

penton col. w/o nov. 5/18

SIZE MATTERS? THANKFULLY, IT DOESN'T IN TODAY'S NHL

This will be a short story. More accurately, a story about short hockey players.

There's a myth that to play and thrive in the National Hockey League one has to be a 6-foot-plus bruiser, carrying 200 pounds or more on a muscular frame that bowls over opposing players on the 200-x-85-ft. ice surface.

Tell that to Johnny Gaudreau — all 5-foot-9 of him — of the Calgary Flames, whose speed and wispy frame powers his team's offence as he regularly places among the league's top 20 scorers.

Try telling that to 5-foot-9 Brendan Gallagher of the Canadiens, whose reputation as one of the most rugged and well-rounded players in the league has been well earned.

Try telling that to Marcel Dionne, who played 18 years in the NHL with Los Angeles Kings and who did OK — like almost career 1800 points— the sixth-highest total in NHL history.

When Philadelphia's Broad Street Bullies started to dominate the NHL picture in the mid-1970s, using talent combined with brute force, flying fists and, well, a healthy dose of goonery, most of the Flyers' rivals sought to copy that method. The result was a dearth of smaller players and a couple of decades of teams using players' height and weight as a more valuable measuring stick than goals and assists.

Thankfully, that approach has changed. Speed as a more important tool has returned, and the smaller, swifter player who knows how to dangle with the puck has made a strong comeback in the NHL. Just check out the names of these players, all of whom are 5-foot-8 or shorter and solid, established NHL stars: Alex DeBrincat of the Hawks, Mats Zuccarello of the Rangers, Conor Sheary of Buffalo, Cam Atkinson of Columbus and Tyler Johnson of the Lightning. One inch taller — statuesque-like 5-foot-9 — are the likes of scoring leaders Gallagher, Gaudreau, Viktor Arvidsson of Nashville and Jonathan Marchessault of Vegas.

Even a couple of stalwart defencemen, Jared Spurgeon of Minnesota and Torey Krug of Boston, are listed as 5-foot-9.

When Krug is paired with Boston team-mate Zdeno Chara, all 6-foot-9, that's truly the long and the short of it.

So that's all there is to say: Short and sweet. There's room in the NHL for players of all size. The only thing that really matters is skill.

- **Randy Turner** of the Winnipeg Free Press, on Twitter, referencing an NBC Sports first — broadcasting an all-Canadian NHL regular season game between the Jets and Leafs. “Really, if it wasn't for Winnipeg I sometimes wonder if Americans would even know Toronto exists.”
- **Norman Chad** of the Washington Post, on Twitter during the marathon 18-inning Red Sox-Dodgers World Series game: “BREAKING — **Bud Selig** has decided if Red Sox-Dodgers is still tied after 15 innings, winner will be determined by next season's All-Star game.”
- Chad again, talking about **J.R. Smith** and **Nick Young** in his NBA preview: “At the moment, Smith is with the Cleveland Cavaliers and Young is out of the league, which puts them roughly in the same quandary.”
- Humourist **Brad Dickson**: “The World Series game in Los Angeles last night was the longest in history — 7 hours, 20 minutes. When I lived in L.A. that was my daily commute.”
- **Janice Hough** of leftcoastsportsbabe.com: “I know it's early in the season, but, somehow I missed the NBA rule change that **Lebron James** has to take at LEAST four steps for refs to call travelling.”
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg** on **Chris Sale**, a 6-foot-6, 180-pound left-hander for the Red Sox: “Now, I don't want to say Sale is skinny, but if the Red Sox wore pinstripes, he would wear a pinstripe.”
- Comedy writer **Jim Barach**: “The NFL has fired an official for missing a false start call in the Browns-Chargers game. Apparently he just wanted to get the game over fast and put the Browns out of their misery.”
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: “A Regina Rams player was suspended following a brawl outside a campus bar. Police charged **Takudzwa Timothy Brandon Gandire** with assault and being 11 letters over the legal limit.”
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: “Former Carolina Panther **Rae Carruth** was released from prison after serving almost 20 years for murdering his pregnant girlfriend. When asked to describe his prison sentence, Carruth said it was bad, but better than playing for the Cleveland Browns.”
- From the readerboard at Beerhaus Las Vegas: “Marty, I just got back from 2078. Canucks still haven't won a Cup.”
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: “Harley-Davidson has recalled 238,000 motorcycles because they have a clutch problem. The NFL, not to be outdone, immediately recalled the New York Giants.”
- **Brad Dickson**, after Minnesota lost 53-28 to winless Nebraska: “How bad did the first half go for Minnesota? **Goldy Gopher** was just picked up by a Humane Society van.”

Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca