

NO GUARANTEES IN SPORT, THANK GOODNESS

Growing up in a sports-oriented family, there were two professional teams we were disinclined to root for: Montreal Canadiens and the New York Yankees. The reason was simple: They seemed to always win. Rooting for the underdog was our family's style, so the longshot winning, the underdog coming through in the clutch, or the surprise victory always seemed more exciting than the same old, same old Habs and Yankees celebrating another championship (Montreal — five Stanley Cup titles in a row in the late '50s; Yankees — eight World Series crowns from 1950-62).

That's why this year's Kentucky Derby was such a thrill to underdog lovers everywhere. Rich Strike was not only an 80-to-1 longshot, but his status as a starter in the 20-horse field wasn't even determined until the day before the race at Louisville, Ky. One horse was a late scratch, opening the door for Rich Strike to be added as the 20th and final entry in the field.

Then, of course, he shocked the sporting world by crossing the finish line first, and winning in spectacular fashion. With about two-thirds of the race completed, Rich Strike was in the middle of the pack, 10th or 11th, before an amazing final burst earned him the victory by half a length at the wire. It was a wow! moment.

A great underdog story has always been a favourite of mine. When Buster Douglas defeated Mike Tyson in a heavyweight bout in Tokyo in 1990, I remember where I was when I heard the news (driving down Victoria Avenue in Regina on a Sunday morning following the end of a newspaper convention). Tyson was regarded as being a man of steel, unbeatable, a beast, an uncontrollable wild animal. Buster Douglas was just another journeyman boxer looking for a quick payday, cuts, bruises and concussions be damned.

When John Daly moved from sixth alternate at the 1991 PGA Championship at Crooked Stick in Indiana into the starting field the night before the event was to start, it was a feel-good story of a golf straggler getting a chance. No real hope, but a chance. Then, of course, Daly shocked the golf world by winning. It was his first title on the PGA Tour and he went on to become a cult hero with his risky lifestyle and booming drives.

The biggest sports upset, however, is probably the Miracle on Ice of 1980, when the U.S. Olympic hockey team stunned the powerful Russians in the semi-final and went on to win gold. The fallout included the making of heroes, movies and legends.

So, Rich Strike, you made my day on the first Saturday in May. This horse proved there are no guarantees in sport — and thank goodness for that.

- Columnist **Norman Chad**, on Twitter: "You know what's gonna be worse than Hell for me? Arriving in Purgatory to see **James Harden** and **Joel Embiid** shooting free throws."
- **Mike Bianchi** of the Orlando Sentinel: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. But teach a man to fish, and he's going to drink a lot of beer for a day."
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: "The New York Post reported Fox Sports will pay **Tom Brady** \$375 mil over 10 years to be a broadcaster. Maybe this will be the break that finally turns things around for poor **Tom Brady**."
- Comedy guy **Torben Rolfson** of Vancouver, on the Buccaneers playing Seattle in Munich this year: "You saw **Tom Brady** on that boat party . . . is it safe for him to be that close to Oktoberfest?"
- A groaner from **Jack Finarelli**, at sports curmudgeon.com: "Q: Why should you never fall in love with a tennis player? A: Because 'love' means nothing to them..."
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "(Canadian tennis pro) **Denis Shapovalov** called his childish tantrum and cussing at the crowd in the second set against Italian Lorenzo Sonego a 'heat of the moment kind of thing.' More like dope of the moment."
- Headline at theonion.com: "**Tom Brady**'s announcing deal includes incentives for number of verbs."
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "Viking QB **Kirk Cousins**' career record as an NFL starter is 59-59-2. Shouldn't that make him the Minneapolis .500?"
- **Mike Bianchi** of the Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel, on **Elon Musk** vowing to reverse the Twitter ban on **Donald Trump**: "In related news, **Pete Rose** is lobbying for Musk to buy the Baseball Hall of Fame."
- **Nick Canepa** of The San Diego Union-Tribune, on Titans QB **Ryan Tannehill** saying 'I don't think it's my job to mentor' rookie **Malik Willis**: "What's he going to teach Malik, anyway, how to hand off to **Derrick Henry**?"
- **Steve Simmons** of Sunmedia, on why **Barry Trotz** would be a poor fit as coach of the Maple Leafs: "Having Trotz coach **Auston Matthews**, **Mitch Marner** and **William Nylander** is like having the fastest horse at Kentucky Derby with **Shaquille O'Neal** as the jockey."

Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca