

Lightning treat Stanley Cup with respect

The Stanley Cup has a storied history and has been all across the world

By Tim Povtak
The Orlando Sentinel (KRT)

TAMPA, Fla. — It has been to the White House, the Kremlin and the Parliament in Canada, to the top of the Empire State Building and the bottom of Mario Lemieux's swimming pool.

Sylvain Lefebvre of Colorado used it for his son's baptism in 1996. Ed Olczyk of the Rangers let Kentucky Derby winner Go for Gin use it as a feedbag in 1994.

It has been used as so many beer mugs and champagne glasses, parade marshals and party favors. It has gone bowling, golfing, fishing and cavorting at strip clubs more times than anyone could imagine.

It has been religiously worshiped and badly abused.

It is what this National Hockey League championship chase is all about — The Stanley Cup, the most recognized, revered, well-traveled

trophy in all of sports history.

"It's the Holy Grail," said Brad Lukowich of the Tampa Bay Lightning. "It's a symbol of God, basically," agreed teammate Tim Taylor.

The Lightning open the best-of-seven Stanley Cup Finals on Tuesday night against the Calgary Flames, both looking to win a title and a chance for every player on their team to hoist the symbol of their sport's supremacy above his head for a memorable lap around the rink.

This is a USA vs. Canada series, two smaller-market teams that almost seem out of place in their sport's showcase event. Yet their single-purposed quest to lift that Cup overpowers any other subplot imaginable.

"When you lift that Cup, it suddenly means your life is perfect," said Calgary veteran Martin Gelin, one of a handful of players in this series to have played on a Stanley Cup championship team. "It's a feeling that is impossible to describe with words."

It can bring tears to the eyes of hardened men, like Lukowich's father when he saw his son carrying it after Dallas won the Cup in 1999. It can

cause flashbacks, like it did with Taylor when he helped win it for Detroit in 1997, skating his lap and thinking back to his childhood dreams.

It can cause regret for people like Gelin, who wishes now he had shared it more with those he loved when he helped win it in Edmonton 14 years ago.

More than any tangible object in professional sports, the Stanley Cup produces a sense of awe among fans, and a died-and-gone-to-heaven feeling among athletes who have won it.

Hockey is a passionate, hardened sport with a passionate, hardened, rough-and-tumble symbol.

"The Cup is what it's all about," said Chris Simon, who won it in 1996 with Colorado. "It just provides a feeling of great joy that everyone who touches it can share. When you win it, you want to share it."

The Stanley Cup doesn't hide in a trophy case in hockey's hall of fame, or behind protective glass in the winner's rink. It's a people's trophy, touched by a thousand hands every year, photographed around the world.

It has dents and marks and plenty of imperfections. It's a blue-collar award in a blue-collar sport, standing the test of time.

Although a replica often sits perfectly for viewing in the hall of fame, the actual Cup travels almost 300 days a year. Each player on the winning team of this series will have it for 24 hours, to do as he pleases, wherever he pleases.

It has been showered with and slept with, locked in the trunk of a car, thrown in a snowdrift and accidentally abandoned on the side of a road. It's been stolen and recovered several times, dropped into more than one swimming pool, hoisted by more than one inebriated player.

Yet often now, it is used in a more conservative manner. Since 1995, it has traveled with a bodyguard, someone who serves as both a drop-off and pick-up man, cutting down on the abuses it once endured. It does not fly coach. It flies in its own first-class seat, next to its keeper.

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earlier pairing had run long. That, Panova said, may have come into play in her loss.

"I waited a long time before my match and I think that kind of mentally exhausted me," Panova said.

Head coach Nils Schyllander said Panova made just a few mistakes.

"At this level and as a collegiate athlete just a few mistakes will get you," Schyllander said.

The loss leaves the junior from Moscow tied with Krissy Barger on top of the Oregon all-time singles victories list with 72.

The loss also denies Panova the chance to break her own single-season record in victories. Panova's 32 wins ties her record-breaking total from last season.

Panova's teammate, Dominika Dieskova, also made an early exit from the tournament, losing to Stanford's Theresa Logar, 6-2, 6-1.

Dieskova, the first freshman ever to make it to the NCAA tournament for Oregon, was up 2-1 in the first set and had a break point, but couldn't convert on the opportunity.

Logar took control from there, losing only two more games the rest of the match.

"In the first set I had some chances, but she played solid tennis and didn't make any mistakes," Dieskova said.

Schyllander believes the familiarity of the courts and her recent play helped keep Logar fresh. Logar helped Stanford win the NCAA team tournament — also held in Athens — on Sunday.

"She's been playing on these courts for the last three days, so I think that definitely helped," Schyllander said.

Kost will head to NCAAs

Oregon's Manuel Kost's hopes for a second consecutive trip came true Monday. It was announced he will participate in the NCAA Individual Tournament, beginning Wednesday.

Kost, ranked 66th in the country, was announced as an alternate two weeks ago, but was named part of the 64-man field on Monday.

The tournament pairings will be announced later today and will determine when and whom Kost and teammate Sven Swinnen will play on Wednesday.

Clayton Jones is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

SPORTS BRIEF

Courtney Nagle wins Arthur Ashe Award

Oregon senior Courtney Nagle was awarded the 2004 Arthur Ashe Award for Leadership and Sportsmanship from the Intercollegiate Tennis Association on Sunday.

The award is handed to the player who exhibits outstanding sportsmanship and leadership along with academic, extracurricular and tennis achievements.

Nagle helped lead the Ducks to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2000 this past season. She defeated 64th-ranked Erin Hoe in the last match of her career in Oregon's near upset of Washington in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Nagle finished her Oregon career third all-time on the victories list and ended with a 65-36 record. She was named an All-American her junior year after receiving a bid to the NCAA Individual Championships after posting a 19-16 singles record.

"I am so proud of Courtney," Oregon head coach Nils Schyllander said. "She was the cornerstone of our team and has set a tremendous example of what we are looking for in an Oregon athlete."

Nagle will receive the award in August during a special ceremony at the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills, N.Y.

— Clayton Jones

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