

Cinderella Canadiens eliminate Crosby, Malkin, and Penguins

By RAHUL VAIDYANATH
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The clock hasn't struck midnight yet for the Cinderella Montreal Canadiens.

In Game 7 against the defending Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins, the Canadiens played a near-perfect game and came away with a convincing 5-2 win to take the series 4-3.

After coming back from 3-1 down against top-seeded Washington in the first round, the Habs beat a more experienced and better balanced team in Pittsburgh.

FRUSTRATED CROSBY, FLOUNDERING FLEURY

The Canadiens jumped out to a very early lead thanks to Pens captain Sidney Crosby. The Canadian icon slammed Josh Gorges into the boards and got a boarding penalty after only 10 seconds of play. Recall the nastiness that took place between the two at the end of Game 6 on Monday.

The Canadiens capitalized on the ensuing power play as Brian Gionta deflected a P.K. Subban backhand past Marc-Andre Fleury. It was a bad goal for Fleury who really should've stopped the puck.

Fleury got off to a poor start and his confidence never had a chance to recover.

Late-season acquisition Dominic Moore put the visitors up 2-0

with a spin-around effort at 14:23 of the first.

The Penguins showed no chemistry and were clearly not well prepared to take it to the Habs. In contrast, Montreal executed their game plan to perfection.

It was more of the same in the early part of the second period as Michael Cammalleri scored his 12th goal of the playoffs to put Montreal up three.

Roughly two minutes after Cammalleri scored, Travis Moen came up with a fine individual effort on the penalty kill to put the Habs up four. That chased Fleury, who had a night to forget.

In came backup Brent Johnson and the Pens settled down.

With the fans in Pittsburgh having nothing to cheer about, the Pens started the comeback. Chris Kunitz and Jordan Staal added goals to bring the Pens within two.

With a 4-on-3 power play at the end of the second period, Montreal needed to respond to shut down the Pens momentum.

HALAK TAKES OVER

The third period was all about a familiar story—Jaroslav Halak stealing the show. The mighty Pittsburgh power play had three opportunities in the third period but Halak stoned Crosby and Evgeni Malkin brilliantly.

The Habs got their chance with



MONTREAL MOVES ON: Michael Cammalleri (second from left) celebrates the game-winning goal. DAVE SANDFORD/GETTY IMAGES

the man advantage after Pittsburgh was guilty of too many men on the ice. Gionta capitalized baseball-style, batting in a floating pass from Cammalleri at the side of the net. That was the nail in the Penguins' coffin.

Halak stopped all 18 shots he faced in the third period and the Canadiens reached the Eastern Conference final.

"It's great to win in their building," said Halak.

"The guys did an amazing job

tonight. Our power play goals were huge. Everybody deserves the credit. We were down but we didn't give up."

The normally stone-faced coach of the Canadiens, Jacques Martin could not hide his smile after the

win.

"We showed a lot of character," he said in an on-ice interview with RDS. "We got excellent leadership throughout the whole series. Give a lot of credit to our centermen playing against Crosby, Malkin, and Staal."

Gionta, who scored two power play goals, believes his team has a chance at the Cup. "If we keep playing as a team, absolutely," he told CBC.

"If everybody keeps doing their jobs, I like our chances."

Shutdown defenseman Hal Gill, who had an icy post-game handshake with Crosby said, "Winning's fun. It's nice to shut down this building."

"We got something good going here. We just want to keep it going."

Montreal has unquestionably the most rabid hockey fans in the league. The Bell Centre showed the game on a large HD screen and the 21,273 tickets to watch the game there were sold out in one hour.

Pittsburgh's last game at Mellon Arena ended the way it began in 1967, with a loss to the Montreal Canadiens.

The Montreal Canadiens are the last remaining Canadian team in the NHL playoffs after the Vancouver Canucks were eliminated in six games by the Chicago Blackhawks on Tuesday.

England approaches World Cup with optimism

By JAMES POULTER
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LONDON—England's emphatic journey to the World Cup finals in South Africa was a pleasure to behold. Winning 9 out of 10 games and scoring 34 goals, they stand as the highest scoring team in 2010 World Cup qualifying.

In particular, the thorough dismantling of Croatia banished memories of England's failure to qualify for Euro2008. Manager Fabio Capello's legendary discipline brought a sharp focus to England's game, and perennial problems such as the "Lampard/Gerrard conundrum" were brushed aside as England developed and sustained a fast, expansive, and fluid approach.

However, the course of true love rarely runs smoothly, and after the euphoric qualifying campaign, the following six months brought back nagging concerns.

Injuries to key players became, once more, endemic. And John Terry's affair with Wayne Bridge's former partner not only disgraced the national team, but also deprived England of a player in a key position, as Bridge withdrew from the squad.

With about a month to go though until their first game against the United States on June 12, a fresh optimism is breezing through the nation.

Wayne Rooney's world-beating form seems matched by his body's ability to recover from hard knocks. Rio Ferdinand, Ashley Cole, and Aaron Lennon have all recently made appearances for their club sides after lengthy absences through injury.



ROAD TO WORLD CUP: Wayne Rooney celebrates with teammates after scoring in the friendly match between England and Slovakia at Wembley Stadium on Mar. 28. SHAUN BOTTERILL/GETTY IMAGES

And in an interview with Four Four Two, John Terry has revealed he is so confident of English success that he is even relishing the chance to take a penalty.

As the tournament draws near, we are bombarded with comment and opinion from players and managers, past and present, who have raised the illustrious trophy. Amid all the debate, one theme appears constant—the need for good team spirit throughout the squad.

This is one striking feature of Capello's regime, his iron discipline successfully containing England's sometimes

larger than life assembly. With "WAGS" (wives and girlfriends) banished to the occasional postmatch rendezvous, and mobile phones banned in camp, there is a palpable sense that England's oft wayward stars will be brought to heel and focus on the job at hand.

Many factors point to England's success. A favourable draw pits them initially against Slovenia, Algeria, and the United States. With 60,000 traveling fans they will be the most supported team outside the host nation.

South Africa's winter climate will not

be too much of a harsh adjustment. Although Spain and Brazil remain favorites, most teams will fear an England firing on all cylinders, and there is a sense that on their day Capello's England can sweep past anyone.

Old concerns have not been completely vanquished though, and player fitness is essential. There is again much talk of the brutal nature of the domestic schedule, and players recovering from lengthy absences can scarcely be compared to the freshness of those who have completed less intensive seasons overseas.

No English team in the Champions League semis has perhaps been a blessing. The fitness of Wayne Rooney will be paramount.

Essential midfield holding player Gareth Barry may miss the competition due to injury sustained in the Man City-Spurs clash for the last European Champions League place, which City lost. But he was named in the 30-man provisional squad on Tuesday. The latest injury concern is now John Terry who suffered a foot injury in training.

So, many questions remain. Will England's fast-flying wingers, accomplished defense, and dynamic midfield reignite the passion and vision of 1966?

Will penalty shootouts be England's downfall again? Will English fans yield to the notorious South African riot police?

Will Duran Duran really re-record Rio with the England captain on guest vocals if England raises the hallowed Jules Rimet trophy on July 11?

And most crucially—will Peter Crouch dance "the robot" if he scores? England and the world awaits.

The legend of Secretariat

By CHERYL CASATI
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No horse has made a more lasting impression on the Triple Crown than one big chestnut colt called Secretariat. With each passing year since he won the Triple Crown, people invariably compare the current racing field to him.

After 25 years without a Triple Crown winner, this horse made it look easy. His heart stopping win at the 1973 Belmont Stakes, the final and longest race in the triad, is unmatched.

If you watched the YouTube video, you can feel the wonder and beauty of watching one of creation's miracles in action. He briefly raced for the lead with another good colt, Sham, but then the big red colt took the lead and it was his race.

The crowd all stood to cheer and watch this phenomenal horse race into immortality. He kept pulling away from the field as if they were standing still. He opened up a distance of 31 lengths and set a new track record for the 1 1/2 mile Belmont Park finishing in 2:24, taking 2.60 seconds off the track record.

Later it was found he had set a new record for all 1 1/2 mile races.

His jockey, Canadian Ron Turcotte, just steered not asking for anything. Secretariat just gave. Turcotte let his horse run, never touching him, sitting quiet and still in the saddle. It was time for history to see what this horse really was all about.

Down the stretch, Secretariat was no longer racing other horses; he was running to run—quiet, smooth, and unmatched. Effortless, his legs were blurred, his white stockings looking like mist or clouds marking the movement of his churning legs. He ran as no other horse has run in racing history—before or since. The field behind him looked as if they were not even in the same race.

At first excited veteran announcer, Chick Anderson, estimated it was 25 lengths between Secretariat and the field. It was later corrected to 31 lengths and "going away."

Lengths are measured by support standards placed along the rail, one length apart. The distance is the approximate length of a horse's body.

Secretariat had been an unusual horse from the time he was a foal. He was independent, brave, and curious. It was said in the book, "The Horse God Built," he had a princely air about him even as a foal.

Secretariat was euthanized for laminitis on Oct. 4, 1989, at age 19 1/2.

An autopsy was done on Secretariat. What they found sparked research into a phenomenon that has been named, the "X factor". The average thoroughbred has a heart weighing approximately nine pounds. Secretariat's was a normal heart with no mutations, yet it weighed 22 pounds.

The bigger hearts are caused by a gene that is passed on by the dam, not the sire. The gene is carried in certain racing lines: Princequillo, War Admiral, Blue Larkspur, and Mahmood.

This was an additional insight into the horse dubbed by Time magazine as "Superhorse." However, when Sham, the closest rival during the 1973 Triple Crown Triad, was autopsied he was found to have a heart weighing 18 pounds. Secretariat's is the largest heart on record and Sham's is the second largest.

With the second jewel of the Triple Crown, the Preakness at Pimlico racetrack rapidly approaching, there has been no indication of another "Superhorse" in the field, but Super Saver might be a Triple Crown winner.

In the works at Disney is the movie "Secretariat" to be released Oct. 8, 2010.

History doesn't support Nets' chances of winning lottery

By SUSAN SHAN
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The 2010 NBA Draft Lottery on May 18 is also known as the "John Wall Sweepstakes." The 6-foot-4-inch point guard from the University of Kentucky is being touted as possibly the best No. 1 pick in the last 10 years with the exceptions of LeBron James and Dwight Howard.

The 14 teams that did not make the playoffs will vie for Wall's services in the draft lottery.

The lottery has undergone many procedural changes throughout the years. Originally, the NBA used a coin flip system between the worst team in each conference to determine the first and second picks of the draft. Now, there is a drawing of ping-pong balls to determine the order of the first 14 picks.

For those math geeks out there, 14 ping-pong balls are used to create 1,001 combinations of four numbers. Then, 1,000 total combinations are assigned to the 14 teams to achieve the desired probabilities. The combination of numbers 11, 12, 13, and 14 is left unassigned and in the case that that specific combination is drawn, there will be a redraw.

New Jersey had the worst record in the

league this past season at 12-70. Thus, they are rewarded with 250 combinations and the best chance to land the top draft pick. The lottery is only conducted for the first three picks. Picks 4 through 14 are determined by record with the worst record left receiving the highest remaining pick.

Therefore, the Nets are guaranteed no worse than the No. 4 pick, the Minnesota Timberwolves are guaranteed no worse than the No. 5 pick, and so on.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The lottery system is far from perfect. Initially implemented in order to prevent teams from deliberately losing games to ensure themselves of a shot at the coin flip, the lottery has fueled speculation that the NBA occasionally fixes the results.

The 1985 NBA Draft was the first lottery draft, although the seven teams involved in the lottery all had equal chances of winning the No. 1 pick, unlike the current weighted system. The prize of that draft class was Patrick Ewing.

Back then, the NBA used envelopes instead of ping-pong ball combinations. To this day, conspiracy theorists still allege that the envelope containing the

New York Knicks logo had been frozen, thereby allowing commissioner David Stern to feel out the cold envelope and ensure that the Knicks win the lottery.

Doubts as to the legitimacy of the lottery have not gone away because in the current system, the drawing of the ping-pong balls is conducted in private, though observed by independent auditors and representatives from each team.

The Orlando Magic won the lottery in 1993 with the worst odds at 1.5 percent. In 2008, the Chicago Bulls won the lottery with only a 1.7 percent chance.

Last year, the Los Angeles Clippers won the lottery despite only having the third-best chance of winning. The Clippers victory marked the 16th time in 20 years that the team with the worst record did not win the lottery.

This year's lottery is highly anticipated because of the once in a decade talent of Wall. Although commonly compared to Bulls star Derrick Rose, Wall is quicker, a better defender, and a better shooter than Rose was when he first entered the league.

Wall is so good that even teams with elite point guards like Utah and New Orleans would draft him because of his

trade value.

Also, today's NBA is much more fluid in terms of player positions. It is not uncommon to see two point guards or two combo guards together in a backcourt.

In this day and age, it is all about drafting the best remaining player instead of focusing on positions of need.

Thus, 2010 is the year of the John Wall Sweepstakes.

This year, the chances of teams receiving the No. 1 pick are as follows:

- New Jersey Nets - 25%
- Minnesota Timberwolves - 19.9%
- Sacramento Kings - 15.6%
- Golden State Warriors - 10.4%
- Washington Wizards - 10.3%
- Philadelphia 76ers - 5.3%
- Detroit Pistons - 5.2%
- Los Angeles Clippers - 2.3%
- Utah Jazz - 2.2%
- Indiana Pacers - 1.1%
- New Orleans Hornets - 0.8%
- Memphis Grizzlies - 0.7%
- Toronto Raptors - 0.6%
- Houston Rockets - 0.5%