes Film Festival and played art houses in the U.S. very successfully, despite pressures on exhibitors by the leadership of the projectionists' union.

Barzman then teamed with another blacklisted director, Joseph Losey, on a pair of very lucrative low-budget films made in England in 1957 and 1958. *Time Without Pity* and *Blind Date* (also billed as *Chance Meeting*) were hailed in the British press, not always friendly to Americans who come to "take jobs away" from British artists and craftsmen, as evidence that Hollywood's loss was the British film industry's gain. The films are still run frequently in film series as examples of financially successful "little" films.

Barzman's contribution to the breaking of the blacklist is not only the number of credits he got during the worst, first years but also—and more importantly—his demonstration that there was money to be made by defying the paper tigers guarding the gates of Hollywood.

As a result of these three strains of resistance and counterattack, and the changing political climate at the end of the Eisenhower era, the blacklist was so nearly unenforceable that the stage seemed set for a demonstration of the domino theory. In 1960 when Preminger put Trumbo's name on *Exodus*, the first domino toppled the second, and Universal gave Trumbo credit on *Spartacus*. A few days later Frank

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## Trumbo

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to survive. And there is a suspenseful crescendo of small victories leading to the climactic moment in January 1960 when producer Otto Preminger decided to make public acknowledgement of Trumbo's authorship of the shooting script of *Exodus*. A few weeks later Universal and actor/producer Kirk Douglas announced that Trumbo had also written the final version of *Spartacus*.

Two major credits in a single season! And thus, says Cook, the blacklist was finally broken.

This simplification—not to say falsification—of history is a major flaw in the book because it misleads the reader in a matter of importance. It is worth an attempt to set the record straight (see the accompanying article) because anyone who believes that the blacklist was broken by a single individual will never draw the relevant conclusions from this example of sustained, collective struggle against repression.

The fault lies partly in Cook's approach to his material, which is that of a journalist, not an historian. He obviously came under the spell of a potent spellbinder and forgot—or never learned—that a biographer must maintain a certain insulating distance from his subject.

This lack of distance results in another flaw in the book. Trumbo was a more complex and compelling character than any he ever created, on paper or on film.

Sinatra announced that he had hired Albert Maltz, another of the Hollywood Ten, to adapt *The Execution of Private Slovik* for the screen. It looked as if the whole wall was giving way.

But this was the warm-up of the John F. Kennedy campaign, and Sinatra was part of the inner circle of the Kennedy clan. Some extraordinary pressure—believed by many to have been applied by Father (Ambassador) Joseph—forced him into a humiliating recantation, published in the *New York Times* on April 12.

"In view of the reaction of my family, my friends and the American public, I have instructed my attorney to make a settlement with Albert Maltz and to inform him that he will not write the screen play for *The Execution of Private Slovik*.

"I had thought the major consideration was whether or not the resulting script would be in the best interests of the United States.

"Since my conversations with Mr. Maltz indicated that he had an affirmative, pro-

In a book that takes his name as its title, one has a right to expect that character to be fully realized. Cook does not pull it off.

There are too many blank spaces, too many skimmed relationships, too many close shots without reverse angles. Trumbo himself would never have left so many loose ends of story lying around to be tripped over. He would, for example, never have started a love story with a whirlwind courtship only to drop the heroine from any significant participation in the "ever after." And if Trumbo had set up a character by having one of his friends observe that "You either love him or you hate him. There are people in Hollywood, lots of them, who hate him," he would have made drama by running the contradiction to earth. Cook justifies the lovers and leaves the haters in the limbo of the irrelevant.

One cannot quarrel with a biographer who chooses to treat only that aspect of his subject's life that is interesting to a large public. There are political biographies of politicians and literary biographies of literary figures. But Cook has chosen neither of those forms, nor addressed the questions they would concern themselves with. For example, he raises but never answers the question, why a writer of distinguished talent should choose, against his better judgment, to fritter away that talent on undistinguished material.

What is offered in *Dalton Trumbo* is as much of the man as Trumbo cared to expose and his friends cared to elaborate. The result is a work that does the man less justice and at once illumines and distorts the important conflicts of his times.

—Janet Stevenson

American approach to the story, and since I felt fully capable as producer of enforcing such standards, I have defended my hiring of Mr. Maltz.

"But the American public has indicated it feels the morality of hiring Albert Maltz is the more crucial matter, and I will accept this majority opinion."

Both *Exodus* and *Spartacus* were picketed—ineffectually—by last-ditchers including the Catholic War Veterans, but the films made money and that meant the blacklist was shot. At least for Trumbo. He was employable anywhere at as good or better money than he had made in the old days. And it was immediately easier for other blacklisted writers to get black-market work for more than the pittance they had been receiving.

But it was a tragically long time before anyone else—writer, actor or director—was able to make it across the moat through the breach in the wall that Trumbo had made in single combat.

—Janet Stevenson

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