

Hockey

NHL debuted 100 years ago with contract snags and many goals

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — It was a night of sticky ice, last-minute player signings and a small crowd.

Such were the glitches when the NHL it made its debut 100 years ago. Now, the world's premier hockey league celebrates its centennial with an outdoor game Saturday night between the Montreal Canadiens and Ottawa Senators.

The days of multimillion-dollar contracts, instant replays and Florida were a long way off when the four-team NHL's first games took place on Dec. 19, 1917, while a gruesome war raged in Europe.

The Canadiens took on an early incarnation of the Senators in Ottawa while the Toronto Arenas played the Wanderers in Montreal.

The daily newspapers of the time, and their anonymous scribes, dutifully recorded the color and chaos of the league's emergence from the ashes of the National Hockey Association, alongside advertisements for gramophones, dyspepsia tablets and handkerchiefs.

Ottawa dominated the Canadiens in the final NHA season, winning six of seven

matchups.

But for their first NHL meeting, the Senators were missing top scorer Frank Nighbor, an enlisted airman whose military commitment kept him off the ice. The "Pembroke Peach" would go on to win several Stanley Cups with the Ottawa team.

One of his descendants, Derek Nighbor, plans to be at Ottawa's TD Place Stadium for the NHL 100 Classic game with his brother and nephew, sporting their heritage Sens jerseys emblazoned with Frank's No. 6.

"Our family's pretty proud of the connection," he said. "It's not only the Nighbor name, but it's Pembroke. Still today, with our Junior 'A' Lumber Kings, hockey is really central to life in the Ottawa Valley."

The 1917 edition of the Senators had another headache on opening night: contract disputes meant several players signed at the 11th hour and two — Jack Darragh and Hamby Shore — even missed the first part of the game.

Canadiens sharpshooter Joe Malone scored three times in the first period, and Montreal led 5-3 heading into the third.

Ottawa forced the play,



Adrian Wylid/The Canadian Press via AP

Ottawa Senators left wing Nick Paul, left, and defenseman Fredrik Claesson run a drill as they skate on the ice rink on Parliament Hill, Friday Dec. 15, 2017, in Ottawa. The Senators will play the Montreal Canadiens in the NHL 100 Classic outdoors on Saturday.

but "it was useless, what looked like sure goals being missed by overskating the puck, missing passes and poor shooting," the Ottawa Journal reported.

Montreal won 7-4. Ottawa might have fared better if it had begun the game at full

strength, said the Journal, adding that the ice became "very sticky" near the end of the game "may have had a lot to do with their poor work here."

The Daily Star confidently predicted the hometown Torontos, as the

team was known, "should win in a walk" over the Wanderers, though the paper later acknowledged the Montreal roster was "not as weak" as player-coach Art Ross — future namesake of the league scoring trophy — "would have it believed."

The Wanderers president invited soldiers who had been injured overseas to attend the Montreal Arena as guests. Even so, the Montreal Gazette noted the turnout of 700 was "one of the smallest crowds" to see a season opener and "many of the well-known patrons of the game were missing."

A Star story concluded that the game had the look of an opener, finding the hockey "pretty rough in spots." The Torontos were said to have shown "plenty of speed and dash on the attack, but were weak on the defence."

Their goaltending also failed to impress, with starter Sammy Hebert chased from the net in favor of Art Brooks.

"Sammy Hebert couldn't stop a flock of balloons," a fan told the Star.

One reporter considered the Wanderers lucky to win, with Montreal hanging on for a 10-9 victory.

No fewer than 20 minor

penalties and two majors were handed out, the Ottawa Journal reported, saying the "game was not rough, but the players were irritable."

Wanderers center Harry Hyland, who scored five goals, sustained the only injury. The puck bounced off his own goalie's stick and "struck him a terrific smash fair in the eye, knocking him out."

The Montreal arena burned down just weeks later and the Wanderers disbanded. In the playoffs, Toronto defeated the Canadiens for the league championship.

The season was notable for a major rule change in January 1918 — allowing goalies to drop to the ice to stop the puck.

The league also tried to stay a stride ahead of devious fans by providing referees with special whistles, preventing people in the crowd from stopping play by blowing the same kind used by officials.

"They are really wonders in their way," the Star noted, saying "their sound resembles something between the roaring of an infuriated bull and the summer night lullaby of the latter's amphibious namesake, the bullfrog."

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

Table listing local basketball games including Prep Boys Basketball, Prep Girls Basketball, Prep Wrestling, and Prep Swimming.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, Pct, GB. Lists games between Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Washington, Miami, Orlando, Charlotte, and Cleveland.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, Pct, GB. Lists games between Houston, San Antonio, New Orleans, Memphis, Dallas, Minnesota, Denver, Portland, Oklahoma City, and Utah.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, Pct, GB. Lists games between Golden State, L.A. Clippers, L.A. Lakers, Sacramento, and Phoenix.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, OT Pts, GF, GA. Lists Eastern Conference games including Tampa Bay, Toronto, Boston, Montreal, Detroit, Florida, Ottawa, and Buffalo.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, OT Pts, GF, GA. Lists Western Conference games including Columbus, Washington, N.Y. Islanders, N.Y. Rangers, Pittsburgh, Carolina, and Philadelphia.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, OT Pts, GF, GA. Lists Pacific Division games including Los Angeles, Vegas, San Jose, Calgary, Anaheim, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Arizona.

Hockey

Table listing NHL games across Eastern, Western, and Pacific Divisions.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, T, Pct, PF, PA. Lists National Conference games including y-Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Kansas City, L.A. Chargers, Oakland, Denver, Tampa Bay, and Washington.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, T, Pct, PF, PA. Lists Southern Division games including New Orleans, Carolina, Atlanta, and Tampa Bay.

Table with columns: Team, W, L, T, Pct, PF, PA. Lists Pacific Division games including L.A. Rams, Seattle, Arizona, San Francisco, and y-clinched division.

Camellia Bowl

Montgomery, Ala. Arkansas State (7-3) vs. Middle Tennessee (6-6), 5 p.m. (ESPN)

Rodeo

Wrangler NFR World Standings Through 9th performance All-Around: 1. Trevor Brazile, \$319,337

Bareback Riding: 1. Tim O'Connell, \$304,146; 2. Tanner Aust (Granite Falls, MN), \$212,868

Team Roping - Headers: 1. Caleb Driggers (Hoboken, TX), \$222,317; 2. Luke Brown (Stephenville, TX), \$210,457

Saddle Bronc Riding: 1. Ryder Wright (Milford, UT), \$273,515; 2. Jacobs Crawley (Boerne, TX), \$226,927

Barrel Racing: 1. Tiani Schuster (Krum, TX), \$250,377; 2. Stevi Hillman (Weatherford, TX), \$185,952

Bull Riding: 1. Sage Kimmey (Strong City, OK), \$340,229; 2. Trey Benton III (Rock Island, TX), \$279,054

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Basketball

Table listing NBA games across Eastern Conference Atlantic Division and Western Conference.

Women's College Basketball

Table listing Friday's Games and Saturday's Games for women's college basketball.

Men's College Basketball

Table listing Top 25 Friday's Games and Saturday's Games for men's college basketball.

Football

Table listing American Conference games including New England, Buffalo, Miami, N.Y. Jets, and Jacksonville.

NCAA Bowl Schedule

Table listing various NCAA bowls including Celebration Bowl, New Orleans Bowl, Cure Bowl, Las Vegas Bowl, and New Mexico Bowl.

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