

A Sweet Return to Magnificence

By Adam Gauthier

On December 27th, 2000 the hockey world rejoiced as one of its saviours returned to the ice. Pittsburgh Penguin superstar Mario Lemieux made his return from a three and a half year layoff to score one goal and set up two others as the Pens defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs 5-0 before a capacity crowd of 17,148 at the Iglou.

Lemieux, who took the opening face-off, assisted on Jaromir Jagr's 20th goal of the season just 33 seconds in to the first period. He did the unthinkable in the second period by scoring his first goal of the season on a great setup from Jagr which left spectators and broadcasters in awe.

Lemieux hasn't lost a step since his return. The Pens are 4-1 and Lemieux has 4 goals in five games and a total of 14 points. With 40 games remaining on the Penguins schedule, Mario is on pace to score 112 points if he continues his 2.8 points per game average.

The return of Lemieux has also rejuvenated Pens' captain Jaromir Jagr who had been struggling and had even contemplated retirement earlier this season. The two were named co-NHL Players of the Week during the week of Lemieux's return.

When Lemieux retired in 1997 it was thought that he would never return after suffering a rash of bad luck which included a lingering back problem, a bout with Hodgkin's Disease, and the constant clutching and grabbing which was taking the finesse and skill out of his and other star players games.

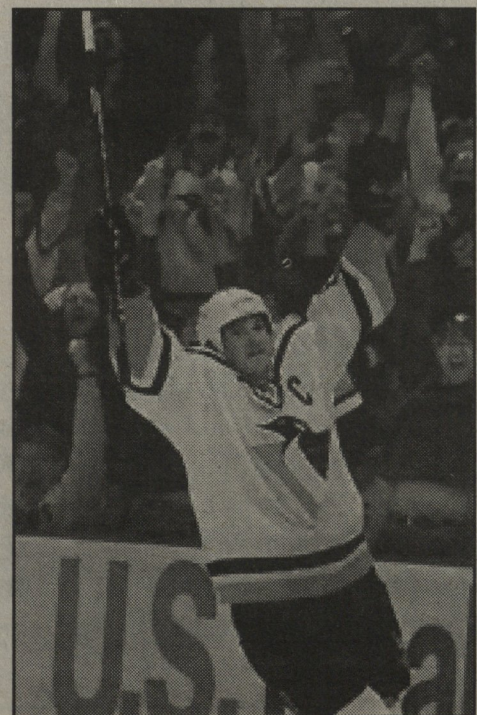
Lemieux is now at full health and seems much happier with the crackdown by NHL officials to call more penalties against clutching and grabbing. Many believe that Lemieux, the majority owner of the

Pens, is back for financial reasons. The team was drawing mediocre crowds to home games before he returned but is now sold out for the team's remaining home games.

Lemieux has defended himself by stating that the reason for his return is his good health, an urge to compete again and to play in front of his 4 year-old son Austin who was an infant when his father originally retired.

The Pens will make one trip to Canada this year to play the Canadiens in Lemieux's hometown of Montreal in February. The hapless Canadiens will be overshadowed by Lemieux which will remind many hockey fans of Guy Lafleur's return to the Montreal Forum as a member of the New York Rangers in 1987. Lafleur won the crowd that night and Lemieux is likely to do the same.

In fact Lemieux has won the crowd in every arena since his return to the ice. He has brought an increase in revenue to the league and has given the fans and the league the marquee name that has been vacant since Wayne Gretzky retired in 1999.



Sp-Editorial

By Marc MacDonald

While most of us have been stuffing our gourds with our own weight in turkey and getting shit-faced to usher in the real new millennium (I guess Clarke and Kubirk were a bit off with their Space Odyssey predictions for 2001) the world of sports has continued to spin on its axis.

And of late that axis has been none other than Mario Lemieux. Yes, Mr. Mario pulled an Air Jordan and removed his jersey from the rafters. Mario's motives are probably more monetarily inclined, as he is part owner of the Penguins, than that he sucks at baseball, as was Mike's excuse. But Mario is only going to be paying himself minimum wage. In his first 5 games back, Super Mario earned 12 points and co-player of the week along with his on ice part-

ner Luigi Jagar.

But all the Pens fans can collectively kiss my ass as Montreal defeated Pittsburgh 4-3 on Friday January 5th and Habs goaltender Jose Theodore scored a goal using a backhand last week. But other than that the Canadiens ain't done shit for me lately. Here's my advice to the new Habs management, go to the All Star game and buy some damn players.

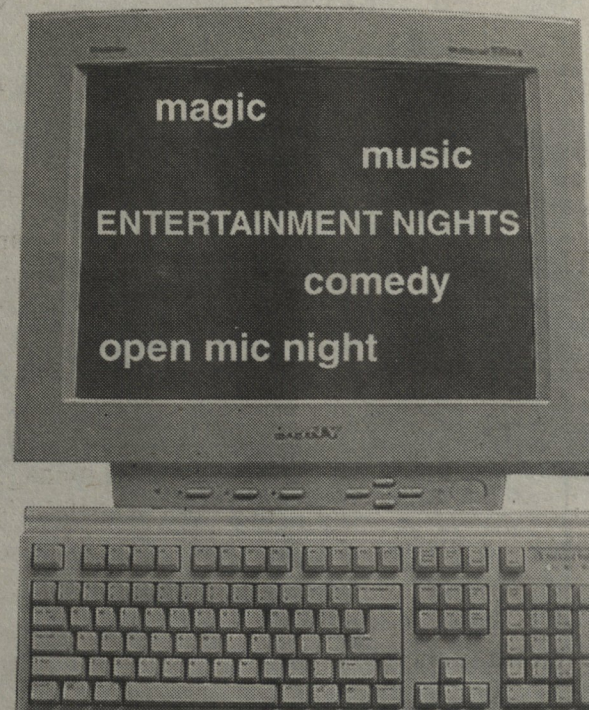
And finally in XFL news... oh wait, I don't care about that P.O.S. excuse for a football league.



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