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Orr's great goal

By Larry Schwartz

Special to ESPN.com

"You always waited for the moment when he got the puck behind his net. And you could see him looking and scanning. And there were those five players in front of that goaltender and you knew that none of them was going to stop him."

-- Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Dave Anderson about Bobby Orr on ESPN's SportsCentury show (Friday, June 18, 10:30 p.m. ET).

Orr, whose Stanley Cup-winning goal in 1970 was selected the greatest moment in NHL history, was voted No. 31 among North American athletes of the 20th century by SportsCentury's distinguished 48-person panel.

Signature game

May 10, 1970 -- Orr put the finishing touch on Boston's first Stanley Cup in 29 years by scoring one of the most acrobatic goals in hockey history.

Early in overtime of Game 4 in Boston Garden, the 22-year-old Bruins star set things in motion when he outraced Larry Keenan of the St. Louis Blues to a loose puck. Orr passed to Derek Sanderson in the corner and then dashed towards the crease. Sanderson waited just long enough before sliding the puck back to the charging defenseman.

Orr somehow slipped the game-winner past goalie Glenn Hall just before Noel Picard sent him flying with a full-fledged leg trip. The dramatic goal was caught on camera by Ray Lussier of the Boston Record American and the image of Orr soaring in the air remains in the minds of hockey fans as the 20th century draws to a close.

"Honest, I really don't know how it went in," said Orr after the Bruins' 4-3 victory.

Neither does Hall. "The puck went between my pads," he said. "I should have made the save. It wasn't that tough a chance."

The goal was Orr's ninth in Boston's 14 playoff games. He scored 20 points, second on the team to Phil Esposito's 27, and won the Conn Smythe Trophy as the playoff MVP.

In the noisy Boston locker room, Bobby's father Doug held a bottle of champagne and said, "Maybe I shouldn't say this, but tonight I don't care if Bobby gets higher than a kite. He deserves it. I've never seen him drunk, but the way we're all feeling, who cares?"



Bobby Orr remains revered by Bruins fans long after his playing days.

Odds and ends

- As a 14-year-old playing for the Oshawa Generals and competing against mostly 19- and 20-year-olds in the Metro Junior A League, Orr was named a second-team all-star. In his final three seasons playing junior hockey, he not only made first-team all-league, but set scoring records for a defenseman each year.
- When Orr was 16, he appeared on the cover of Canada's national magazine, Maclean's.
- Orr didn't join the Bruins until he was 18 because NHL rules prohibited anybody playing in the league before that age.
- In Orr's first NHL game, on Oct. 19, 1966, against the Detroit Red Wings, Orr checked Gordie Howe. Later in the game, Howe caught Orr with his head down and smashed him to the ice. "I saw birds for a while," Orr said. Howe said, "All of the Boston players were skating over and the young kid got up and told them, 'Take it easy. I deserved that.'"
- In 1970, he was named Sports Illustrated's "Sportsman of the Year." In that story, he said, "O.K., I'm lucky, right? I've been gifted, right? But the world is full of people who've not been gifted. Not only haven't been gifted, but have had things taken away from them. All I have to do is see one of them -- some little girl that can't walk and yet she keeps smiling at me, some lady like Deanna Deleidi who goes home to an iron lung every night and still gives me a kiss and a hug after every hockey game. All I have to do is see someone like that and then I don't think I'm such a big hero anymore."
- Only Wayne Gretzky (16) led the league in assists more than Orr (five).
- In the late 1970s, Orr was voted the greatest athlete in Boston history in a Boston Globe poll of New Englanders, beating out Ted Williams, Bill Russell, Carl Yastrzemski and Bob Cousy.
- When he was introduced at "Bobby Orr Night" Jan. 9, 1979, at Boston Garden, he received an 11-minute standing ovation. Finally, the noise subsided and his No. 4 was lifted to the rafters.
- The mandatory waiting period for the Hockey Hall of Fame was waived for Orr and he was enshrined in 1979 at 31, the youngest player to be inducted.
- Orr's agent, Alan Eagleson, turned down a deal for Orr to own 18 1/2 percent of the Bruins in the mid-seventies without telling his client. Also, Eagleson's financial investments for Orr left the player in tax trouble in both the United States and Canada.
- Before games in Boston Garden, while the national anthem was played, Celtics great Larry Bird would look up at Orr's retired jersey for inspiration.