

## **Flyers Back in Form...Alley-Fighting Experts**

**by Gary Mueller. *The Sporting News*. November 16, 1974.**

The Philadelphia Flyers, accused last season of being more prize-fighters than hockey players, spent much of the summer pointing out that it took more than a few rights to the jaw to win the Stanley Cup.

Flyers' officials and fans pointed, with justifiable pride, to their team's 1-0 victory over the Boston Bruins in the sixth and final playoff game. Philadelphia's victory in that decisive game came on the strength of excellent hockey, with nary a threat of a fight.

Just when some of us were convinced that these Flyers could win without fisticuffs, along comes a disgrace such as the October 25 brawl between the Flyers and the California Golden Seals in Oakland.

The fight, which took nearly 40 minutes to break up, centered around the California penalty box, where defenseman Mike Christie was the victim of a beating reportedly administered by Philadelphia's Orest Kindrachuk, Bob Kelly and Don Saleski.

The incident was touched off after Christie and Kindrachuk had been escorted to the penalty box following a routine hockey fight. But when referee Bryan Lewis gave Christie only a major for fighting and gave Kindrachuk both a major and a minor, the Flyers quickly ruined all the good they had done last spring in sticking to hockey to win the final Stanley Cup game.

According to reports from several eyewitnesses, Saleski went to the California penalty box and taunted Christie from the ice, apparently in an attempt to get Christie to come out of the penalty box so that he, too, might get an extra penalty.

But while Christie was being entertained by Saleski, Kindrachuk made his way past the official scorer and climbed into the penalty box with Christie. He reportedly was joined there by Kelly, who most observers feel was the most active in the fighting that followed and left Christie with two puffy eyes and a need for 14 stitches around the eyes.

"I know who it was," said Christie. "I never saw him but I know who it was. But I'm not going to say anything. We have to go to Philly in a couple of weeks (November 10) and there's no point stirring anything up."

Munson Campbell, the new president of the Golden Seals, wasn't afraid to possibly stir things up.

"We'll bring up the butchers," said Campbell. "We'll meet them in the alley or on the ice. We have the big, tough players in our farm system who can come up here and take care of the Flyers."

Seals' President Campbell, no relation to National Hockey League President Clarence Campbell, felt it

was up to the NHL boss to prevent further violence.

"It's up to Mr. Campbell, whether we play hockey or Philadelphia-style shinny," said the Seals' Campbell.

Clarence Campbell wasted no time suspending indefinitely, pending a hearing, Saleski and Kelly. The Flyers were notified by NHL officials that Saleski and Kelly were suspended for six games each and Kindrachuk fined \$300.

This somehow outraged some of the Flyers. Team captain Bobby Clarke, in a hockey column he writes for a Philly newspaper, protested that the pair should not have been suspended without a hearing.

Flyers' defenseman Tom Bladon thought the whole thing was being blown a little out of proportion.

"It wouldn't have looked so bad if some of the Seals would have come to help him (Christie) out," said Bladon, who is a personal friend of Christie. But none of them seemed to interested in helping him. It's pretty sad when Jim Neilson -- what is he, 36 years old? -- is the first to get there to help."

Some observers reported that the Flyers on the ice appeared to be preventing the Seals from entering the penalty box to come to Christie's aid. Neilson and Len Frig finally broke through.

By the time the game was over, referee Lewis had whistled an NHL record 232 minutes in penalties and the Seals skated off with a surprising 4-1 victory.

Ironically, the suspensions to Saleski and Kelly ended just in time for the battlers to return to play the Seals again November 10.

But the Flyers lost more than a hockey game that night.