

AMAZING HOCKEY STORIES

P.K. SUBBAN

Lorna Schultz Nicholson

Illustrations by D. A. Bishop



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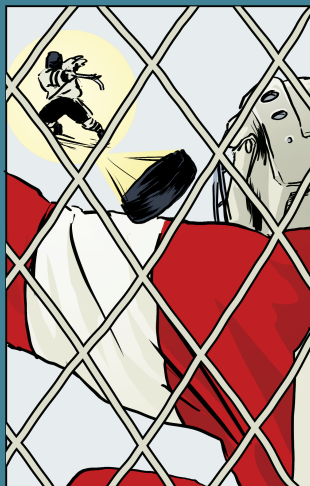
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A BIGGER STAGE

P.K. had his fair share of ups and downs as he worked through the ranks of minor hockey. Some of his teams didn't win a lot of games. Learning how to lose wasn't always easy, but P.K. kept an upbeat attitude. If they couldn't win, at least the team could rely on P.K. to make a play, so he concentrated on his game. Sometimes people taunted him for the colour of his skin. P.K. ignored them. And he also ignored the coaches and some of the other players' parents who told him that he'd never make it in hockey. The best way to win was on the ice, so he focused on that. He was determined to achieve his dream: playing in the NHL.

LOOK OUT BELLEVILLE, HERE COMES A BULL

A week before P.K. turned 16, he sat in front of a computer to watch the names being chosen for the Ontario Hockey League Priority Selection draft. First round. Second round. Third round. More and more names. Fourth round. Finally, in the sixth round, P.K. was drafted by the Belleville Bulls.

The percentage of players who actually play in the OHL after being drafted past the fourth round is small. P.K. wondered if his dream of playing in the NHL was even possible. Then George Burnett, P.K.'s new coach, phoned him to welcome him personally to the Bulls. This small gesture inspired P.K. and gave him the fuel he needed to train hard all summer.

To get ready for the OHL training camp, P.K. travelled an hour from Toronto to Cambridge at least four times a week — sometimes twice a day! — to work with a coach who trained many OHL players. They did drills on the track and weights in the gym, as well as ice sessions with other junior and pro players.

When he hit the ice for Belleville's training camp he was ready. It was intense, but the Bulls liked what they saw in the determined 16-year-old. Coach Burnett said, "It was special that we were able to find a player in the sixth round who turned out to be of his talent . . . he brought such a terrific attitude and work ethic and set of skills to the rink each and every day."

At the end of camp, including pre-season games, P.K. was signed for the 2005–06 season. He was going to be a Belleville Bull after all.



P.K. BECAME A STAR FOR THE BELLEVILLE BULLS. AS A SIXTH-ROUND PICK, HE WAS CONSIDERED A "STEAL" FOR THE TEAM.

At the time, the Belleville Yardmen Arena had an Olympic-sized rink, which is four metres wider than a standard NHL rink. P.K. quickly learned how

to use the extra space to his advantage. He would rush up the ice, barrel through opponents and make risky, daring plays. P.K. loved to have the puck on the end of his stick, to control the play. He'd pick up the puck, skate like the wind, sometimes lose the puck, but then get it back so he could take a shot on net . . . or maybe lose it again. Or maybe wipe out. Or make an assist on a goal. Every shift was exciting when P.K. was on the ice.

When reporters questioned George Burnett about "reining in his hotshot," he said, "That's just P.K. being P.K." The fans in Belleville loved him for his high-speed rushes, gutsy moves, and for his energy. P.K. was better entertainment than television! It didn't take long for P.K. Subban to become a household name in the small city of Belleville. He became a media favourite because he always had something witty to say when he was in front of a camera. And P.K. *loved* being in front of a camera.

In his OHL rookie season in 2005–06, P.K. played 52 games and got 5 goals and 7 assists for a total of 12 points. The Bulls managed 72 points that year and made it into the playoffs. They battled the Brampton Battalion in the first round, which went to six games. Ultimately the Battalion defeated the

Bulls, but the young rookie P.K. played in three of the games, getting a taste of OHL playoff action.

In his second year with the Bulls, P.K. played in all 68 games, scoring 15 goals and a whopping 41 assists for 56 points. When it came time for the 2006–07 season playoffs, he couldn't wait to prove himself.

PLAYOFFS AND POWER PLAYS

The Bulls took charge in the first round and were soon up three games to one on the Ottawa 67's. In the fifth game of this series, P.K. popped a power-play goal in the net, helping his team to a 3–3 tie at the end of regular play. Belleville won the game in overtime, and for the first time in his junior career, P.K. was moving on to the second round of playoffs.

Round two saw the Bulls sweep the Oshawa Generals in just four games. In game two, P.K. assisted on a power-play goal in the first period and scored back-to-back goals in the second period to help Belleville win 5–2. P.K. earned his first big playoff accolade and was named first star of the game. Two wins later the Bulls were off to the conference final against the Sudbury Wolves.