

May 9, 2004

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS

Philadelphia Flyers at Tampa Bay Lightning

An Interview With:

COACH KEN HITCHCOCK

KEN HITCHCOCK: My opinion is that the challenge for us is the way we played in the first 30 minutes, we have to play like that for 60. That's the biggest challenge. If we play like we did the first 30 minutes of the hockey game, we are going to give ourselves a chance to win every game.

Q. What do you look to to focus on for the next game, is it fixing the things you didn't do or execution?

KEN HITCHCOCK: I don't think it's that. I think everybody is focused on a mistake here or a mistake there. They made just as many mistakes as we did. What's controlling this series is tenacity. And they were able to ratchet it up, their tenacity, in the second half of the game, and it made us make the mistakes, and I was able to do it in the first half of the game. That's why we got all of the odd-man rushes, that's why we got all of the bang-bang plays at the net. Somebody had a stat we were nine minutes in their end and they were two and a half or three in ours. It's because our tenacity was controlling them. That's going to be the controlling element in this series.

Each team has a focal point of really, really strong tenacity in every aspect of their game. They were able to get it out there after they got the 2-1 lead. The game was there for us for the taking, and then when we scored their second goal, their level went up and ours went down. And that was a big difference in the second half of the game.

Q. During the regular season you would make changes when scoring was dropping off, is there any changes that you would make now for goals dropping off?

KEN HITCHCOCK: Oh, yeah, every team goes through this. It's at such a high level during the playoffs, but this is not -- this series is different than the **Toronto** series in that the **Toronto** series had way more physical play to it than this series does, I think so, far. But this series has -- like I say, I use the word tenacity. This series has, when you play a team like **Tampa** you have to match that every shift. There's no resting on the ice, there's no gliding through a shift. It really has a lot

to do with the response on a shift-by-shift basis, and there were times in the **Toronto** series where there was a lot of physical play, but there was a lot of goals. There's no goals in **Tampa**. You don't get easy opportunities, just like you don't get easy opportunities with us. We had 17 shots on goal. And when they got the 2-1 lead, they were really able to defend well, and we couldn't get through.

Q. After you lose a game like that, does it change --

KEN HITCHCOCK: I think that the change that we have to make is the things that we did well, the challenge for us is to continue to do them well for the full 60 minutes of the hockey game. Our problem was that the things that we did well, in the first half of the game, we did not do those things well in the second half. We didn't do them well. And some of it was what **Tampa** did, but also some of it was what we did, and we -- we -- their checking forced us to make errors that we couldn't make in the first half the game.

Q. What sort of errors?

KEN HITCHCOCK: Forced passes, things like that. That's what tenacity does. That's what it does.

*Q. After the first few games against **Toronto**, there was a sense of urgency from the other team, if you go down 0-2, do you feel that same sense of urgency?*

KEN HITCHCOCK: Yeah, we don't have a choice, and the reason we don't have a choice is that we have to win road games. So the sense of urgency from us has got to be tremendous. And I think our team, or you felt, anyways, we had everything going the right way, but we weren't scoring. I think we have to deal with the reality that this is a team that's tenacious defensively. Look, they have got a goals against average under 1. They have a goalie with a save percentage almost .970. You have to deal with that. It's not going to change. You're not all of a sudden going to get, four, five, six goals on this team. You're going to have to deal with it, and you're still going to have to find ways to win. That's our job. But it's more magnified and more imperative because they have home ice, they have the home ice advantage.

Q. Do you think it will come down to the goalies at the end of the series?

...when all is said, we're done®

FastScripts® by ASAP Sports

t. 01 212 267 2727 f. 01 212.385.0349

visit our archives at www.asapsports.com

phicoach0509.doc

KEN HITCHCOCK: Well, I'm certainly not going to tell you. But I'll tell you what I tell the players in every series, if the goalie becomes an issue at the end of the series, and you say the goalie was the factor, then it's shame on you. You have to have the attitude that you're going to outwork the goalie, and I learned that a long time ago in 1997 against **Curtis Joseph**, that if you don't have the attitude that you're prepared to outwork the other team's goalie, you'll never be successful.

Q. How do you outwork a goalie?

KEN HITCHCOCK: You have to find the second and third efforts. You have to be able to sit down as a team and say, look, these are what his weaknesses are. We have to have a focal point of not just shooting the puck, but knowing what his weaknesses are, and then attacking them.

But there are -- both goalies here never given up on shots. I mean, he made four or five saves in the second period, he just saw it the last second, little close-in plays that he got his pads on. He doesn't give up on shots, just like **Esche**. So those opportunities that you get, you're going to have to put him through the back of the net. You're not going to be able to beat him by just trying to put it back into where it came from. You're going to have to put it through the back of the net, and you're going to have to have that attitude if you expect to beat him.

Q. It looked like in the third period, most of your shots came -?

KEN HITCHCOCK: You and I could have the same conversation ten days from now and it will be the same thing. You're not getting any shots from the slot, so get used to it. They protect the middle of the ice very well. You're not getting anything, so you're going to have to find other ways to score. It ain't coming from the middle.

Q. Is that what you call your areas of risk?

KEN HITCHCOCK: It ain't coming from the middle of the ice. Find another way to score.

Q. Is that tough to do, for a team that does that, to make that kind of a change?

KEN HITCHCOCK: Yeah, but it's something we are going to have to change and get used to.

Q. Was there a reason you decided to cancel practice?

KEN HITCHCOCK: We can't cancel. We had an optional. That's why there's eight guys.

Q. Inaudible?

KEN HITCHCOCK: Well, we can't really have a drop off. Our second period was better than our first. We played the first 12 minutes in the second period about as well as we've played in the playoffs. We controlled the tempo, we controlled the zone, the zone play, I think -- **ABC** had a number there that was pretty telling. But when they got the second goal, we dropped and they came up. We didn't have a lot of chances after they got their second goal. They went up a level and we didn't go with that level. That's the challenge for us, is to maintain that level.

Q. Is there any possibility --

KEN HITCHCOCK: Not after the meeting today, no. We know what's up. Look, you can deal -- this is now the time to deal in realities, and it's not about what they did. It's that there is a level out there that they are playing at, and they are playing at -- they have been playing at this level for a long time, four months. So we've shown the ability to go up there and play, but we have to do it now. We could maybe get away with it in the last series, we could drop and maybe get away with it, but we can't this series. This is -- this is a team who is equally as focused as we are, equally as tenacious defensively, more holes defensively, and you're going to have to play in that atmosphere. So if you live on -- if you live on, we made a few mistakes, we'll correct those, and think you're going to win, you're badly mistaken. The game was lost, from our standpoint, in the last 30 minutes, because we were not able to maintain our level over the course of 60 minutes, which is what you have to do to win on the road. You can do that at home, but you can't do it on the road.

Q. Do you feel that you played better than you actually did?

KEN HITCHCOCK: Oh, you mean, we're there? I don't buy that. They were forced to play by the way we played, they were forced, in my opinion, they were forced to play that game because we did a lot of things right and we did them well. And if we continue to do that, hopefully we can force it again.

Q. Because they are a young team --

KEN HITCHCOCK: They are not a young team. They talk young. They are not young. They are 28.9 and we are 29.8. So don't give me that crap. They are not a young team. They have got guys like **Andreychuk** who are as old as dirt.

...when all is said, we're done®

FastScripts® by ASAP Sports

t. 01 212 267 2727 f. 01 212.385.0349

visit our archives at www.asapsports.com

phicoach0509.doc

Q. But their big goals, the front line --
KEN HITCHCOCK: Not at this time of year. Age is just experience. And they are not a running team.

Q. You talk about the intensity and tenacity, how much do you think that will factor --

KEN HITCHCOCK: No. I don't agree with that. Can't afford to agree with that and I don't. And the reason is that this is the same way their team has played for four months. They were on the edge of the abyss when they beat us here in early **February** or **January**. They were on the edge of the abyss. They made a commitment and they have played the same way. They have had the best record in the **National Hockey League**, blown away everybody since that period of time because they play this way every night. You're just going to have to get used to it.

Q. Do you what did you see in Esche last year?

KEN HITCHCOCK: Athleticism and competitiveness, and it just needed to channel it in the right areas. He was in a -- we knew how good of an athlete he was and we knew how competitive he was. But we needed to just have his focus channelled in the right competitive areas. He had a tendency at times to check, to want to act out being the tough guy, and we need him just to stop the puck and focus in those areas, and he's done that this year. He's had tremendous focus and that's why he's been so good.

Q. Do you view tomorrow as a must-win?

KEN HITCHCOCK: I don't think tomorrow is a must-win. I think any time we are on the road, they are must-wins, because we have to win road games in this series to win this series. So it doesn't matter if it's **Game 1**, **Game 2**, **Game 5**, **Game 7**, it doesn't matter, we are going to have to win some of these games for us to make this a series.

Q. Is momentum a key factor at this stage in the playoffs?

KEN HITCHCOCK: I don't know about that. Look at the **Toronto** series, it was 2-0, then 2-2 and we had to put up that effort in **Game 5** to get it swung because all the momentum. I'm not sure you can say that. But I think what happens is that if you don't win -- if you don't win early in the series as a road team, then pressure starts to mount and that becomes another factor that comes into play. But from our standpoint, I don't even think we can go there. I think we have to put in an

unbelievable 60-minute effort to beat this team and we have to be mentally prepared to do that. That's got to be our focus, wherever it comes from.

Q. Do you foresee making any line changes?

KEN HITCHCOCK: We've thought about some of that stuff at times, but, you know, we've showed so much good play from **Primeau's** line, we've had so much good play from **Zhamnov's** line. I think the one thing we might look at doing is probably doubling up the center like we did towards the end of the **Toronto** series, but we had some great shifts yesterday. Hard to tell. You can't keep changing people around to try to get them going. This is really -- it really is up to the individual to get himself going at this time of year. I don't think you can keep tweaking and changing and tweaking because I think all you're doing is building excuses. You're looking for something outside.

And like I said before, this is within our group to do this, but we only played 30 minutes of our hockey against their team and they withstood that barrage and came back at us.

Q. What was it specifically that makes you say you lost the game in the last 30 minutes?

KEN HITCHCOCK: Their faceoff percentage was 23 in the first 30 minutes, and it was 60 in the last 30, which to me is a reflection of the game. That's a telltale sign for us. Our energy dropped, whether it was residue from the series before or whatever. There was a huge difference, huge. And when you're playing against a team like **Tampa** and you can start with the puck, those are good things. But in the last 30 minutes, we did not start with the puck, and they started to build momentum because of that.

Q. Inaudible?

KEN HITCHCOCK: You can't ignore what's happening there. You have to have an attitude that you have to win games in this series 2-1, and it might even be in overtime. That has to be your attitude. That's what I mean by the tenacity and staying with it. As good as they are defensively, we have to be better defensively. We can't keep talking about the offensive side of things because you're going to -- every team talks about that. That's what I heard from the **Islanders**, that's what I heard from **Montreal**; you have to be able to take games into overtime, score on a goal. You have to expect to win games in this series winning 2-1. That's the facts of life when you're playing against

...when all is said, we're done®

FastScripts® by ASAP Sports

t. 01 212 267 2727 f. 01 212.385.0349

visit our archives at www.asapsports.com

phicoach0509.doc

two teams that are as committed as both these teams are.

But they went up when they scored that second goal, and we went down and that gave them the energy to keep going.