

In 1903, the Pittsburgh Pirates beat the Boston Pilgrims 7-3 in the first World Series game. Jimmy Sebring hit the first Series homer, Deacon Phillippe was the winning pitcher and Cy Young the loser.

Baseball umpires have said they will eject anyone arguing within "an arm's length" of them during the major-league postseason.

Yankees' homer-coaster on track

BY LARRY MILLSON
Sport Reporter
New York

THE STORY / Cone exits early, but New York still takes opener as Indians fail to hold lead

DAVID Cone gave it the big try. But all he could do was put the New York Yankees into a big hole. That couldn't stop them, not on this night.

They would come back with three successive homers in the sixth inning, a postseason first, for the 8-6 victory in the opener of their best-of-five divisional series against the Cleveland Indians.

But for a while there with Orel Hershiser and his history of postseason success pitching for the Indians, the Yankees seemed to be stumbling on their first step in pursuit of a second successive World Series championship.

Cone's comebacks and his pitching skill have given the Yankees inspiration during their run of success the past couple years.

Last year, he returned from surgery to repair an aneurysm in his right (pitching) arm.

This time he was returning from tendinitis in his right shoulder that limited him to two five-inning starts since Aug. 17.

But he left the game with one out in the fourth inning with the Indians leading 6-1 at Yankee Stadium where the crowd of 57,388 was the largest in the 22 seasons since it was remodelled.

Cone was finished for the night, but the Yankees sure weren't. Maybe Cone inspired them in another way.

First, Ramiro Mendoza was brilliant in relief of Cone, allowing no runs and one hit in 3¹/₃ innings.

Second, the Cleveland relievers weren't quite so brilliant, particularly in the Yankees' five-run sixth. Right-hander Eric Plunk allowed two home runs and left-hander Paul Assenmacher another. The Yankees were suddenly ahead and the stadium was electric.

The home runs were hit in succession by Tim Raines, with one on, Derek Jeter and Paul O'Neill, a left-handed hitter who was Assenmacher's assignment. It is the first time there have been three successive home runs hit in one inning in the postseason and the fourth time in postseason that one team has hit three home runs in one inning.

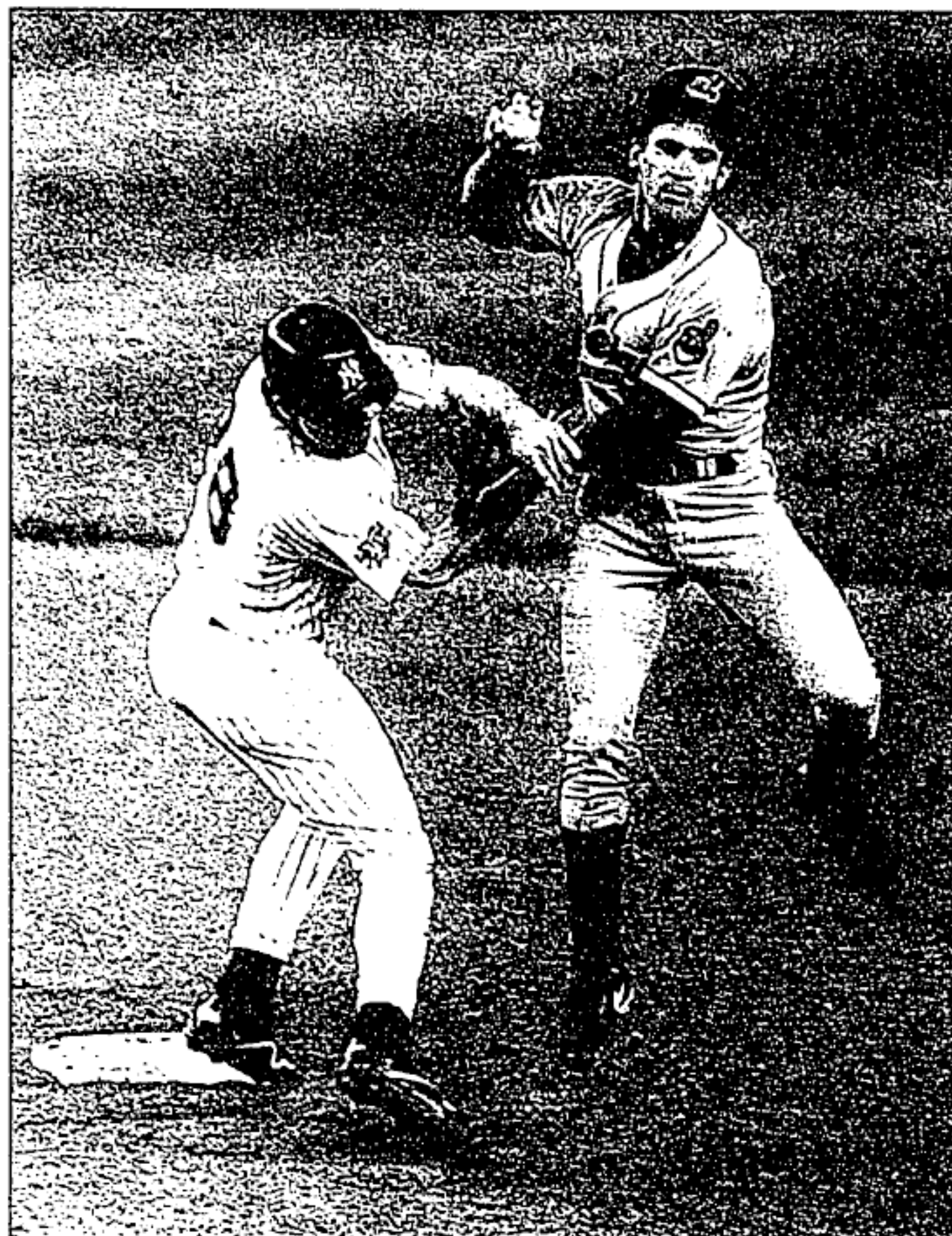
Raines was starting as designated hitter instead of Cecil Fielder. His homer came on a forkball. "I was expecting a fastball because he fell behind (2-1) with a forkball and two sliders," Raines said.

Jeter and O'Neill hit their homers on 0-2 pitches, which would have to jar the Indians that much more. With no balls and two strikes, the pitcher is supposed to be in control. This time they were out of control.

Hershiser entered the game with a postseason career record of 8-1 with one save and an earned-run average of 1.83 in 14 outings, including 13 starts.

Cleveland manager Mike Hargrove said he wasn't too confident even with Hershiser taking a five-run lead into the bottom of the first.

"I don't know if you ever feel very confident after scoring that many runs very early in the game," Hargrove said. "I thought we needed to



New York Yankees Chad Curtis runs into Cleveland Indians Omar Vizquel at second base to break up the double-play on a hit by Yankees' Wade Boggs during the American League division series in New York yesterday.

score more runs and when we did get the sixth run [in the fourth] I felt good."

Hershiser wasn't all that bad, allowing three runs in 4¹/₃ innings. An effective bullpen could have kept the Indians in the lead.

And Plunk did work out of one jam in the fifth. He was brought in with the bases loaded, one run in and one out. Plunk, one of those guys with great stuff who haven't been able to convert it into a closer's role, ended the inning on a foul out and a strikeout.

But trouble came in the sixth after Plunk had retired two batters with a single in between. Then he allowed Roy Sanchez's run-scoring single and two home runs before Assenmacher kept things going.

Cone's status as the Yankees' opening-game starter of the best-of-five series wasn't confirmed until this past weekend. He had made

two five-inning starts since he was placed on the disabled list on Aug. 19, one against the Toronto Blue Jays and the other against Cleveland when he gave up no hits but walked five.

So the Yankees knew they wouldn't be getting any complete games from Cone. Yankee manager Joe Torre had said he'd rather have half a game from Cone than nothing.

Torre said that Cone would still start the fourth game if it is needed. Torre talked to Cone after the game to see how he was feeling. "He warmed up fine," Torre said. "In the first inning, he was a little too careful and made some mistakes."

Cone gave up a little of everything in the first — a walk, a hit batsman, a couple of singles, a homer — and a lot of runs.

But this time the Yankee batters took him off the hook.

THE GAME

Yankees 8, Indians 6
Three successive home runs — a first in postseason competition — in the sixth inning brought the New York Yankees from behind to victory in the opener of their best-of-five divisional series against the Cleveland Indians. Ramiro Mendoza allowed one hit and no runs in 3¹/₃ innings in relief to earn the victory. Eric Plunk allowed four runs on four hits, including two homers, in the sixth to take the loss. Mariano Rivera pitched 1²/₃ innings for the save.

The starters
David Cone allowed five runs on a walk, three hits, and a hit batter in the first inning. He allowed another run before leaving after 3¹/₃ innings (63 pitches, 41 strikes). Orel Hershiser allowed six hits, two walks and three runs in 4¹/₃ innings (71 pitches, 49 strikes).

The quick start
Bip Roberts led off the game with a walk, stole second, was sacrificed to third by Omar Vizquel and scored on Manny Ramirez's single to centre.

The wild pitch
Cone's wild pitch on an 0-1 count to Matt Williams with two out in the first scored Ramirez. Williams was hit on the shoulder by the next pitch.

The homers
Sandy Alomar (two out, two on) on a 2-2 pitch in the first to put Cleveland ahead 5-0. Tino Martinez (one out, none on) on a 1-2 pitch in the fourth to make it 6-2. Tim Lincecum (two out, one on) on a 2-1 pitch in the sixth to make it 6-6. Derek Jeter (two out, none on) on an 0-2 pitch in the sixth to put New York ahead 7-6. Paul O'Neill on an 0-2 pitch in the sixth, 8-6.

The argument
Cleveland thought Chad Curtis should have been charged with interfering with shortstop Vizquel in the second. Curtis stayed on his feet and bumped Vizquel preventing completion of a double play on Wade Boggs' grounder to second. A run scored on the play and would have anyway. But it left the Yankees with runners at first and third and one out. Manager Mike Hargrove argued the non-call with second-base umpire Rick Reed. Hershiser prevented further damage.

The look ahead
The teams have today off before resuming the series tomorrow night at Yankee Stadium with Jaret Wright (8-3, 4.38 earned-run average) scheduled to start for Cleveland and Andy Pettitte (18-7, 2.88) the starter for New York. Friday is another day off with the next three games scheduled for Cleveland's Jacobs Field. Charles Nagy (15-11, 4.28) to start for Cleveland against New York's David Wells (16-10, 4.21) in Saturday night's game.

The five-star rating
★★★★



Stephen Brunt

Hope, peril follow NHL into season

THE season that begins tonight in the National Hockey League brings both great opportunity and great danger for the business of the game.

The upside is rather obvious. Come February at the Olympic Winter Games in Nagano, Japan, hockey will be showcased in a new way.

The Olympics attract a non-traditional audience, a non-sports audience, a non-hockey audience, a once-every-four-years audience. And it shouldn't be forgotten that the only time in history when a very large percentage of Americans actually cared about hockey was the miracle of Lake Placid, N.Y., in 1980.

This is a big, big chance for the NHL — no gimmicks, no glowing pucks, just the game at its absolute best, with a little nationalistic, patriotic fervour thrown in. It is far bigger than the World Cup simply because of the Olympic brand-name. A Canada-U.S. gold medal final, even if it is played live at dawn, could be the most significant game in the history of the sport. Hockey would really matter, at least for the moment, outside of traditional hockey hotbeds, and a lot of eyes would surely be opened to the sport's possibilities.

Basketball can't duplicate that, at least until the Dream Teams have real competition. Baseball, football, don't have the international potential. Only hockey has the possibility of turning the players you pay to see on a Saturday night into legitimate national heroes.

What is the danger of 1997-98? It is not the big-name players who are under contract but are choosing not to report to their teams. That's a natural, not at all uncommon phenomenon, a byproduct of this particular point in the labour history of professional hockey.

It's the same in any sport: The starting point is essentially servitude, and once the genie's out of the bottle, the end point is full, unrestricted free-agent status at the height of an athlete's marketability. Hockey players, thanks to that nice little house union Alan Eagleson used to run, are just a few steps behind their brethren in other sports.

Until they catch up a couple of collective agreements from now, players and especially their agents will use any leverage they can find to get at the extra money they believe is in the system. That means holding out, that means temporarily not honouring contracts, that might mean missing the part of the season that doesn't count for anything anyway.

It's hardly the end of the world, and all of the players will be back eventually, with enough of a raise to ease their discomfort.

The real peril comes in, of all places, North Carolina, where the ex-Hartford Whalers are in for a terrible struggle to find a berth in the public imagination as the Hurricanes.

It has been a long time since the NHL failed in a market where it chose to be (as opposed to the former World Hockey Association franchises that it absorbed as the price of eliminating competition). Not since Atlanta moved to Calgary has hockey seen out-and-out rejection.

Everybody wants to get to Carolina. Basketball thrives there. Football is ridiculously successful. The Minnesota Twins would love the chance to prove that it is fertile ground for baseball.

Hockey, though, looks like it might crash and burn, which would have an immediate ripple effect throughout the NHL. All professional sports, to a degree, operate like pyramid schemes, with franchise value the key.

Teams are worth precisely what someone is willing to pay for them. If you're an owner, the difference between that number and what it originally cost you to buy is the reason you're in business. Operating profits come and go, wax and wane, but if your equity is going through the ceiling, it doesn't matter.

How do you determine that value, and more importantly, what value, without putting your team on the market? By establishing an inflated price for expansion franchises, and actually finding pigeons who will pay it, or by demonstrating that there are all kinds of other cities where your team would be welcomed with open arms.

Hockey is going through a period of hyper-inflation. Salaries are going up, but franchise values are going up faster. The league is about to embark on an ambitious expansion that includes one sure thing (Atlanta, irony of ironies).

A little setback down south, and the foundations of the pyramid suddenly get a little shaky.

It's just one team in one market; it's just the ever-anonymous Whalers, "for gawd's sake."

But still, the people who run the NHL had better hope the people in "Mayberry" get over their indifference — or at least that they tune in to the Olympics.

Braves beat Astros in playoff opener

By RICK HUMMEL
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ATLANTA — If it's daytime, it's Maddux time. But, then again, most times are Maddux times.

Greg Maddux, the Atlanta Braves' four-time Cy Young Award winner, ran his record in daylight games to 11-0 this season by outduelling Houston's Darryl Kile, 2-1, yesterday in the first game of the National League divisional series. Game 2 of the best-of-five competition will be today at 1 p.m. (Eastern).

Maddux, who was 19-1 during the season, calls his daytime record a "coincidence. I like getting up early. I'd rather go to bed early and get up early."

The Braves right-hander gave up seven hits, two by Kile. Kile, meanwhile, allowed just two hits — a fisted leadoff double by Kenny Lofton, who scored, in the first, and Ryan Klesko's sec-

ond-inning home run. He didn't allow a hit from the third to the seventh inning, when he came out.

Though the Astros, champions of the woeful Central Division, won 17 games fewer than the Braves during the season, they have played the Braves close in 12 meetings. Houston has won only four, but all 12 games have been decided by one or two runs.

"This was a game so close that a lot of little things spelled the difference," said Houston manager Larry Dierker, directing his first postseason game.

Maddux prospered because he kept Craig Biggio and Jeff Bagwell off base in their eight at-bats, although Bagwell was robbed of one hit by shortstop Jeff Blauser.

With Bobby Abreu on first in the eighth inning, Maddux got Biggio to foul out to right.

After Derek Bell flied out and Abreu stole second, Bagwell struck out on a nasty inside changeup. The pitch might have been ball four, but home-plate umpire Greg Bonin had called Bagwell out on a similar pitch in his previous at-bat.

"Maddux got him into a compromising position and he put him away," Dierker said.

Lofton, bothered much of the season by a pulled groin muscle, ran the Braves to a run in the first. He blooped a hit into short left field and legged it to a double. He then tagged on a fly ball of medium depth to right by Keith Lockhart and scored on a sacrifice fly to left by Chipper Jones.

Kile's pitch had jammed Lofton. "A fastball on my knuckles," Lofton said.

"I wanted to come in with a fastball and take away the outside corner," Kile said. "I threw

the pitch where I wanted to and he hit it where he wanted to."

Dierker bemoaned the first Braves run. "The first run makes you wonder how a guy [Don Drysdale] ever had a scoreless streak of 59 innings when a guy gets hit right on the hands and loops one," said Dierker. "The hit wasn't much to look at."

"You can go right back to the first hitter in the first inning and that was probably the difference in the ball game."

Klesko drilled Kile's first pitch, a curve ball, for his home run in the second. "It happened to be in the happy zone," Kile said.

That was the last hit for the Braves. "We're lucky we got him early," said Lofton, "because if we didn't, we'd have been in trouble."

Martins slip by Giants — Page C13

Sundin hopes he can provide leadership

Leafs' new captain feels comfortable in the role assigned to him to lead a young team into this season

By DAVID SHOALTS
Sport Reporter

TORONTO — The fuss surrounding the coronation of the Toronto Maple Leafs' 16th captain obscured the practical reason for it: The care and feeding of the team's best player.

Without Mats Sundin, the Leafs would open the National Hockey League season tonight at Maple Leaf Gardens without a prayer, on offence. Even with him, a win against the Washington Capitals, missing two of their best players because of contract disputes, is by no means guaranteed.

The role of captain can best be compared to the role of governor-general of Canada. It's a nice title, you get to attend some dull parties in uncomfortable clothes, but ultimately it doesn't mean anything. Making any more out of it than that depends on the player.

"It's more of a ceremonial function, so that representative of the team is more visible," Leafs president Ken Dryden said. "The captain's role is, by definition, important."

"It can become very important depending on the captain. There have been important captains in the past and not-so-important captains. Mark Messier is obviously an important cap-

tain. Wayne Gretzky has been an important captain. Others pretty much just wear the C."

Which category Sundin will fall into isn't known, although giving him the honour, despite what is becoming the organization's customary dithering, guarantees that the season will start with one happy Sweden.

"It's a sign management and my teammates appreciate me as a player," Sundin said. "It's a real thrill."

"I definitely feel more comfortable now in a leading role. I remember the first year I came here, [management] asked me to have a more leading role. I looked around the room at guys like Doug Gilmour and Dave Andreychuk who were already leaders. Now I can look around the room and I'm older than most of the guys."

He is also better than all of them, which doesn't bode well for the season. However, expectations are modest.

"The goal is to make the playoffs," Dryden said. "It doesn't matter how many points that takes."

The goal is going to be reached by gambling with a much younger lineup than last season's group of veteran malcontents and loafers. There will be four rookies on the team this sea-

son, and four more who are in their second NHL season.

Given the Leafs' 23rd-place finish last season, and no chance of owner Steve Stavro's taking a blow torch to his wallet, Dryden and his committee of managers did not see another way to proceed.

"I think this can be a team people will enjoy watching," Dryden said. "The fan can see this team is trying hard. That's what this team has to demonstrate."

"That's also how you develop your players. What you want from your younger players is to be in the 2-1 and 3-2 games. That's when the best is brought out of them, when you can see how good they are."

Given how bad the team was last season, Dryden felt handing the team's fate over to a large group of young players was worth both the risk of stunting their development by prolonged exposure to losing and missing the playoffs again.

"The commitment to youth is such that two of the team's four centres, Alyn McCauley and Kevin Adams, will be making their NHL debuts tonight."

"We finished 23rd last season," he said. "Where's the risk of going with those veteran

players you know? You look at each younger player differently. You say to yourself, 'Is this the kind of young player whose skills are such that he should be in the minors for a year or so to develop or does he have different kinds of skills?'"

"And Alyn McCauley, I think, is the kind of player who is a smart player. He understands the game very well. Is that sort of player, and he's physically strong enough, going to be better served in St. John's? I don't think so."

McCauley has been impressive enough that he'll be the No. 2 centre behind Sundin. But Dryden and head coach Mike Murphy acknowledge that McCauley will not face the usual demands of a No. 2 centre.

"We have always stated we have a first line and three third lines," Murphy said. "We'll be using a four-line system this season."

The system will be fairly simple. Sundin and his linemates Derek King and Sergei Berezin will have to score most of the goals. Goaltender Felix Potvin will have to rediscover his form of two years ago, and the defence and the rest of the forwards will have to play well enough defensively to make it easy for Potvin to do that.

Otherwise, it's going to be another 82 games of agony for Leaf fans.