

# FIVE MINUTE MAJOR: New logo could help Leaf franchise keep past failures in the past

By Jake Courtepatte

Last month, NHL phenom Steven Stamkos liked a tweet by TSN posting a video about his upcoming free agent status. And, as they always do, the blue-and-white fan club flew off the handle: speculation came pouring in that the Markham native is coming home, hallelujah, here we come from the depths of despair that we have been trapped in since the late 90s, an era this lifelong Leafs fan was barely of age to remember.

This is what we have been reduced to. Twitter likes.

But while this may seem to reflect the false and blind hope of our fan base, another seemingly mundane announcement has me wondering.

Sportslogos.net recently reported the Maple Leafs are expected to unveil an entirely new logo and uniform for their centennial 2016-17 season, the first time the club has done so in over 45 years.

They adopted the modern eleven-point design and typography in 1967-68, opting for a more minimalistic design compared to the sharp-edged and detailed logo of the past. You know, one that looked like a leaf.

Any Leafs fan could tell you the significance of that season. It was the first year of our ongoing Stanley Cup drought, now closing in on fifty years.

Since then, the logo has gone through changes only in the smallest of details. Angles have changed, wording has grown larger or smaller, and most recently the colour was switched to navy from a royal blue in 1987-88.

Could there be any significance? As a Leaf fan, I'm bound to superstition, as sometimes it's all we have as a fan base to hold on to.

Let's switch the focus to baseball for a second. Bear with me here.

The Toronto Blue Jays went through a number of logo revamps in the late 90s and 2000s, all of which most of us would like to forget. There was the anthropomorphic blue jay tossing a baseball in the air, and let's not forget the awful, awful 'T' logo and black uniforms from the JP Ricciardi era.

In 2012, the Jays finally realized if it ain't broke, don't fix it. They returned to a slightly-modified version of their original logo from 1977, one that emblazoned the front of Roberto Alomar's jersey when he hit the World Series-clinching run in 1992, and the front of Joe Carter's when he bounced around the bases in 1993.

Since then, the Jays have resurged both on and off the field, the fans are back, and we were rewarded this year with the most exciting season of Toronto baseball since those rings.

Back to hockey.

Sportslogos.net reported that the new logo will be 'a combination of all past team eras plus a nod to the future'. As with the Jays, the Leafs were better off with their historic logo, and the modern one (albeit historic in its own way) has become synonymous with mediocrity.

In the first year of the modern logo, the Leafs failed to make the playoffs for the first time in a decade. They weren't able to finish higher than third in the Wales division throughout the 70s, and the 80s did not see one winning season for the franchise.

It was the logo that Scott Niedermayer should have worn, had the Leafs not traded their first round pick in 1991 for journeyman Tom Kurvers. It was the logo worn by Andrew Raycroft when he joined the Leafs in 2006, traded for future all-star Tuukka Rask. It was the logo worn by guys like Darryl Sittler and Phil Kessel, both great players driven out of town by brass and fans looking for excuses for another bad season.

It is the logo thrown on the Air Canada Centre ice last season by disgruntled fans that have had enough.

So maybe, just maybe, the Leafs could take a page out of the Blue Jays' book and look at the past for answers. In an interview with ESPN last week, Leaf great Johnny Bower said his favourite logo was the older one, and that today's is 'too plain'.

Bower was the last goaltender to win the Stanley Cup for the Maple Leafs.