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My God...It's Full of Stars!

By Paul Bliss

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There are not too many opportunities while running a business where there is a defined period of work stoppage, thus giving you the time needed to go over the details of your product or service.

Right now, the NHL's little details are eagerly waiting to be re-defined, yet are being completely ignored. While the major issue of a work stoppage should be addressed, this is also a time when the NHL could be on the verge of breaking out into the public eye. Even though I am a die-hard hockey fan, I can see that the NHL is not the "4th" sport in America. It's Nascar. How did this happen?

What Nascar did, and what they are continuing to do is exactly what the NHL needs to do when they come back to work. Market the individuals. Sure they marketed Gretzky and Lemieux, but after them, how many casual fans could name 10 other players in the league?

With all of the bad press that the NBA and Baseball are currently getting, the NHL should take advantage of this. In this rare time of reflection, the NHL should be aggressively thinking about it's comeback strategy. It should make rule changes to open up scoring. That's what the public wants to see. The NFL listens. They make changes to keep their game on top. History be damned, they continue to stride for the ultimate user experience.

In today's world of instant information and numerous choices, you need to create as much saturation as possible. You need to personify the user experience to as many different types of people out there. That's why there will always be fans of Lemieux, easily addressing class, style and talent – attributes that most people aspire to – and there will be fans of players such as Darius Kasparaitus, of whom they can see his hard work, although misguided sometimes in his decision making. Everybody makes mistakes, but "blue collar" types appreciate hard work and effort.

Knowledgeable fans appreciate a great stay-at-home defenseman. The casual fan would think the guy is a bum since he can't score. The solution is to convey to the casual fan the value of that type of player. You can't have a defense consisting of 6 Paul Coffey's – As exciting as that may seem to be, it would liken hockey more to Lacrosse, rather than the highly skilled sport it is.

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The NHL needs to spotlight the young high flying aces such as St. Louis, Kovalchuck and Nash. By marketing these players in their youth, there will be time for the casual fan to absorb the impact they have on the game when they watch the sportcenter highlights.

This is where the NHL could put a huge stamp into the public eye. Instead of marketing the teams, use the marquee players. Most teams have at 3 or more players that could be used in this manner. Look at NBA – do you think there is no one in America who hasn't heard of Lebron James? It doesn't matter whether you watch the sport or not, but even the casual fan knows who he is.

This is the time for the NHL to break away from it's early and conservative 20th century thinking, and embrace the new century with a new sense of purpose. They can't say there are no examples, as all

one has to do is look at the NFL. True, the NFL has the biggest TV contract, but they changed their game to fit what the audience wanted, which in turn is what will sell advertising revenue.

Americans love heroes. We love the underdog too. Every hockey game has these elements. Back in the 80's the big bad Oilers led by Gretzky coming into town was an event – because you knew you were going to see many goals scored, they were the defending champs, and they had the best player at that time. Of course the hometown team didn't have much of a chance to beat them, or did they?

People want more than just the action of the sport. Just about every sport played professionally can be played by any spectator. What makes a game great is the added element of drama. The guy who takes 20 stitches to his face in the 1st period, and then comes back in to score the game-winning goal in the 3rd. That's what people love to talk about. That's why the playoffs are so exciting – every game has certainty, and a new hero is born every playoff year. Most go back into obscurity the following year, while some maintain that momentum for the rest of their careers.

It's from these moments of transformations when you see that 2nd-line winger becoming a clutch goal-scoring power forward.

It's in these moments when a spectator begins to believe that this former unknown player is not just good, but that they are a gamer.

It's in these moments that a spectator believes that player can win a game for them at any moment. It's one of the rare times one can witness a hero being born.

This is why a team will always have the passion of a spectator, but a hero will always have their hearts.

That is what the NHL needs to display. Office talk. Spectacular highlights. Things that people remember seeing. Things that the average human can't do, but a professional athlete can. This why Americans identify so well to heroes. It's the belief that at any given moment in time, that they too, could be great, if only for a brief shining moment.

Paul has been a rabid Hockey fan since he first fell on face on the ice when he was 5. Since then, he's come to appreciate the skill and talent needed to become a great NHLer. Paul can be reached at: paul.bliss@gmail.com

God Made the Stars, Also

By Joyce C. Lock

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And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude. Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it.

Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ... O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light ... While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.

Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

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Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning,

and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

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Joyce C. Lock is a published author, poet, and columnist. In addition, she founded and maintains the e-mail ministries "Heavenly Inspirations" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HeavenlyInspirations/> and "Share a Smile" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/smilesaring/>. Joyce's writings encourage us in our relationship with God and each other.



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