

Meloche stops Canadiens cold

By TIM BURKE
of The Gazette

Half of Ville Emard was jammed outside the California Golden Seals' dressing room after the 14th tie last night and when native son Gilles Meloche emerged with a wide grin, Bernie Assaully, his neighbor and business manager, cried out: "Let's hear it for Gilles!" and the throng erupted with a rousing cheer and handclapping.

"He's the first guy to make it to the top from Ville Emard," Assaully said, "and the whole district roots for California when they come here. The rest of the time they cheer for the Canadiens."

The 21-year-old goaltender, who put on another fine display against the Canadiens last night, was greeted by his mother, four younger brothers, Denis, 19, Michel, 17, Robert, 14, and Jean, 10. So many of his pals and former teammates in Ville Emard were on hand that a policeman sighted: "I think I'm the only one in the Forum tonight who's not related to the Meloche family."

FELLED EARLY

Gilles shrugged off Yvan Cournoyer's blistering shot that felled him in the first period, hitting him square on the face mask. "The lights went out for a couple of seconds, but when I opened my eyes I knew where I was all right."

Which was more than many of the Canadiens did throughout much of the game, as well as some of Meloche's own teammates in last night's ragged contest. The mediocrity extended right into the panel of critics where Carol Vadnais, who had a horrendous game, was selected as the third star of the game.

Frank Mahovlich succinctly summed up the Canadiens' performance, saying: "We played terribly."

Symptomatic of the mediocrity of the evening was an unprecedented three penalties called for delay of game. The Canadiens supported the rigid enforcement this year of a rule that had been gathering cobwebs in the NHL statutes for years.

DOUBLE PENALTY

Since California suffered to a larger degree from its enforcement last night, they cussed it. Pete Mahovich scored the tying goal in the second period after Meloche was called for deliberately tossing the puck into the crowd.

Then in the third period, California could have lost the game had the Canadiens'

First Period
1—California, Pinder (20) 2:16
Penalty — Tremblay (M) minor misconduct 12:34.

Second Period
2—Montreal, P. Mahovich (22) 14:32
(F. Mahovich)
Penalties — Croshaw (Cal) 2:48
Lefleur (M) 10:28, Meloche (Cal) (struck by Patrick) 14:04.

Third Period
No scoring.
Penalties — Jarrett (Cal), Vadnais (Cal) 7:21, Tardif (M) 8:34, Ferguson (Cal) 12:12.
Shots on goal by:
California 14 13 5 — 32
Montreal 17 14 8 — 39
Goal—Meloche, California; Dryden, Montreal.
Attendance—14,612.

power play been anything more than totally ineffectual. At 7:21 Gary Jarrett was already earmarked for the penalty box on a delayed call for interference. Then Vadnais checked the puck into

the stands after the whistle had gone and although referee Bruce Hood hadn't seen it, assistant captain Frank Mahovlich pressed the issue (See CANADIENS, P. 18)

SPORTS

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1972

'Delaying' call irks Stasiuk

By BOB MORRISSEY
of The Gazette

Imagine those California Golden Seals: It's bad enough they come into the Forum with their white glossy skates and tie the Canadiens 1-1, but isn't it stretching it a bit when one or two of them claim they were robbed?

Seals' coach Vic Stasiuk was one of the two, and the attention of his wrath was a delaying game penalty called against his goaler, Gilles Meloche. Pete Mahovich scored the equalizer while Canadiens had the man advantage.

On the play, Meloche beat Yvan Cournoyer in a race for the puck, and his clearing attempt went into the crowd.

'LOUSY CALL'

"It was a lousy call under the circumstances," snapped Stasiuk. "The puck was rolling and there was a race for it. How can they call that delaying the game?"

Meloche agreed. "I was just trying to throw it out of our zone," said the young Montrealer. "If I had deliberately tried to hit the puck out I would have shot it from a sharp angle. But the puck was near the blue line when it went out."

Meloche said the reason they called it was because earlier in the game, Canadiens' J.-C. Tremblay had been hit with the same infraction, "and they had to even it up." Tremblay reacted so strongly to the call, that he was given a 10-minute misconduct.

Stasiuk later explained that the rule itself wasn't bad, but that it was an unjust call under the circumstances. "You know why they put in that rule?" he asked the small group clustered in the small room adjoining the Seals' dressing room. "It's because of Cheevers (Gerry). He used to do it all the time to give Orr (Bobby) time to rest."

THIRD CALL

There was a third delaying the game call made during the game when Carol Vadnais tipped the puck into the stands after play had been whistled down when Doug Jarrett was hit for interference.

"He just flipped it and it hit the edge of the boards and went over," said Stasiuk, pounding his fist into his hand. "Can you imagine calling a double minor like that when it's in the third period and the game's so close?"

Then he added: "Ya know, maybe it made them (California) work a little harder. Did you ever see three guys kill a penalty as well as Mar-



VIC STASIUK

shall Johnston, Paul Shmyr and Bert Marshall did."

Of the penalty, Vadnais said: "How can I be accused of delaying the game when play was already stopped? The play had been whistled down, there was no play in progress. I didn't mean to shoot the puck into the crowd. I just cleared it towards the boards. It hit something and went over. How can you delay a game that's already been stopped?"

Several Canadiens expressed opinions about the delaying the game rule. "If there's such a rule it should be enforced all the time," Canadiens' goalie Ken Dryden said.

And Frank Mahovich had this view. "It's a good rule. Imagine if in baseball or football they threw the ball into the stands."

GOALIE IN LIMELIGHT

The rule aside, the player most in the spotlight last night was Meloche. He made several difficult saves, but one of the ones he remembered most came against Yvan Cournoyer during the second period.

"He came in from the left and I thought he was going to cut across and deke me like he usually does," Meloche said. "But he shot instead and it surprised me."

Meloche also had a different type of anxious moment. In the first period, he stopped a shot on the mask and was knocked out for several seconds. But he quickly got back into the game.

"Thank God for Jacques," said Stasiuk of Jacques Plante who pioneered use of the face-mask.

Stasiuk was hardly surprised by Meloche's performance.

"He's been like that all season. He does everything a good goalie is supposed to do."

"He cuts off his angles, uses his feet well and stays up."

Stasiuk added that the only thing he's worked on with the young goalie is, "making him stronger with his stick."

Canadiens tied

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with linesman John D'Amico, who had.

For a minute and 23 seconds, the Seals' three defencemen, Paul Shmyr, Marshall Johnston and Bert Marshall, picked happily away at the Canadiens' disorganized attackers, limiting them to one routine shot, by Frank Mahovich.

A well-known local official, Frank Musica, said last night that he thought the call against Vadnais "was really bush. To leave a team two men short because of an infraction like that is completely ridiculous," he said. "Give him a misconduct, but don't leave them two-men short."

An NHL official explained that in the case of Vadnais, the call was automatic, because he'd flipped the puck out of play after the whistle had gone. In the earlier cases, against J.-C. Tremblay and Meloche, the penalties were judgment calls.

J.-C. Tremblay was one of the few Canadiens who had reservations about the rule, particularly the way it was applied to him.

"My feelings about it were known when I got misconduct," he said, adding with a good deal of sarcasm, "but it must be a good rule. The governors of the league made it, didn't they?"

There was little else to discuss after the game, and Bowman heatedly defended the enforcement of the rule. It is being enforced for the protection of the fans, he said, and was approved of 14-0 by the committee that passed it.

"Serge Savard got the same

treatment when he fired the puck out after Vancouver had scored," he pointed out. "What business have players with the puck after the whistle has gone?"

Thus the only uncontroversial effort of the night was produced at 3:15 in the first period when Gerry Pinder tipped in Wayne Carleton's hard shot from the blue line. It was the hard-skating winger's 20th goal of the season.

Outside the California dressing room, Meloche's mother

said she was nervous throughout the game (Gilles stopped 33 of 34 shots, Dryden 31 of 32). "But I didn't worry to much when Gilles got hurt," she said. "All my boys are playing and I'm used to injuries. My husband and I taught them all to play you know. I still play myself — on defence."

Only Pere Meloche was absent from the welcoming committee. After the game he had to rush off to work. He's a welder on the night shift at Dominion Bridge.