

Shutt, Lafleur play it again

By RED FISHER

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REPORTER — "How many goals do you think you'll score this season?"

STEVE SHUTT — "As many as Guy Lafleur lets me."

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CLEVELAND — It is not really difficult to score goals for some people — particularly when the name happens to be Steve Shutt or Guy Lafleur.

If it's S. Shutt, what you do is knock the puck out of mid-air with the blade of your stick, let it drop to the ice, shoot, have it blocked by the defenceman, get the rebound and snap it into the net, as S. Shutt did for his first goal of the game, and 25th of the season to start Canadiens en route to their 8-1 laughter over Cleveland.

Or maybe you can get together with Lafleur and Peter Mahovlich in the seventh minute of the third period, pass the puck among yourselves until it's Guy, Steve and Peter versus Gilles Meloche, wait patiently while Lafleur moves Meloche out of position with a couple of head fakes, shake of the shoulders, trembling of the knees and the crossing of his eyes — and then take his pass and direct it into the empty net.

Tic, tac, toe . . . and it's his second goal of the game and his 26th of the season in 25 games with Cleveland's largest crowd of the season, 11,774,

looking on in dismay and wonderment.

On the other hand, if the name happens to be Lafleur, what you do with the fastest ankles in hockey is step out of the penalty box, reach out for an 85-foot pass from Larry Robinson, sweep in on Meloche, fake once, snap your wrists and well . . . that's how it's done for goal No. 29 of the season. Goal No. 19 had come earlier, providing Canadiens with a 3-0 first-period lead after goals by Shutt and Yvon Lambert. This one was routine: a Mahovlich pass through the crease and . . . ho-hum, see you later, folks.

This latest chapter of Lafleur-Shutt vs. The Universe was neat, quick and painless — if the Barons happen to be nerveless, which they aren't.

"You look at Shutt," sighed Dave Gardner, who was Shutt's linemate with the junior Toronto Marlboros a century ago, "and it's as if he's back in junior. Everything he touches is going in. But it's not only Shutt or Lafleur, it's everybody. Larry Robinson . . . he's playing now the way they expected him to play all along. He stands out there and checks you with one hand on the stick, and you'd swear he had both hands going for him. He's that strong. He's that big."

"And if you get by that defence of theirs," muttered Gary Sabourin, "that big guy back there (Ken Dryden) is almost sure to stop you. They're just too

good for this league. You throw anybody out there and he's scoring goals."

"Anybody" included people like Murray Wilson, who got his first of the season now that he's played fairly regularly in two straight games (Mario Temblay wasn't dressed last night. It also included Jacques Lemaire, and add Doug Jarvis, all 5-foot-7 of him with high heels brushing off a couple of oak trees named Bob Stewart and Glenn Patrick to slash the puck beyond Meloche for his fifth goal of the season or his entire output last year.

Canadiens had accumulated a 7-0 lead and the Barons a braying, disgruntled crowd by the time Bob Murdoch finally beat Dryden from close in with one of the 23 shots the Barons tossed at the Canadiens net. There could have been a couple more, since even Dryden made it plain he can't remember as many tough shots (there were roughly eight) in a 23-shot game, but people like Al MacAdam helped considerably by blowing a shot beyond an empty net.

Canadiens, on their part, made it an agonizing night for Meloche, who didn't play particularly well, with a 46-shot barrage — without really digging in and expending unnecessary energy. What they did do, however, was make the most out of every opportunity thrust at them. Once in a while — a 69-second

period in the third period is an example — they gathered their legs beneath them and thundered at the Barons with predictable results. Three goals from Wilson (from a sharp angle); Lemaire, (from the slot), and Shutt's three-on-nothing piece of excellence.

"That play reminded me of the ball-handling show the Harlem Globetrotters put on television," grinned Shutt. "We should put it to music. Twenty-six goals in 25 games . . . ridiculous, that's what it is. It's embarrassing. On the other hand," he laughed, "I guess it isn't. I don't even think about it. As far as I'm concerned, I'm starting from zero when we go into Los Angeles."

If there is embarrassment, all of it rests on the consciences of the opposition. Canadiens have been running into lately. They make it look so easy, it's as if they go into the game punching up figures on a computer: defensively, as well as offensively. That includes any attempt to rough up any of the Canadiens, which occurred late in the first period. One little skirmish started between Lambert and Stewart, another involving Charlie Simmer and Guy Lapointe and . . . look out! here comes L. Robinson. Peace was declared rapidly.

REPORTER — "Shutt says he'll score as many goals as you'll let him."

GUY LAFLEUR — "No problem. I'll put him on the map!"