

THE WINNIPEG VICTORIAS

Their Last Stanley Cup Challenge

By Ed Sweeney

ONE OF HOCKEY'S EARLY CHAMPIONS was the Winnipeg Victorias. In fact, in the first 10 years (1893 to 1902) of Stanley Cup competition, Winnipeg was the only city other than Montreal to boast a winner of the coveted trophy. During this 10-year span, the Victorias appeared in eight Stanley Cup challenges, capturing the championship in 1896 and 1901. As champions, the Winnipeg club defended the Stanley Cup three times, but was successful only in January of 1902 when they beat the Toronto Wellingtons. However, in March of that year the Winnipeg seven were defeated by the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association in a three-game series on home ice. In January of 1903, the Victorias



Billy Keane of the Winnipeg Victorias.

challenged that same Montreal club in an attempt to win back the trophy. It would be their last Stanley Cup appearance.

The Montreal AAA squad had made one lineup change from 1902 when they faced the Victorias again: future Hall of Famer Tom Phillips replaced Charlie Liffiton at left wing. (Cecil Blachford and George Smith had also been added as spares.) Meanwhile, Winnipeg had made three changes to its lineup with Fred Olsen taking over goaltending duties from Art Brown, Billy Keane (a relative of current NHLer Mike Keane) replacing Charlie Johnstone at rover, and Fred Cadham at center in place of future Hall of Famer Dan Bain who had retired from the game.

The best-of-three series between the AAA and the Victorias opened in Montreal on January 29, 1903, with a crowd of 3,637 in attendance. The Winnipeg club caused a mild stir from the crowd when they appeared on the ice wearing white dressing gowns. More importantly, the players were all wearing tube skates — an unfamiliar site for eastern fans. The game itself proved to be no contest as the Cup defenders hammered the challengers 8–1 in a one-sided affair. Art Hooper with four goals and Jack Marshall (a former Victorias player) with three led the winners. Billy Keane scored the lone Winnipeg marker.

Team Lineups Winnipeg: Olsen, Rod Flett, Magnus Flett, Keane, Cadham (capt.), Gringras, Scanlan.

Montreal: Nicholson, Bellingham, Boon (capt.), Hooper, Marshall, Phillips, Gardner.

Game Summary First Half: 1-Marshall, 12:00. 2-Hooper, 19:00. 3-Marshall, 23:00. 4-Hooper, 25:00. Penalties, Phillips, Gringras (2), Hooper.

Second Half: 5-Gardiner, 3:00. 6-Hooper, 17:00. 7-Hooper, 21:00. 8-Keane, 28:00. 9-Marshall, 29:00. Penalties, Hooper, Bellingham, Keane.

Referee Percy Quinn.

The Victorias showed a complete reversal of form in the second game of the series on January 31 as they battled Montreal to a 2–2 overtime tie. A crowd of 4,520 at the Westmount Arena viewed a closely fought game. Montreal had held a 2–0 lead late in the game on goals by Art Hooper and Tom Phillips, but Tony Gringras and Fred Cadham scored two quick goals for Winnipeg that sent the match into extra time. The two goaltenders, Billy Nicholson for Montreal and Fred Olsen of the Victorias, turned in outstanding performances. The game was marred, however, by an injury to Montreal winger Jimmy Gardner who sustained a broken collarbone from a checking incident with Winnipeg's Billy Keane. A unique situation arose during the game when the clock struck midnight after 27 minutes of overtime. The mayor of Westmount stopped the contest, refusing to allow the match to continue into the Sabbath.

Team Lineups Winnipeg: Olsen, Rod Flett, Magnus Flett, Cadham, Gringras, Keane, Scanlan.

Montreal: Nicholson, Hodge, Boon, Gardner, Hooper, Marshall, Phillips, Blachford.

Game Summary First Half: 1-Hooper, 22:00. 2-Phillips, 23:30.

Second Half: 3-Gringras, 25:00, 4-Cadham, 27:30. Penalties, Gardner, Blachford, Marshall, Hooper (5), Phillips (4), Gringras (2), M. Flett (2). R. Flett, Keane (6).

Referee Percy Quinn.

President A.B. (Abe) Code of the Manitoba Northwest Hockey League, President Charles Chitty of the Montreal Hockey Club and referee Percy Quinn made a hasty trip to Ottawa on Sunday to interview the Stanley Cup trustees with regards to Saturday night's 2–2 tie. After a brief conference with P.D. Ross and Sheriff John Sweetland it was decided that when Montreal and Winnipeg played game three of the series on Monday, February 2, the club scoring the first goal of the match would be declared the winner of Saturday's game. If Winnipeg was to tally first, the players would be given a 10-minute rest period and then return to the ice for the third and deciding game. However, this decision of the trustees was changed when they recognized the fact that it would be nearly impossible to sell tickets to a game that could be terminated after only a few minutes if Montreal scored. (As it turned out, Winnipeg might well have won the Stanley Cup that night if the original ruling stood, as the Victorias scored first and then went on to a 4–2 victory.)

At another executive meeting, it was decided that Montreal and Winnipeg would play a full third game of the series. If Montreal won, they would retain the Cup championship, but if Winnipeg won, then Saturday night's overtime game would continue immediately afterward with the team that scored first being declared the Stanley Cup champion. This plan was also scrapped, with the final decision being that Saturday's 2–2 draw

would simply go into the books as a tie game. If Winnipeg won game three on Monday, then a fourth match to decide the Stanley Cup champion would be staged on Wednesday, February 4.

Game three on February 2 drew a crowd of 5,127 with hundreds of others turned away. The large gathering hoped to see the home team win the Stanley Cup that evening, but was met with disappointment when the Victorias recorded a 4–2 victory over the Winged Wheelers to force the extra game. Billy Keane turned in an outstanding performance for the winners, scoring three goals while future Hall of Famer Fred Scanlan notched the other Winnipeg marker. Montreal's two goals were scored by Jack Marshall, yet another future Hall of Famer.

Team Lineups Winnipeg: Olsen, Rod Flett, Magnus Flett, Keane, Cadham, Gringras, Scanlan.

Montreal: Nicholson, Hodge, Boon, Hooper, Marshall, Phillips, Blachford.

Game Summary First Half: No Scoring.

Second Half: 1-Keane, 5:00, 2-Scanlan, 7:00. 3-Marshall, 9:00. 4-Keane, 16:00. 5-Marshall, 27:00, 6-Keane, 29:00, Penalties, Keane (2), Gringras, Hooper, Blachford, M. Flett (2), Cadham.

Referee Percy Quinn.

The Montreal AAA retained the Stanley Cup in game four on February 4, beating the Winnipeg Vics 4–1 and winning the series two games to one with one tie. A crowd of 4,282 saw Tommy Phillips lead the way with three goals while Jack Marshall had the other. (Montreal's first goal actually went in off Marshall's leg, but the goal was credited to Phillips). Billy Keane, Winnipeg's leading scorer in the series, scored his team's lone goal. Victorias captain Fred Cadham was injured during the game and replaced by Dan Flett, the younger brother of Rod and Magnus. Percy Quinn, who had refereed the first three games of the series, refused to officiate the final game and was replaced by Chauncey Kirby.

Team Lineups Winnipeg: Olsen, Rod Flett, Magnus Flett, Keane, Cadham, Gringras, Scanlan, Dan Flett.

Montreal: Nicholson, Bellingham, Boon, Hooper, Marshall, Phillips, Smith.

Game Summary First Half: 1-Phillips, 11:00. 2-Keane, 16:00. 3-Phillips, 17:00, 4-Phillips, 21:00.

Second Half: 5-Marshall, 20:00. Penalties, Gringras, Keane (3), M. Flett (2), Hooper, Phillips, Smith.

Referee Chauncey Kirby.

Although their loss in 1903 proved to be the Winnipeg Victorias' final Stanley Cup bid, they would be heard from again in 1911 and 1912 when the club captured the Allan Cup.