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**Montreal Misery**

**By David Ferraro**

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We've all done it before. Sportscenter is on showing the highlights off the latest Expos game and they show a snap shot off the bare bleachers. Of course the jokes follow like "It's easier to grab a foul ball at an Expos game than at a Little League game." But hey, who are we to talk?

To underline this point I ask you another question: When was the last time you saw somebody with a "You Gotta Believe" poster at Yankee Stadium? I'm going to go ahead and assume the awnser is not for a while. It is easy to be a Yankees fan. You don't have to believe. They know every year they will have the talent to contend.

It is not like that in Montreal. Their slow start is something that you just hope won't get worse and they've started bad and I mean real bad. They are the first team to score four runs or less in its first 16 games since the 1968 Chicago White Sox. They may or may not be in Montreal next year depending on what offers the owners of the team, Major League Baseball, recieve.

So how did it get like this? Is Montreal just not the place for a baseball club? The awnser is Montreal is just as good as any other location. Heck, Montreal finished second in the National League in attendance in 1983 and barely missed a chance to go to the World Series by losing game 7 to the Dodgers in 1981.

Then baseball started to move into the modern era where you have two types of teams. Insert team type one, where the owner takes risks to put more money into the team to keep and bring in talent hoping that wins will increase attendence and revenue. Then there is team two where the owner doesn't keep his talent and puts less money into the team to make a profit.

Obviously today in our profit motivated economy we are going to have most managers picking the latter half of the two types and that is what happened to the Expos. They saw their talent getting moved throughout the 80's. Gary Carter and Andre Dawson went to larger markets and ranked 1st and 15th in

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salary in 1988. This is the time when the MLBPA gained power by striking in 1981, a two day strike in 1985, a strike in spring training of 1990, and the strike of 1994. Players knew they could get more money and wouldn't let the owners do anything about it.

MLB had essentially already lost the struggle with the players association. The effect was that GM's were forced to start putting in money and change with the times. If one didn't the effect was losing the star players who brought the fans to the stadium.

After having over 2 million in attendance in 1983, the Expos would never reach that again. Their attendance woes were highlighted in the end of 1991 when a giant beam collapsed in Olympic Stadium. This forced the remaining games of Expo's schedule to be played away from Montreal. Interest in the Expos was at significantly low levels despite still being a decent team.

Plus, they were still losing plenty of good young talent. Among the names were Pedro, Larry Walker,

and Moises Alou. Tim Lincecum said, "I feel for the fans more than anything. I think the fans got fed up with having good teams and then losing all their good players. Montreal fans were so used to winning, with the Canadiens there. Then there was this whole series of things that just kind of turned fans away." However in 1994 the Expos looked to be a top notch team with a record of 74–40, the best in majors. Of course we all know that 1994 ended up to a bad year for every team in baseball. The next year the Expos would have lost Larry Walker and screwballer Ken Hill, who had won 16 games in the previously shortened season and the team finished with just 68 wins in 95.

The attendance continued to drop as it was clear the Expos were just going through the season playing meaningless games. In 1998 they dropped under 1 million in attendance for the season, the lowest in the league. It continued to get worse and went below 650,000 in 2001 amid the contraction talks.

Major League Baseball then took over the Montreal Expos saying that baseball could never succeed there. Despite this the Expos kept on playing there games although there was obviously conflict of interest. This conflict of interest was really brought out when Major League Baseball had them play part of their home games in San Juan. Despite now playing in three different cultures French, English, and Spanish and having a low salary Montreal pressed for the wild card in 2003 but ultimately fell short.

The longer Major League Baseball keeps owning the Expos the more they are killing the value and perception of it. Of course any good young player is going to leave a team where the future of where they are playing is uncertain. That is the situation right now with Jose Vidro and Orlando Cabrera and sure to be issues in the future if something isn't done soon.

It seems symbolic that the first home game for the Montreal Expos in 2004 was in San Juan. However 16 games into the season it is finally the "home opener" for the Expos in Montreal. They fail to sellout for the game but the hardcore fans say it is because of a Montreal Canadiens game, hopeful that if the Expos make the playoffs some local businessman will come forth and keep the team in Montreal.

Second year stud Marlon Byrd starts the game off with a hit for Philadelphia. Then 2B Placido Polanco follows it up with another single. The slow start brings the Montreal fans into their traditional cheering

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method where they bang their bodies against the plastic seats and also in many cases the empty ones next to them. The noise is so loud you forget your not at a domed version of Fenway park. The pitch from Claudio Vargas is then crushed into the seats for a three run blast by Bobby Abreu, leaving the stadium to all of a sudden get death quiet. Amidst the stands you can see a proud fan instantly stand up with a large sign that reads, "You Gotta Believe!"

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## **The Creation Of The National Hockey League**

**By Dana Bradley**

The creation of the National Hockey League began as the result of a dispute. The owner of the Toronto Blueshirts didn't get along with the owners who owned the league called the National Hockey Association. All the teams in this league were Canadian. The NHA met in the Windsor Hotel in Montreal to see how they could their dispute. Their solution was to dissolve the NHA and create the National Hockey League. The teams that were part of this league were the Montreal Canadians, the Montreal Wanderers, the Ottawa Senators, the Quebec Bulldogs and the Toronto Arenas.

After seven years of its existence, the NHL started to expand. The Hamilton Tigers joined in 1920. The Boston Bruins and Montreal Maroons became part of the league in 1924. The New York Americans and the Pittsburgh Pirates joined in 1925. The New York Rangers, Chicago Blackhawks and the Detroit Cougars (later renamed to become the Red Wings) became part of the league in 1926. By 1930, the NHL had a total of 10 teams. The Great Depression and World War II were not a great help to the league. By 1942, the NHL was only made up of 6 teams. These 1942 teams (Montreal Canadians, Toronto Maple Leafs, Detroit Red Wings, Chicago Blackhawks, Boston Bruins and New York Rangers) were known as the Original Six. For next 25 years, they were the only members of the National Hockey League.

The NHL had to expand 25 years later since it was facing the competition from the Western Hockey League and the World Hockey Association. It added the Philadelphia Flyers, St. Louis Blues, Minnesota North Stars, Los Angeles Kings, Oakland Seals, Pittsburgh Penguins, Vancouver Canucks and Buffalo Sabres to beat its competition. Throughout the 1970s, the WHA and the NHL competed for fans and players with the NHL winning. The WHA teams called the Hartford Whalers, Quebec Nordiques, Edmonton Oilers and Winnipeg Jets joined the NHL after WHA folded in 1979.

In the early 1990s, the NHL expanded ever further. The San Jose Sharks became part of the league in 1991. Ottawa Senators and the Tampa Bay Lightning entered the league in 1992. In 1993, the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim and the Florida Panthers joined the league. By the new millennium, four more

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teams called the Nashville Predators, Atlanta Thrashers, Minnesota Wild and the Columbus Blue Jackets joined the league and brought the grand total of teams in the league to 30.

Dana Bradley writes about

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