

HockeyTalk

Boucha Keeps Quiet for Now

By Steve Marantz
A Member of the Sports Staff

Henry Boucha's right eyeball appeared to have a mind of its own, as if the weight of his thought had jarred it from its moorings in the socket. Boucha swiveled his head to the left and the reticent pupil finally tagged along. He tilted his gaze upward, and the pupil remained behind, fixed on a bad memory.

"I know what I'd like to do but I won't do it," Boucha was saying, nodding his head. Since he came to the Scouts more than two weeks ago he has lived in constant reminder of tomorrow night, when Dave Forbes and the Boston Bruins come to Kemper Arena.

Boucha and Forbes know each other well. "I'd just as soon not say anything about him," said Boucha.

The game tomorrow will mark a historic reunion for the two. Not since Jan. 4, 1975, have they skated on the same ice, and on that night only one, Forbes, left under his own power. Boucha, then with the Minnesota North Stars, was the hit-and-run victim to the Bloomington, Minn., incident that turned hockey upside down for a week last summer.

Forbes was the defendant in the Hennepin, Minnesota, County trial on charges of assault. Not since a hung

jury let him off the hook in July has Forbes seen Boucha.

"It's going to be different," said Boucha, who came to the Scouts by way of the Minnesota Fighting Saints of the World Hockey Association. "Everybody will be watching. I don't think anything will happen."

The reason nothing will happen is not because Boucha is a pacific part Indian from Warroad, Minn. The reason nothing will occur makes sense and cents to Boucha, plenty of both. He has a \$6-million suit pending against Forbes, the Bruins and the N.H.L. for the injuries that give his eyeball its disobedient nature. He thinks he has an excellent chance to collect a large settlement.

"I really don't want to do anything to jeopardize the lawsuit," said Boucha, a well-traveled 24-year-old.

Three operations were needed to correct the damage inflicted by Forbes's stick. The blow tore a gash above the eye that required 30 stitches and shattered the bone at the base of the socket. A teflon plate was inserted to replace the shattered bone.

Boucha claims permanent damage to his vision. The right eyeball is slow and doesn't react to quick changes of direction. If Boucha were trying to exaggerate the injury for purposes of the lawsuit then he has mastered a neat trick. At the same time he realizes his case gets stronger as the credibility of the injury increases.

"The eye doesn't move sometimes," said Boucha. "You get self-conscious. I can't do what I used to do with the puck. It's sad."

Boucha's lawsuit is just another episode in his young but eventful career. Boucha says the Forbes incident has not altered his life and a look at his background may explain why.

The son of a French-Canadian fisherman and half-Chippewa mother, Boucha was the sixth of seven children. He grew up in Warroad, a town of 1,200 along Minnesota's northern border.

Boucha's fame in his home state was established in his senior year in high school. He led tiny Warroad to the

state hockey finals that season against a large suburban Minneapolis team, which was an overwhelming favorite. In the final game, with the teams playing even, Boucha was checked into the glass and suffered a hairline fracture to his skull and a punctured ear drum.

Warroad lost the game, but Boucha received a flood of sympathy from the state. Financial contributions greatly exceeded expenses, and Boucha set up a trust fund for his school.

He had an unusual amateur career, spending one season in Winnipeg before being drafted by the U.S. Army in 1970. In the service Boucha played for the U.S. National team and the 1972 U.S. Olympic team, winner of a silver medal.

At one point Boucha was assigned to military police training in Fort Gordon, Ga. Eventually 225 of the 250 in his group were sent to Vietnam. Boucha went with the other 25 to Germany. After the '72 Olympics the Army gave him his discharge six months early.

Detroit took him in the '71 amateur draft and he played for the Red Wings through the '75-74 season. The North Stars then acquired him, seeing gate appeal in his name. But after returning from the Forbes bout last season, Boucha was suspended by the North Stars for a disciplinary reason. The Fighting Saints stepped in with a larger contract and Boucha was gone across the river in the battle of the leagues.

He was having a good season with the Fighting Saints until he decided his contract was not being satisfied. So Boucha left the bench one night in January and the next bench he sat on was the Scouts.

"This is where I want to finish my career," he says, wondering what he will do if the Scouts are shuttled wholesale to another city.

Boucha is uncertain about himself at

this stage of his career. He has never produced more than 51 points in an N.H.L. season, and is still regarded as a raw talent. The game is not as easy for him as it was because of the eye injury, and he candidly says he does not have the desire to play he once had. The outcome of the \$6-million lawsuit he feels will direct his future.

"I still can't believe it," says Boucha of his strange fate. His right eye wanders outward and for a moment he appears to be looking two ways at once. Which, of course, might be a good idea tomorrow night.

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Talley, Rietzke Hold N.A.I.A. Leads

Archie Talley of Salem College, W. Va., with 57 points last week in a 112-103 victory over West Liberty State College, W. Va., raised his 30-game scoring average to 40.4 points.

The 6-1 senior guard easily leads the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics in individual scoring. He has 522 field goals for the season and 169 free throws for a total of 1,213 points. Tom Randall of Judson College (Illinois) is second with a 32.2 average in 20 games.


Tracy Rietzke of Kansas Wesleyan maintains his lead in field goal shooting percentage at a .791 clip.

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