

= Georges Vézina =

Joseph Georges Gonzague Vézina ( / ʒəʒˈvɛzina / ; French : [ ʒəʒˈvɛzina ] ; January 21 , 1887 ? March 27 , 1926 ) was a Canadian professional ice hockey goaltender who played seven seasons in the National Hockey Association ( NHA ) and nine in the National Hockey League ( NHL ) , all with the Montreal Canadiens . After being signed by the Canadiens in 1910 , Vézina played in 327 consecutive regular season games and a further 39 playoff games , before leaving early during a game in 1925 due to illness . Vézina was diagnosed with tuberculosis , and died on March 27 , 1926 .

The only goaltender to play for the Canadiens between 1910 and 1925 , Vézina helped the team win the Stanley Cup in 1916 and 1924 , while reaching the Stanley Cup Finals three more times . Nicknamed the " Chicoutimi Cucumber " for his calm composure while in goal , Vézina allowed the fewest goals against in the league seven times in his career : four times in the NHA and three times in the NHL . In 1918 , Vézina became the first NHL goaltender to both record a shutout and earn an assist on a goal . At the start of the 1926 ? 27 NHL season , the Canadiens donated the Vezina Trophy to the NHL as an award to the goaltender who allowed the fewest goals during the season . Since 1981 , the award has been given to the most outstanding goaltender as determined by a vote of NHL general managers . In Vézina 's hometown of Chicoutimi , the sports arena is named the Centre Georges @-@ Vézina in his honour . When the Hockey Hall of Fame opened in 1945 , Vézina was one of the original nine inductees .

= = Personal life = =

Georges , the youngest of eight children , was born on January 21 , 1887 , in Chicoutimi , Quebec , to Jacques Vézina , a local baker and an immigrant from St. Nicolas de La Rochelle in France , and his wife Clara . The younger Georges attended school at the Petit Séminaire de Chicoutimi until the age of fourteen , when he left the school to help at his father 's bakery . He played hockey from a young age , participating in informal street hockey matches with others his own age . Vézina partook in these matches in his shoes , and used skates for the first time at age 16 when he joined the local team in Chicoutimi . As Chicoutimi was in a remote area of Quebec , more than 200 kilometres from Quebec City , the hockey club was not in any organised league . Rather the club , known as the Saguenéens ( " People from the Saguenay " , the region where Chicoutimi is located ) , toured the province , playing exhibition games against a variety of clubs .

Vézina married Marie @-@ Adélaïde @-@ Stella Morin on June 3 , 1908 , in Chicoutimi . After Vézina 's death , it was reported that he fathered 22 children . This rumour was started when the Canadiens ' manager , Leo Dandurand , told reporters that Vézina " speaks no English and has twenty @-@ two children , including three sets of triplets , and they were all born in the space of nine years . " In actuality the Vézinas only had two children and Georges spoke broken English . In 1912 they had their first child , a son named Jean @-@ Jules . A second son was born the night of the Montreal Canadiens ' first Stanley Cup win in 1916 . To honour the event , Georges named the child Marcel Stanley . When not playing hockey , Vézina operated a tannery in Chicoutimi , living a quiet life .

= = Playing career = =

= = = NHA = = =

On February 17 , 1910 , the Chicoutimi Hockey Club played an exhibition match against the Montreal Canadiens . Though playing an inferior team the Canadiens failed to score a goal , losing the game . This prompted Joseph Cattarinich , goaltender for the Canadiens , to convince his team to offer a tryout to Georges Vézina , who was Chicoutimi 's goaltender . Vézina initially refused the offer , staying in Chicoutimi until the Canadiens returned in December of that year . This time they

convinced Georges , along with his brother Pierre , to come to Montreal . The two Vézina brothers arrived on December 22 , 1910 . While Pierre failed to make the team , Georges impressed the Canadiens , especially with the use of his stick to block shots . Vézina was signed to a contract for C \$ 800 per season , and made his professional debut December 31 , 1910 , against the Ottawa Senators . He would play all 16 games for the Canadiens in the 1910 ? 11 season , finishing with a record of eight wins and eight losses , while allowing the fewest goals in the league .

The following season Vézina again led the league in goals against , as well as winning eight games , along with 10 losses . Vézina recorded his first career shutout during the 1912 ? 13 season , defeating Ottawa 6 ? 0 on January 18 , 1913 , for one of his nine wins in the season . The Canadiens finished first in the NHA for the first time in 1913 ? 14 , in a tie with the Toronto Blueshirts . Once again , Vézina led the league with the fewest goals against , while posting 13 victories and seven losses . Under the NHA rules , the first place team would play in the Stanley Cup Finals , but due to the tie for first , the Canadiens had to play a two @-@ game , total @-@ goals series against Toronto . Vézina shut out the Blueshirts in the first game , a 2 ? 0 win for Montreal , but let in six goals in the second game , allowing the Blueshirts to play for the Stanley Cup , which they won .

After losing 14 games and finishing last in the NHA in 1914 ? 15 , Vézina and the Canadiens won 16 games during the 1915 ? 16 season , placing the team first in the league . As league leaders , the Canadiens earned the right to play in the 1916 Stanley Cup Finals , where they faced off against the Portland Rosebuds , champions of the rival Pacific Coast Hockey Association . The Canadiens defeated the Rosebuds three games to two in the best @-@ of @-@ five @-@ games series , winning the Stanley Cup for the first time in team history . Vézina 's second son was born the night of the fifth game , which coupled with a bonus of \$ 238 each member of the Canadiens received for the championship , led to him considering the series as the pinnacle of his career . The following season Vézina again led the NHA with the fewest goals against , the fourth time in seven years he did so , helping the Canadiens to again reach the Stanley Cup Finals , where they lost to the Seattle Metropolitans .

== = NHL == =

The NHA gave way to the National Hockey League ( NHL ) in November 1917 , with Vézina and the Canadiens joining the new league . On February 18 , 1918 , he became the first goaltender in NHL history to record a shutout , by blanking the Torontos 9 ? 0 . On December 28 , 1918 , he became the first goaltender to be credited with an assist , on a goal by Newsy Lalonde , who had just picked up the puck after a save by Vézina . He finished the season with 12 wins , allowing the fewest goals against . Vézina also set a record , which was shared with Clint Benedict of the Ottawa Senators , for the fewest shutouts needed to lead the league , with one .

In 1918 ? 19 Vézina won 10 games and helped the Canadiens defeat the Ottawa Senators in the NHL playoffs for the right to play for the Stanley Cup against the PCHA champion , the Seattle Metropolitans . Held in Seattle , the two teams were tied in the best @-@ of @-@ five series when it was cancelled due to the Spanish flu epidemic , the first time the Stanley Cup was not awarded . In the 10 playoff games prior to the cancellation , Vézina had won six games , lost three and tied one , with one shutout . Vézina recorded nearly identical records the next two seasons , with 13 wins , 11 losses and a goals against average above four in both 1919 ? 20 and 1920 ? 21 . He won 12 games the following season , as the Canadiens again failed to qualify for the Stanley Cup .

After winning 13 games in 1922 ? 23 , Vézina led the Canadiens into the NHL playoffs , where they lost the two @-@ game , total @-@ goal series to the Senators , who would win the Stanley Cup . The following season saw Vézina return to leading the league in fewest goals against . His average of 1 @-@ 97 goals per game was the first time a goaltender had averaged fewer than two goals against per game . With another 13 @-@ win season in 1923 ? 24 , the Canadiens reached the NHL playoffs , where they again faced the Ottawa Senators . This time the Canadiens won the series , then defeated the Vancouver Maroons of the PCHA before reaching the Stanley Cup Finals for the first time in five years . Playing the Calgary Tigers of the Western Canada Hockey League , Vézina and the Canadiens won the best @-@ of @-@ three series two games to none , as Vézina

recorded a shutout in the second game . The championship was the Canadiens ' first as a member of the NHL and second title as a club . After a 17 @-@ win season in 1924 ? 25 where Vézina recorded a goals @-@ against average of 1 @.@ 81 to again lead the league , the Canadiens reached the Stanley Cup Finals . The Canadiens only qualified after the Hamilton Tigers , the regular season champions , were suspended for refusing to play in the playoffs unless they were paid more . Facing the Victoria Cougars , the Canadiens lost the series three games to one .

Returning to Montreal for training camp for the 1925 ? 26 season , Vézina was noticeably ill , though he said nothing about it . By the time of the Canadiens ' first game on November 28 against the Pittsburgh Pirates , he had lost 35 pounds in a span of six weeks , and had a fever of 102 Fahrenheit . Regardless , he took to the ice , and completed the first period without allowing a goal . Vézina began vomiting blood in the intermission before returning for the start of the second period . He then collapsed in his goal area , and left the game , with former U.S. Olympic team goaltender Alphonse Lacroix taking his place .

The day after the game , Vézina was diagnosed with tuberculosis and advised to return home . He made a last trip into the Canadiens ' dressing room on December 3 to say a final goodbye to his teammates . Dandurand would later describe Vézina as sitting in his corner of the dressing room with " tears rolling down his cheeks . He was looking at his old pads and skates that Eddie Dufour [ the Canadiens trainer ] had arranged in Georges ' corner . Then , he asked one little favour ? the sweater he had worn in the last world series . " Vézina returned to his hometown of Chicoutimi with his wife Marie , where he died in the early hours on Saturday , March 27 , 1926 , at l 'Hôtel @-@ Dieu hospital . Though he played only one period for the Canadiens during the entire season , the team honoured his entire \$ 6 @,@ 000 salary , a testament to how important Vézina had been to the team .

= = Legacy = =

One of the dominant goaltenders in the NHA and early NHL , Vézina led the Canadiens to five Stanley Cup Finals appearances , where they won the title twice . Seven times in his career , Vézina had the lowest goals @-@ against average in the league he played , and he had the second @-@ best average another five times . From when he joined the Canadiens in 1910 , until being forced to retire in 1925 , Vézina never missed a game nor allowed a substitute , playing in 328 consecutive regular season games and an additional 39 playoff games . Though he played the bulk of his career in an era when goaltenders could not leave their feet to make a save ( the rule was changed in 1918 ) , Vézina is regarded as one of the greatest goaltenders in hockey history ; the Montreal Standard referred to him as the " greatest goaltender of the last two decades " in their obituary .

Well liked in Montreal , Vézina was often seen as the best player on the ice for the Canadiens , and was respected by his teammates , who considered him the spiritual leader of the team . Referred to as " le Concombre de Chicoutimi " ( the " Chicoutimi Cucumber " ) for his cool demeanour on the ice , he was also known as " l 'Habitant silencieux " ( the " silent Habitant " , Habitant being a nickname for the Canadiens ) , a reference to his reserved personality . He often sat in a corner of the team 's dressing room alone , smoking a pipe and reading the newspaper . When news of Vézina 's death was announced , newspapers across Quebec paid tribute to the goalie with articles about his life and career . Hundreds of Catholic masses were held in honour of the devout Vézina , and more than 1 @,@ 500 people filled the Chicoutimi cathedral for his funeral .

A lasting legacy of Vézina was the trophy named after him . At the start of the 1926 ? 27 season , Leo Dandurand , Leo Letourneau and Joseph Cattarinich , owners of the Montreal Canadiens , donated the Vezina Trophy to the NHL in honour of Vézina . It was to be awarded to the goaltender of the team who allowed the fewest goals during the regular season . The inaugural winner of the trophy was Vézina 's successor in goal for the Canadiens , George Hainsworth . He went on to win the trophy the next two seasons as well . In 1981 , the NHL changed the format of awarding the trophy , instead giving it to the goaltender deemed best in the league based on a poll of NHL general managers . The Hockey Hall of Fame was established in 1945 and among the first nine inductees was Vézina . In 1998 Vézina was ranked number 75 on The Hockey News ' list of the 100

Greatest Hockey Players . In honour of the first professional athlete to come from Chicoutimi , the city renamed their hockey arena the Centre Georges @-@ Vézina in 1965 .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Regular season and playoffs = = =

NHA statistics are from Trail of the Stanley Cup .

NHL statistics are from NHL.com.