

All-Time Great “One-Hit Wonders” for HOCKEY BLAST Pro Hockey Game

By Brian Chipney

“One-Hit Wonder.” “Flash in the Pan.” It doesn’t matter which sport we talk about. We can all think of players who came out of nowhere, put together the season or two of their lives and then disappeared back into obscurity. In this set, designed to be compatible with the All-Time Franchise Great Teams series produced for HOCKEY BLAST, we’re going to take a look at some of the notable one year wonders from the National Hockey League. We’ve produced a card for each player rating them for their best single season. You can put this team on your tabletop and see just how good these guys were...for a little while, anyway!

CENTERS

Alexander Semak was one of the offensive stars of Moscow Dynamo and the Soviet National team. He arrived in North America in time for a “get acquainted” partial NHL season with New Jersey in 1991-92. It paid off. The next season, Semak was ready. He scored 37 goals and 42 assists for the Devils. But the year after Semak fell back to just 12 goals. He spent several seasons bouncing around the NHL, achieving a degree of success with the Islanders. Still, his production was nowhere near what it had been in his one great season. Semak headed back to Europe and finished his career with several years in Russia.

Ken Hodge, Junior had an OK college career, but given his apparently limited skill set nothing much was expected from him. He played a handful of games with Minnesota and gave no sign of any imminent breakthrough, though he did have some nice numbers with the Stars’ minor league team. The Bruins picked Hodge up, mainly because his dad had been a Bruins star in the Orr/Esposito glory days. They thought there might be a chance at some nice PR from having Ken at training camp. But Hodge surprised everyone. He made the Bruins roster in 90-91 and put up 30 goals and 29 assists, finishing 3rd in voting for Rookie of the Year. Was he really going to be a player after all? No. The following year Hodge returned to earth, notching just 6 goals in 42 games and spending time in the minors. Phil Esposito had become GM in Tampa Bay and brought Hodge in, but the results there were even more dismal. With his NHL time over, Hodge had a couple of decent minor league years and finished his career with three mediocre seasons in the British professional league.

Michel Briere was a special player. He was a fantastic skater with speed to burn. Briere used that speed to dart around opponents, opening up the ice for his teammates. He was a great passer too, and a smart hockey player. Coming off a brilliant junior career, it was only Briere’s diminutive size that prevented him from being one of the first players chosen in the 1969 draft. Taken by Pittsburgh in the 3rd round, the Penguins were sure they’d found a player they could build their franchise around. They were right. Briere scored only 12 goals in his rookie season, but added 32 assists. He electrified crowds night after night with his dazzling moves. That summer, with the world by the tail, Michel Briere was planning his wedding. He was out with friends one evening, riding in the car as a passenger in the back seat. There was a crash and Briere was thrown from the vehicle. Though he appeared to be unmarked when ambulance crews arrived, he had suffered massive head trauma. Briere remained in a coma until his death several weeks later. The jerseys of Michel Briere and Mario Lemieux are the only two that have ever been retired by the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Brian Bradley was a slick play-making center who actually had some okay years for Vancouver early in his career. But in 1992-93, Bradley, then in his first season with Tampa Bay, had a year that was far more than decent! He more than doubled his previous season high for goals, picking up 42 and adding 44 assists for good measure. Bradley’s goal-scoring total dipped to a more usual 24 the following year, but he still managed 40 assists. Two seasons later, Brian Bradley had one last big year with 56 assists to go with his 23 goals. With injuries taking their toll, Bradley soon retired. He was always a player who could set up teammates, but for one special season in his career Brian Bradley showed that he could also put the puck in the net.

Vladimir Ruzicka’s time in the NHL was brief. In common with a number of other European players of the 1970’s and ‘80’s Ruzicka spent most of his career at home, playing in the Czech league and starring for the National team. He eventually decided to try his luck in the NHL. Ruzicka played sporadically for the Oilers in 1989-90 and scored 11 goals in 25 games. He was never a particularly strong skater and his interest in playing defense was virtually non-existent. When Ruzicka wasn’t scoring he was a liability that NHL teams couldn’t afford. Traded to Boston after the season, his production declined to just 8 goals in 29 games. But Ruzicka still had a surprise up his sleeve! In 1991-92 he played 77 games for the Bruins, scoring 39 times and picking up 36 assists. His numbers the following year were far less impressive. That was the end of Ruzicka’s time in Boston. He went to Ottawa for half a season but performed poorly. Returning home, Ruzicka played well in the Czech league and helped the Czechs to Olympic gold in 1997-98. After two more seasons Vladimir Ruzicka retired as a respected veteran of Czech hockey.

WINGERS

David Clarkson was a hard-nosed player for the New Jersey Devils, short on talent but never afraid to take on all comers with his physical style. Clarkson’s career high for goals was 17, and even that appeared to be abnormally high. Aside from his last year of junior hockey, David had never been much of a scorer. That changed during the 2011-12 season as Clarkson surprised one and all by picking up 30 goals to go with his 16 assists, also a career high. After one more season where his production was more in line with his career numbers, Clarkson cashed in. He signed a rich free-agent contract with Toronto and began three nightmarish seasons with the Leafs. In his first year there he managed only 5 goals in 60 games. It wasn’t much of a return for the big money the Leafs were paying him, and the fans seldom allowed Clarkson to forget it. He scored 10 goals in each of the next two years, which was right in line with his normal production. But again, not what the fans were expecting. Hobbled by injury, Clarkson’s career now appears to be over, though he’s still traded occasionally when teams need to pick up some salary for cap purposes.

Norm Dupont could score goals. That had been true in his outstanding junior career and was just as valid in the American Hockey League. But in his 35 games with Montreal in 79-80 Dupont managed only 1 goal. He was traded to Winnipeg after the season and appeared to have found an NHL home. Dupont scored 27 for the Jets the next year and looked every bit the scoring winger. He wasn’t much interested in checking, but he could sure put the puck in the net! I well remember what happened the next season. Dupont started hitting goal posts. A lot. Where the year before the puck would surely have gone in, in 81-82 it hit the iron and stayed out. Jets fans felt that as long as Dupont was getting his chances the puck would eventually start bouncing his way. It never did. His goal production fell to 13. Traded to Hartford, Dupont had two seasons of 7 goals each. He fled to the Swiss league, where Norm Dupont enjoyed many seasons as a top-notch goal-scorer once again.

Tom Rowe was a rugged winger for the Washington Capitals in that team's early history. There was no reason to expect that he'd ever be more than a grinder, but Rowe turned goal-scorer in 1978-79. He picked up 31 goals and 30 assists while continuing to play hard-nosed hockey. The following season the hard-nosed hockey was still there, but the goals weren't. The Caps traded Rowe to Hartford for a tough, skilled defenseman, Al Hango. Rowe changed teams a couple of times and even found himself back in Washington, but the magic had worn off. He could still score during his minor league stints, but not at the NHL level. Tom Rowe finally retired and went into management with Hartford/Carolina and Florida.

Jacques Richard had talent. No one ever disputed that, especially when he scored at better than a goal a game pace in the final seasons of his junior career. He'd actually started as a 15 year old with the Quebec Remparts. Drafted by Atlanta, Richard was expected to become a dynamic NHL player. Didn't happen. He did manage 27 goals in his second year, but often appeared disinterested. After he slipped back to 17 goals in his third year the Flames gave up on Richard and traded him to Buffalo. His performance there was even worse and the Sabres released him after three poor seasons. Signed as a free agent by the Nordiques, there must have been hope that a return home would spark Richard into becoming the player everyone knew he could be. But in his first season with Quebec he scored only 3 times in 14 games. His play in the AHL was no more impressive. And then it happened. On a powerhouse Nordiques squad that featured the Stastnys, Michel Goulet, Dale Hunter and Robbie Ftorek, Jacques Richard got serious. In 1980-81 he recorded 52 goals and 51 assists. Surely this was just the start! Instead it was the end. The following season Richard had just 15 goals. It was even worse the next season and Jacques Richard found himself back in the minors. After going without a goal in 4 playoff games, Richard retired, leaving fans to wonder what he could have accomplished if he had only been more interested in living up to his potential.

Scott Bjugstad grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota and dreamed of starring for the North Stars. After an outstanding career at the University of Minnesota Bjugstad was indeed drafted by the Stars. In his first full season he scored 11 times in 73 games, not terrible for a young player. But the following season, Bjugstad exploded with 43 goals and 33 assists. He was fast and appeared to be a born goal scorer. Who could have guessed that he'd follow up his magic year with a 4 goal campaign and that his season high in goals the rest of his career would be 10? Bjugstad said in later years that he felt he was still doing all the same things that he did when he had his big season. He never could figure out what happened. Even a spell on the wing with Mario Lemieux failed to revive Bjugstad's scoring prowess. After hanging on as a role player for several years, Bjugstad retired. He remains one of the greatest "One Year Wonders" in NHL history.

Eddie Johnstone is remembered as a tough two-way winger. But in his junior days Eddie displayed surprising ability as a goal scorer. Perhaps then it shouldn't have been a surprise when Johnstone scored 40 goals in the AHL before establishing himself with the New York Rangers. He had a terrific season in 80-81, racking up 30 goals and 38 assists while playing well at both ends of the ice. His follow-up season was just as good, but the year after saw Johnstone slip back to 15 goals. He was then part of a massive trade with Detroit. Eddie was unable to live up to expectations with the Wings as injuries began to take their toll. After a lackluster year Johnstone found himself back in the minors, where he spent most of the next two seasons before retiring.

Warren Young had a good college career at Michigan Tech and played well with the Minnesota minor league affiliate. Young wasn't able to establish himself with the North Stars though and went to Pittsburgh as a free agent. His first season with the Penguins was less than mediocre 1 goal in 15 games. The following year Young found himself on a line with Mario Lemieux. The result? Young tallied 40 goals and 32 assists while picking up close to 200 minutes in penalties! Yet the Penguins opted not to resign Warren, who headed to Detroit as a free agent. Minus Mario, Young's numbers predictably declined, though his 22 goals and 24 assists were respectable. Young continued to play a tough game, earning over 160 penalty minutes with the Wings. And yet Young found himself on the move yet again, sold back to the Penguins. After two poor seasons in Pittsburgh, Warren Young's hockey career came to an end.

Nikolai Borschevsky was anything but the prototypical Russian. Though highly skilled, Borschevsky loved to play a physical, agitating game. As a bonus, he managed to do so without taking penalties, letting his opponents retaliate and putting his team on the power play. Borschevsky was 28 when he made his NHL debut with Toronto in 1992-93. He had a great year, with 34 goals and 40 assists. In the playoffs it was Borschevsky who scored the winning goal in game 7 of the Leafs' series with Detroit. Unfortunately Borschevsky ruptured his spleen early the next season and was never the same player again. After a couple of futile campaigns with various NHL clubs he returned to Europe to finish his career.

Chris Simon was as tough a customer as you'd ever want to find. In his first full NHL season, with Colorado, Simon also showed he could play some hockey. He recorded 16 goals and 18 assists—along with 250 penalty minutes! Simon was traded to Washington and continued to play tough, physical hockey while also dealing with some injury problems. In the 99-00 season, Chris Simon really showed what he could do. He picked up 29 goals and 20 assists for the Caps, while continuing to fulfill his policeman role with 146 minutes in penalties. He would never again approach the 30 goal mark. Simon spent several more seasons in the NHL, moving from team to team and doing what was expected of him as a tough guy. When his time in the NHL ended, Simon finished his career playing in the KHL, putting up the same kind of modest scoring stats he had in the NHL with a whole lot of penalty minutes!

Dmitri Kvartolnov was a steady, though not spectacular, scorer in his native Russia. He came over to North America looking for an NHL job, but first he spent a season in the IHL. Pretty good season 60 goals in 77 games! The Bruins drafted Kvartolnov and he rewarded the B's with a great rookie season ... 30 goals, 42 assists. On the downside, Dmitri was another of the skilled Russian players who had little interest in playing without the puck. As long as he was producing they put up with him. But the very next season Kvartolnov's numbers declined and he found himself in the minors. He opted to return to Europe and enjoyed many fine seasons in Austria, Germany, Finland and Russia, playing right up to the age of 38.

DEFENSEMEN

Rick Foley was a giant for his day. Standing over 6' 4" and weighing more than 220 pounds, Foley was known for his fists more than anything else. He had a long minor-league career that featured plenty of fights. But Foley also displayed more than a little offensive ability. The latter was showcased (along with the fists!) when Foley finally made it to the NHL with Philadelphia for the 71-72 season. He managed 11 goals and 25 assists in just 58 games while also putting up 168 penalty minutes. But Foley wasn't a disciplined pro. Unable to keep his weight under control, this would be his only season with the Flyers. After a handful of games with Detroit and an equally short spell in the WHA, Foley played a couple of minor league seasons before retiring from the game.

DEFENSEMEN (continued)

Larry Sacharuk wasn't much of a skater. Wasn't much interested in playing defense either. Really, there was only one thing he did well score goals! Sacharuk was drafted by the Rangers, but as Larry himself said, the Rangers already had Brad Park and didn't need another offensive defenseman. After being named "Minor League Player of the Year" with the Rangers' farm team, he was traded to St. Louis and enjoyed a breakout season, 20 goals and 22 assists. But the Blues apparently concluded that Sacharuk's liabilities outweighed his obvious offensive skills. After that one big year he was traded back to New York. Larry Sacharuk spent most of the next few seasons in the minors and finished his career with a couple of years in Europe.

Norm Maciver was considered small for a defenseman. He made his living as a skill player, one who could skate, move the puck and out-think the opposition. Maciver actually enjoyed some success in that role early in his career with both Rangers and Edmonton. But it was with the expansion Ottawa Senators that Maciver came into his own, scoring 17 goals and 46 assists. He suffered serious heart issues while playing in the World Championships at the end of the season. Though he made a full recovery, only once the rest of his career would Maciver play over 70 games. He spent a couple of years in Ottawa, then finished his career with Pittsburgh and Winnipeg, never getting back to the level he reached in that one magic season with the Senators.

Dick Tarnstrom enjoyed a fine career in his native Sweden before coming to the NHL. Already 27 when he broke in with the Islanders, Tarnstrom was picked up on waivers the next season by Pittsburgh. It was a smart move. He was the top scoring defenseman on the Pens in 03-04 with 16 goals and 36 assists, the vast majority of those points coming on the power play. The next season his production fell off dramatically. Tarnstrom was traded to Edmonton, where he fared no better. After another futile NHL season Dick Tarnstrom returned to Sweden, where he played the final year of his career.

Pekka Rautakallio may be one of the very best players you've never heard of. The offensively gifted blue-liner enjoyed a number of excellent seasons in his native Finland before trying his luck in North America. After a fine year in the WHA, Rautakallio eventually found himself playing for the Flames in both Atlanta and Calgary. His final NHL season was his best, as he scored 17 goals and 51 assists during the 81-82 campaign. Pekka was no slouch in his own end either. He was just a real solid all-around defenseman who played in the All-Star game that season. Though he was in his prime at 28 and seemed to have years of NHL stardom ahead of him, Rautakallio put family first. He announced that he wanted his children to grow up in Finland and moved back to his home country. There he played excellent hockey for several more seasons before retiring at the age of 35.

Tapio Levo was another Finnish defenseman who came to the NHL during his peak years. Levo was a mobile player with loads of offensive ability. Many thought he could be the equal of the excellent Pekka Rautakallio. Levo had one season with Colorado and played well, though a broken arm limited him to just 34 games. He moved with the franchise to New Jersey. There he enjoyed a fine year in 82-83, picking up 7 goals and 40 assists. In that era, many Finnish players opted to head home after relatively brief NHL careers. Levo was no exception, as he returned to Finland immediately after that 82-83 season. He performed brilliantly in the Finnish league until retiring in his late 30's.

Mario Faubert was a journeyman defenseman of no great repute. He came out of the American college ranks and joined Pittsburgh, where he spent several years bouncing between the Pens and their minor-league affiliate. In 1980-81 Faubert was partnered with Randy Carlyle and everything changed. He put up 8 goals and 44 assists while recording 122 penalty minutes and helping Carlyle to a Norris Trophy win. Mario Faubert had finally arrived. The next season he was playing even better—right up till he suffered a horrendous broken leg in a game against St. Louis. Faubert never played again.

GOALIES

Pelle Lindbergh may have been the best goalie of his era. He was spectacular, a state of the art netminder. I was never a Philadelphia fan, but I loved watching Pelle play. Lindbergh was judged the top goalie of the 1984-85 season, a 1st team all-star and a 3rd place finisher in MVP voting. He was off to a strong start the following year. But one night after a game the team got together for a few drinks. Lindbergh wasn't known as a heavy drinker, but that night he had a few too many. Pelle also loved sports cars and enjoyed driving fast. It was a fatal combination. On his way home Lindbergh ran head-on into a concrete wall. He died in hospital a couple of days later after suffering massive brain injuries.

Frank McCool was the NHL's Rookie of the Year in 1944-45, playing every minute of the 50 game schedule for the Leafs. His record wasn't spectacular, but his playoff performance certainly was! McCool led the Leafs to a 7th game Stanley Cup victory over the Detroit Red Wings. But even in that final game, McCool gave a hint that things were not quite under control. Always known for his ulcers, McCool skated off the ice in the 3rd period and was prepared to quit on the spot. Leafs coach Hap Day had to remind him that he was the only goalie the team had. To his credit McCool gulped down some soothing liquid to calm his ulcers and went back on the ice to win the Stanley Cup. The next season he asked for a \$500 raise and was turned down. Management didn't have faith in McCool's ability to stay the course. He eventually did sign, but after playing just 22 games McCool retired from the game.

Andrew Raycroft had posted mediocre numbers in junior. He appeared to be the definition of a journeyman goalie. But the Bruins were desperate for some goaltending help and gave him a shot. He played well in the AHL and then won the starting job in Boston for the 2003-04 season. Raycroft somehow put together the season of his life, with a .926 save percentage and Rookie of the Year honours. The next year, Raycroft fell apart. But the Leafs thought he could recapture the magic and traded for him. Boston picked up a young goalie in the deal. Guy by the name of Tuuka Rask. Rask is STILL the #1 man in Boston today. Meanwhile, Raycroft had an awful season as the Leafs' starter. He played a lot of hockey and the results weren't pretty. Raycroft spent a few more years bouncing around the league as a back-up with no great success. But for one season, he was as good as anyone in the game.

Questions? Comments? We're always happy to help! The e-mail address is info@plaay.com.

SHOT ★ ASST
Rick FOLEY
 D • All-Time Wonders
 HIT
 ■
 POWER
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 5 C 3

SHOT ☆ ASST
Larry SACHARUK
 D • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL SMART
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 B 0.5

SHOT ☆ ☆☆☆ ASST
Norm MACIVER
 D • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL SMART
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 I A I

SHOT ★★ ASST
Dick TARNSTROM
 D • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ☆ SMART
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 A 0.5

SHOT ☆ ☆☆☆ ASST
Pekka RAUTAKALLIO
 D • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 A 0.5

SHOT ⇄ ★★ ASST
Tapio LEVO
 D • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ☆ SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 B 0.5

SHOT ⇄ ★★ ASST
Mario FAUBERT
 D • All-Time Wonders
 HIT
 SKILL
 POWER
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 3 B 1.5

SHOT ★★ ☆☆☆ ASST
Alexander SEMAK
 C • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 5I A I

SHOT ★ ★ ASST
Ken, Jr. HODGE
 F • All-Time Wonders
 SKILL SMART
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 54 B 0.5

SHOT ☆☆ ASST
Michel BRIERE
 C • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 50 A 0.5

SHOT ★★ ☆☆☆ ASST
Brian BRADLEY
 C • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED HIT
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 ☆ STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 52 I A I

SHOT ★ ASST
David CLARKSON
 W • All-Time Wonders
 HIT
 SMART
 POWER
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 4 A 1.5

SHOT ★ ★ ASST
Norm DUPONT
 W • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL SMART
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 A 0

SHOT ☆☆ ☆☆ ASST
Tom ROWE
 W • All-Time Wonders
 HIT
 ■ SMART
 POWER
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 4 C 2

SHOT ★★☆☆ ASST
Jacques RICHARD
 W • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 B 0.5

SHOT ★★ ☆☆ ASST
Scott BJUGSTAD
 W • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 A 0.5

SHOT ★★ ☆☆ ASST
Warren YOUNG
 F • All-Time Wonders
 HIT
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 POWER STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 47 5 A 2

SHOT ★ ★★ ASST
Eddie JOHNSTONE
 W • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED HIT
 ■ SMART
 ●
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 2 A 1.5

SHOT ☆☆ ★★ ASST
Nikolai BORSCHESKY
 W • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 B 0.5

SHOT ★ ☆ ASST
Chris SIMON
 W • All-Time Wonders
 HIT
 SKILL
 POWER
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 5 B 2

SHOT ★ ☆☆☆ ASST
Dmitri KVARTALNOV
 W • All-Time Wonders
 SPEED
 SKILL ▼ SMART
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 B 0

SHOT ★★ ☆☆ ASST
Vladimir RUZICKA
 C • All-Time Wonders
 SKILL ☆ SMART
 STAR
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 FO FIGHT INJ PEN
 52 B 0.5

Andrew RAYCROFT
 G • All-Time Wonders
 PLAY SAVE ★★☆☆
 SHOT SAVE ★★☆☆
 SPEC SAVE ★★☆☆
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 ST FIGHT INJ PEN
 3 B 0

Frank McCOOL
 G • All-Time Wonders
 PLAY SAVE ★★★
 SHOT SAVE ★★☆☆
 SPEC SAVE ★★
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 ST FIGHT INJ PEN
 3 A 0

Pelle LINDBERGH
 G • All-Time Wonders
 PLAY SAVE ★★☆☆
 SHOT SAVE ★★★
 SPEC SAVE ★★☆☆
 ©2018 PLAAY Games LLC
 ST FIGHT INJ PEN
 4 A 0.5

All-Time Great "One-Hit Wonders" for HOCKEY BLAST Pro Hockey Game