

Weekend Travels with the Seals:

Meloche -- Mott ... MMmmm

by Fran Tuckwiler
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In Montreal, internationally famous for its exquisite cuisine, Seals goaltender Gilles Meloche may build the simple hamburger into a legend.

In New York, famous for its hostility to visiting hockey players, Seals forward Morris Mott may become a living legend as the symbol of the anonymous athlete.

The night before a recent Seals-Montreal Canadiens game, Meloche took some of his teammates to his hamburger place on Notre Dame St., not far from the Montreal Forum.

There he rolled up his sleeves and served up a delectable array of hamburger goodies that boggle the mind. He opened the establishment last August and already he and his partners are doing a big business, both in home delivery service and from the walk-in trade.

"Things are a little slow at the moment," he said. "But wait until the hockey game is over. People will be calling and coming in. It will be good."

Meloche has one of five similar franchised establishments in the city of Montreal and between orders explained that the hamburgers are made from a special mixture of beef and pork and cooked by a special process. "And all the trimmings — the lettuce, the onions, the tomatoes — are cut fresh with each order."

He stepped out into the chill Quebec night. "Over there," he pointed with a sweep of the arm that blocks so many pucks for the Seals, "new apartment complexes are being built. And right in front here, is a bus stop. And up there." He gestured again. "A new Metro station is being built. These are not rich people here. But they like hamburgers."

Around the tastefully decorated walls are autographed pictures of Gilles and his Seals' teammates as well as pictures of other National Hockey League players.

The early evening visitors all were aware Meloche was in the cafe. They mostly are his friends and former neighbors. And Gilles stands tall among them.

Two days later, when the Seals skated onto Madison Square Garden ice against the New York Rangers, there were two banners that stood out in the mind of the visitor.



GILES MELOCHE

... Hamburger King



MORRIS MOTT

... New York's Mini Hero

One read "Meloche — Mott ... MMmmm." On the other side of the Garden a sign proclaimed the presence of "The Morris Mott Fan Club."

There is a Morris Mott Fan Club, perhaps fittingly headquartered in Brooklyn.

"I received a letter recently from a 17-year-old high school student in Brooklyn," Mott recalled. "He said he wanted to start a Morris Mott fan club and could I send him some pictures. I didn't know what was going on, but I sent some along."

What happened was that one Arthur Friedman, a statistician for the New York Rangers, set himself up as the world's foremost authority on Morris Mott.

"He is on his way to becoming a living legend," says Friedman, a champion of the little-known athlete. Friedman spends most of his time compiling the statistics for Ranger programs of such illustrious visitors as Phil Esposito, Bobby Orr and Stan Mikita.

One day he came across the statistic that as of Dec. 9 Morris Mott of the Seals had scored one goal and one assist.

Mott became an instant mini-hero to Friedman.

"Here was little Morris Mott, skating

around in his green helmet, hustling all the time and without anyone really knowing much about him. And the name Morris Mott was a natural."

Friedman is quick to assure everyone it's all in good fun.

"We're not trying to demean him. It's all in fun. Here is a guy with a great sounding name who hustles all the time and plays for the team with the worst record in hockey and never gets any recognition. There can be no more anonymous player than that."

The next time Friedman saw Mott play, he scored one goal and one assist against the Rangers and the fan club was on its way.

In a recent game against the New York Islanders at Uniondale, banners the size of bed sheets advertised the presence of the Morris Mott Fan Club.

He has it made in New York now. Ranger promotions on cable TV advertise an upcoming game:

"The California Seals and Morris Mott vs. the New York Rangers, tonight, 7:30." Then follows a closeup of Mott on the TV screen.

Y. A. Tittle never had it so good in the Big Apple.