

FIVE MINUTE MAJOR: A New Art Form

The new art form of celebrating in hockey

By Jake Courtepatte

May 10, 1970: Bobby Orr put the puck past Glenn Hall forty seconds into overtime to complete the sweep for the Boston Bruins over the St. Louis Blues to claim the Stanley Cup. After the goal, Orr celebrated with a Superman-esque dive; and with that moment, he was forever immortalized in photographic history.

We've all done it. Whether in the driveway, on the pond, or in 9th grade Algebra, every good Canadian kid has fantasized about scoring that deciding overtime goal, or making that big last-second save. But imagine if that fantasy were reality? How would we handle that moment of such amazing elation?

The 'celly' has become quite an art to the new generation of hockey players. Swiping the ice with a glove, going down on a knee, jumping into the glass. It was this last form of celebration that injured the Pittsburgh Penguins' Beau Bennett earlier in October, which he revealed as the cause a few days go.

Jordin Tootoo, of the New Jersey Devils, celebrated with a chicken dance last week.

I've seen the flamboyant celebrations in Aurora Tigers Junior A games. They're even starting to leak into the minor systems. So with the rise of the celebration comes the complication of policing their ethics. In a game where respect is a virtue, what differs a 'good' celebration from a bad one?

In his rookie year in 2012, Nail Yakupov of the Edmonton Oilers came under fire for his overbearing celebration against the Los Angeles Kings. After tying the game with his first career goal at 19:56 of the third period, Yakupov took a dramatic rink-long slide as if he had just won the Stanley Cup.

Now, these types of theatrics are a hot topic. Don Cherry, Canada's king of the hockey opinion, was quick to dismiss Yakupov's celebration as 'idiotic', and added that all it achieved was the 'loss of respect from his fellow players'.

Cherry can often let his mouth run. We all know that. Hockey fans know to take what he says with a grain of salt. But one key element he added in that evening's Coach's Corner really hit home. Cherry took notice of the devastated L.A. goaltender, Jonathon Quick, waiting in the King's zone long after the celebration left it for Yakupov to finish his antics. Realizing this, one word springs to mind when judging the ethics of a celebration: humiliation.

Taking humiliation into account, the controversy becomes black and white with very little grey area. Did the goal scorer humiliate his opponent purposely with his celebration? If he did, it takes away the integrity that is so crucial within sport. What separates war from competitive sports is the respect that athletes must have for both themselves and their opponent. Celebrations calling out an opponent do not show that respect.

Let's pad this argument with some concrete examples of a 'good' celebration and a 'bad' celebration. Dec. 8, 2011. Artem Anisimov scores a shorthanded goal in the second period to give the Rangers a 2-1 lead over the Lightning. In typical young-ego fashion, Anisimov proceeded to turn back at goalie Mathieu Garon, take a knee, and pretend to fire a sniper rifle.

Blatant disregard for a man ten years your senior, in a game halfway through the season.

This type of theatrics has no place in the game of hockey, or any other sport for that matter. It crosses the line between celebrating and taunting. The Lightning knew it, quickly turning the celebration into a line brawl.

Now let's go to February 2010. With 12:20 left in the first overtime, Sidney Crosby took a feed from Jarome Iginla in the corner to bury what is perhaps the most celebrated goal in Canadian history: the 'Golden Goal.' The gloves and stick go flying, Sid careens into the glass and is swarmed by teammates.

As heartbreaking as it was for the American team, Crosby's celebration involved his teammates and only his teammates. A national poll by the Association for Canadian Studies found Crosby to be the best-remembered Canadian Olympian of all time. Although his goal was not the prettiest, it was remembered, rather than his celebration.

All Canadian hockey fans remember the 'Golden Goal' vividly, and have probably recreated it on backyard rinks across our great country. Coincidentally, do many people remember Anisimov's goal he scored back in December 2011? Not without searching Youtube for 'Anisimov sniper celebration'. Be remembered for your athletic ability, not your theatrics. When you score a goal, focus on your teammates, not your opponents. There's a reason why Unsportsmanlike Conduct was invented.