

SPORTS

Hockey Retirements



Liam McKenna
Sports Editor

Earlier in the week, teammates and fans alike were surprised to hear Zigmund Palffy, second leading scorer of the Pittsburgh Penguins, announce his retirement from the game of hockey. Being a large fan of Palffy since his early days as an Islander, I was somewhat dismayed to hear of his early retirement at the ripe old age of 33. Palffy cited back

problems as the reason for his retirement. With the rash of retirements in the year following the lockout, one begins to wonder just how many players in

recent years have been forced to retire or just plain old decide to call it quits maybe a little too early. So, without further ado, players who may have benefited from a few more years in the NHL:

Cam Neely: This one is pretty obvious. One of the original modern power forwards, Cam Neely would act as the model for players such as Todd Bertuzzi, Eric Lindros, and Joe Thornton. Interestingly, Neely actually spent three useless years in Vancouver before being shipped to Boston for a bag of pucks. He'd go on to score 36 goals the next year, and in subsequent years would tally an unofficial 50 goals in 44 games in an injury-plagued season. In his brief 13-season career hampered by knee and thigh injuries, Neely produced 395 goals and 694 points in 726 games. He also holds the team record for playoff goals, 55, even more than Bruins great Bobby Orr.

Patrick Roy: Think he retired on time? Think again. This guy was a goaltending machine, and one of the few goaltenders who could've stood up to the equipment regulations and laughed heartily. The NHL's all-time leader in wins, I think I speak in all objectivity when I say Patrick Roy was



the greatest goalie of all time, and anybody who argues with me needs to give their head a shake. He won four Stanley Cups, two each with Colorado and Montreal, and was last named to the All-Star team in 2001-2002, a year before his retirement. Sure, he may have beaten his wife, but nobody's perfect, right Ed Belfour? Have a drink

on me, Eddy, and try to tell me that Patrick Roy couldn't come back and be great at 40 years old.

Gino Odjick: Only 35! Who knew! It may feel like he's been around forever, with

his 2500+ career penalty minutes, one career playoff goal, and hockey sense that makes Bruins' coach Mike Sullivan look like Napoleon behind the bench, but ol' Gino is only 35. And retired! Bring G.O. back, he's good for entertainment, isn't he? I heard the Islanders were looking for a coach - I wonder if they'll snap him up before somebody else gets fired and he replaces them.

Andy Moog: Oh, sorry, wrong pile. Look for him in next issue, under "Players Who Didn't Retire Early Enough, and Who Nobody Really Likes Anyway — This Means You, Andy Moog."

Mark Messier: I was never a big fan of the "Moose," who was starting to look more like a deer caught in the headlights by the end of his career. That being said, it would have been nice for New York's finest to see his Rangers through a winning season before he retired, especially to take them through a few rounds of the playoffs. And hey, wouldn't it be nice to see him break Howe's record of 1767 games? He's only eleven games shy - come back, Mess, for twelve games. Then leave. You're 44, no sense being a damn fool about it.



Take Broncos, Panthers for Super Bowl XL



Josh Lewis
Reporter

It's final four time in the NFL playoffs and the biggest stories are not the teams still in action, but those who aren't. Teams that were supposed to be here but got sidetracked somewhere along the way.

Exhibit A: the Indianapolis Colts. This team started out with a whopping 13-0 record. Many thought they would join the 1972 Miami Dolphins as the only team to go undefeated through an entire season. Instead, they lost to the Chargers and Seahawks, and their dream season came to a crashing halt with a humbling loss to Pittsburgh. Mike Vanderjagt's missed 46-yard field goal may make him the scapegoat, but the entire team was outplayed in a 21-18 loss.

The two-time defending Super Bowl champs didn't stick around, either. After a mediocre start to the season, the New England Patriots started to turn things around toward the end of the season and made the playoffs as the fourth seed. Of course, it doesn't hurt when your biggest divisional challenger was the worst team in the league last season. After routing the Jacksonville Jaguars 28-3 on wildcard weekend, the Pats came up against the 13-3 Denver Broncos. New England had all kinds of trouble with Denver during the season, and this time was no different. Champ Bailey's 100-yard interception return gave the Broncos a comfortable lead and buried New England's so-called dynasty.

Another team that was expected to be in the thick of the Super Bowl hunt was the Philadelphia Eagles. After coming within a field goal of the championship last year, the Eagles were doomed from week one when Donovan McNabb suffered a sports hernia. The descent into hell continued as the Terrell Owens soap opera resulted in his expulsion from the team and other key players went down with serious injuries. Philadelphia finished at 6-10 and last in the NFC East.

What about the teams that did make it this far? They're nothing to sneeze at either. Place your bets, folks,

and take these tips from UPEI's most reliable print media.

(2) Denver Broncos vs. (6) Pittsburgh Steelers

The AFC championship game matches Denver's 2nd-ranked running game against Pittsburgh's 4th-ranked defense. Pittsburgh loves to blitz, and it was one of the main factors in their win over the Colts. Constant pressure on Peyton Manning forced him into making mistakes and turnovers and the Broncos' stellar offensive line will have its hands full protecting Jake Plummer from the rush, not to mention high-octane running backs Tatum Bell and Mike Anderson.

The Steelers, on the other hand, will be relying on Big Ben Roethlisberger to lead the passing attack against the Broncos' 29th-ranked pass defense. In stark contrast, Denver's 2nd-ranked rushing defense will be looking to shut down Pittsburgh running backs Jerome Bettis and Willie Parker.

Denver's defense will be the difference in this one. **Broncos 24, Steelers 17**

(1) Seattle Seahawks vs. (5) Carolina Panthers

For Seattle, it's Shaun Alexander, Shaun Alexander, Shaun Alexander. For the Panthers? Defense, defense, defense. Alexander, the NFL MVP, set a league record with 28 touchdowns in 2005. A first-quarter concussion knocked him out of last week's 20-10 win over the Redskins and had Seahawks fan(s) holding their breath until the team announced Thursday that the star running back would play against Carolina.

Alexander will have to get past Carolina's 4th-ranked rush defense to have an impact on Sunday. He will be the Panthers' main target, and Seattle QB Matt Hasselbeck will have to perform to the best of his ability if Alexander is neutralized.

After DeShaun Foster broke his leg last week, the Panthers will turn to Nick Goings as running back. Jake Delhomme will have to return to his form of two years ago, when he led his team to the Super Bowl before losing a tight battle best remembered for the Super Boob incident. In the end, Carolina's defense will carry them to an upset victory and their second Super Bowl berth in two years. **Panthers 27, Seahawks 24**