

= Jacques Plante =

Joseph Jacques Omer Plante ( French pronunciation : ? [ ??k pl? ? t ] ; January 17 , 1929 ? February 27 , 1986 ) was a Canadian professional ice hockey goaltender . During a career lasting from 1947 to 1975 , he was considered to be one of the most important innovators in hockey . He played for the Montreal Canadiens from 1953 to 1963 ; during his tenure , the team won the Stanley Cup six times , including five consecutive wins .

Plante retired in 1965 but was persuaded to return to the National Hockey League to play for the expansion St. Louis Blues in 1968 . He was later traded to the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1970 and to the Boston Bruins in 1973 . He joined the World Hockey Association as coach and general manager for the Quebec Nordiques in 1973 ? 74 . He then played goal for the Edmonton Oilers in 1974 ? 75 , ending his professional career with that team .

Plante was the first NHL goaltender to wear a goaltender mask in regulation play on a regular basis . He developed and tested many versions of the mask ( including the forerunner of today 's mask / helmet combination ) with the assistance of other experts . Plante was the first NHL goaltender to regularly play the puck outside his crease in support of his team 's defencemen , and he often instructed his teammates from behind the play . Plante was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1978 , was chosen as the goaltender of the Canadiens ' " dream team " in 1985 , and was inducted into the Quebec Sports Pantheon in 1994 . The Montreal Canadiens retired Plante 's jersey , # 1 , the following year .

= = Early life = =

Plante was born on a farm near Notre @-@ Dame @-@ du @-@ Mont @-@ Carmel , in Mauricie , Quebec , the first of 11 children born to Palma and Xavier Plante . The family moved to Shawinigan Falls , where his father worked in one of the local factories . In 1932 , Plante began to play hockey , skateless and with a tennis ball , using a goaltender 's hockey stick his father had carved from a tree root . When he was five years old , Plante fell off a ladder and broke his hand . The fracture failed to heal properly and affected his playing style during his early hockey career ; he underwent successful corrective surgery as an adult . Plante suffered from asthma starting in early childhood . This prevented him from skating for extended periods so he gravitated to playing goaltender . As his playing progressed , Jacques received his first regulation goaltender 's stick for Christmas of 1936 . His father made Plante 's first pads by stuffing potato sacks and reinforcing them with wooden panels . As a child , Plante played hockey outdoors in the bitterly cold Quebec winters . His mother taught him how to knit his own tuques to protect him from the cold . Plante continued knitting and embroidering throughout his life and wore his hand @-@ knitted tuques while playing and practicing until entering the National Hockey League ( NHL ) .

Plante 's first foray into organized hockey came at age 12 . He was watching his school 's team practice , when the coach ordered the goaltender off the ice after a heated argument over his play , and Plante asked to replace him . The coach permitted him to play since there was no other available goaltender ; it was quickly apparent that Plante could hold his own , despite the other players being many years older than he was . He impressed the coach and stayed on as the team 's number one goaltender .

Two years later , Plante was playing for five different teams - the local factory team , and teams in the midget , juvenile , junior and intermediate categories . Plante demanded a salary from the factory team 's coach after his father told him that the other players were being paid because they were company employees . The coach paid Plante 50 cents per game to retain him and maintain the team 's popularity . Afterwards , Plante began to receive various offers from other teams ; he was offered \$ 80 per week ? a considerable sum in those days ? to play for a team in England , and a similar offer to play for the Providence Reds of the American Hockey League . Plante passed them up because his parents wanted him to finish high school . He graduated with top honours in 1947 . Upon graduation , he took a job as a clerk in a Shawinigan factory . A few weeks later , the Quebec Citadels offered Plante \$ 85 per week to play for them ; he accepted , marking the beginning of his

professional career .

His nickname was " Jake the Snake " .

= = Playing career = =

= = = Minor leagues = = =

Jacques joined the Quebec Citadelles in 1947 . It was while playing for the Citadelles that Plante started to play the puck outside his crease . He developed this technique when he recognized that the team 's defense was performing poorly . Fans found Plante 's unconventional playing style to be exciting , but it angered his managers . They believed that a goaltender should stay in net and let his players recover the puck . Plante had come to the conclusion that as long as he was in control of the puck , the opponents could not shoot it at him - this is now standard practice for goaltenders . The same season , the Citadelles beat the Montreal Junior Canadiens in the league finals , with Plante being named most valuable player on his team . The Montreal Canadiens ' general manager , Frank J. Selke , became interested in acquiring Plante as a member of the team . In 1948 , Plante received an invitation to the Canadiens ' training camp . On August 17 , 1949 , Selke offered Plante a contract with the Canadiens ' organization . Plante played for Montreal 's affiliate Royal Montreal Hockey Club , earning \$ 4 @, @ 500 for the season , and an extra \$ 500 for practicing with the Canadiens .

In 1949 , he married Jacqueline Gagné ; they had two sons , Michel and Richard .

In January 1953 , Plante was called up to play for the Canadiens . Bill Durnan , the goaltender who played for Montreal when Plante first began , had retired , and Gerry McNeil ? their top goaltender ? had fractured his jaw . Plante played for three games , but in that short time , he generated controversy . Coach Dick Irvin , Sr. did not wish his players to stand out by any addition to their regular uniforms . Plante always wore one of his tuques while playing hockey , and after an argument with Irvin , all of Plante 's tuques had vanished from the Montreal locker room . Even without his good luck charm , Plante gave up only four goals in the three games he played , all of them wins .

Later during the 1952 ? 53 NHL season , Plante played in the playoffs against the Chicago Black Hawks . He won his first playoff game with a shutout . Montreal won that series and eventually the Stanley Cup . Plante 's name was engraved on the Cup for the first time .

At the beginning of 1953 , McNeil was still the starting goaltender for the Canadiens . Selke assigned Plante to the Buffalo Bisons of the AHL so fans in the United States would get to know him . Plante was instantly successful ; Fred Hunt , the general manager of the Bisons , told Kenny Reardon , Montreal 's recruiting manager , that , " he 's [ Plante ] the biggest attraction since the good old days of Terry Sawchuk . "

= = = Montreal Canadiens = = =

By the end of the 1953 ? 54 NHL season , Plante was well @-@ entrenched within the NHL . In the spring of 1954 , he underwent surgery to correct his left hand , which he had broken in his childhood . He could not move the hand well enough to catch high shots and compensated by using the rest of his body . The operation was successful .

On February 12 , 1954 , Plante was called up to the Canadiens and established himself as their starting goaltender - he did not return to the minor leagues for many years . Plante was the Canadiens ' number one goaltender at the beginning of the 1954 ? 55 NHL season . On March 13 , 1955 , with only four games left in the season , an on @-@ ice brawl resulted in the suspension of Montreal 's leading scorer , Maurice Richard , for the rest of the season and the playoffs . Four nights later , playing in Montreal in front of an angry crowd , Plante was witness to the riot that followed . It began at the Forum by angry hockey game spectators and spread along Montreal 's Ste . Catherine Street , causing injuries to police and fans and extensive damage to businesses and

property . The Canadiens subsequently lost to the Detroit Red Wings in the finals .

For the 1955 ? 56 season , Plante was the unchallenged starting goaltender of the Canadiens ; Gerry McNeil had not played the previous season and was sent to the Montreal Royals . Charlie Hodge , Plante 's backup the previous season , was sent to a Canadiens ' farm team in Seattle . Later that season , Montreal won the Stanley Cup ? the first of what would be five consecutive Stanley Cup championship seasons . The next season , Plante missed most of November because of chronic bronchitis , a consequence of the asthma that had affected him since childhood . During the 1957 ? 58 NHL season , the Canadiens won their third straight Stanley Cup despite injuries to Plante and other members of the team . Plante 's asthma was getting worse . He sustained a concussion with just a few weeks left in the season and missed three games of the playoffs . In the sixth game of the Stanley Cup finals , Plante 's asthma was making him dizzy , and he was having difficulty concentrating ; he collapsed at the end of the game after teammate Doug Harvey scored the series @-@ winning goal . The Canadiens went on to win the Stanley Cup again at the close of the 1958 ? 59 season .

= = = = Mask = = = =

During the 1959 ? 60 NHL season , Plante wore a goaltender mask for the first time in a regular season game . Although Plante had used his mask in practice since 1956 after missing 13 games because of sinusitis , head coach Toe Blake did not permit him to wear it during regulation play . However , on November 1 , 1959 , Plante 's nose was broken when he was hit by a shot fired by Andy Bathgate three minutes into a game against the New York Rangers , and he was taken to the dressing room for stitches . When he returned , he was wearing the crude home @-@ made goaltender mask that he had been using in practices . Blake was livid , but he had no other goaltender to call upon and Plante refused to return to the goal unless he wore the mask . Blake agreed on the condition that Plante discard the mask when the cut healed . The Canadiens won the game 3 ? 1 . During the following days Plante refused to discard the mask , and as the Canadiens continued to win , Blake was less vocal about it . The unbeaten streak stretched to 18 games . Plante did not wear the mask , at Blake 's request , against Detroit on March 8 , 1960 ; the Canadiens lost 3 ? 0 , and the mask returned for good the next night . That year the Canadiens won their fifth straight Stanley Cup , which was Plante 's last .

Plante subsequently designed his own and other goaltenders ' masks . He was not the first NHL goaltender known to wear a face mask . Montreal Maroons ' Clint Benedict wore a crude leather version in 1929 to protect a broken nose , but Plante introduced the mask as everyday equipment , and it is now mandatory equipment for goaltenders .

= = = Trade to New York and first retirement = = =

Hampered by terrible pain in his left knee during the 1960 ? 61 NHL season , Plante was sent down to the minor league Montreal Royals . Torn cartilage was found in his knee , and the knee was surgically repaired during the summer of 1961 . The next season Plante became only the fourth goaltender to win the Hart Memorial Trophy - he also won the Vezina Trophy for the sixth time . The 1962 ? 63 season was unsettling for Plante . His asthma had worsened , and he missed most of the early season . His relationship with his coach , Toe Blake , continued to deteriorate because of Plante 's persistent health problems . Later , Plante was at the center of a major controversy when he claimed that net sizes in the NHL were not uniform , thus giving a statistical advantage to goaltenders playing for the Chicago Black Hawks , Boston Bruins , and New York Rangers . His claim was later confirmed as the result of a manufacturing error .

After the Canadiens were eliminated for the third straight year in the first playoff round during the spring of 1963 , there was mounting pressure for change from their fans and media . Growing tension between Plante and Blake because of Plante 's inconsistent work ethic and demeanor caused Blake to declare that for the 1963 ? 64 season either he or Plante must go . On June 4 , 1963 , Plante was traded to the New York Rangers , with Phil Goyette and Don Marshall in

exchange for Gump Worsley , Dave Balon , Leon Rochefort , and Len Ronson . Plante played for the Rangers for one full season and part of a second . He retired in 1965 while playing for the minor @-@ league Baltimore Clippers of the American Hockey League . His wife was ill at the time , and he required surgery on his right knee .

Upon retirement , Plante took a job with Molson as a sales representative but remained active in the NHL . In 1965 , Scotty Bowman asked Plante to play for the Montreal Jr . Canadiens in a game against the Soviet National Team . Honoured to represent his country , Plante agreed , and after receiving permission from both the Rangers ( who owned his rights ) and Molson , he began practicing . The Canadiens won 2 ? 1 , and Plante was named first star of the game .

= = = Comeback to professional hockey = = =

At the beginning of the 1967 ? 68 NHL season , Plante received a call from his ex @-@ teammate Bert Olmstead seeking some help coaching the expansion Oakland Seals . Plante coached mainly by example , and after the three @-@ week training camp he returned home to Montreal . Plante also played an exhibition game with the Seals . Rumours swirled that Plante was planning a comeback .

In June 1968 , Plante was drafted by the St. Louis Blues and signed for \$ 35 @,@ 000 for the 1968 ? 69 season . In his first season with the Blues , Plante split the goaltending duties with Glenn Hall . He won the Vezina Trophy that season for the seventh time , surpassing Bill Durnan 's record . While playing for the Blues in the 1969 ? 70 playoffs against the Boston Bruins , a shot fired by Fred Stanfield and redirected by Phil Esposito hit Plante in the forehead , knocking him out and breaking his fibreglass mask . The first thing Plante said after he regained consciousness at the hospital was that the mask saved his life . That game proved to be his last for the Blues , and he was traded in the summer of 1970 to the Toronto Maple Leafs . He led the NHL with the lowest goals against average ( GAA ) during his first season with the Maple Leafs . At season 's end , he was named to the NHL 's second All @-@ Star team , his seventh such honour . He continued to play for the Leafs until he was traded to the Boston Bruins late in the 1972 ? 73 season , recording a shutout against the Black Hawks in his debut for the Bruins . He played eight regular season and two playoff games for the Bruins to finish that season , his last in the NHL .

Plante accepted a \$ 10 million , 10 @-@ year contract to become coach and general manager of the Quebec Nordiques of the World Hockey Association in 1973 . He was highly dissatisfied with his and the team 's performance and resigned at the end of the 1973 ? 74 season . Coming out of retirement once more , Plante played 31 games for the Edmonton Oilers of the WHA in the 1974 ? 75 season . Plante retired during the Oilers ' training camp in 1975 ? 76 after receiving news that his youngest son had died .

= = Hockey analysis and coaching = =

Plante had a well @-@ earned reputation for his ability to analyse the game of hockey . He began shouting directions to his teammates during games in his first stint in the minor leagues ( the goaltender usually has the best view of the game ) . He kept extensive notes on opposing players and teams throughout his career . He made his debut in the broadcasting booth during his first retirement in the 1960s as a colour commentator for broadcasts of Quebec Junior League games alongside Danny Gallivan of Hockey Night in Canada fame . Radio Canada , the French language branch of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation , brought Plante aboard as on @-@ air analyst for its television broadcasts of the 1972 Summit Series between the national team of the Soviet Union and a Canadian team made up of professional players from the NHL . Plante was one of the few North American analysts who dissented from the widely held belief in the superiority of the Canadian team .

Plante also wrote extensively on hockey . He wrote hockey columns starting early in his career and was published in La Voix de Shawinigan , Le Samedi , and Sport Magazine . He alienated local reporters by writing a column for the local paper during his time as coach of the Quebec Nordiques .

His seminal work , Goaltending , was published in 1972 in English , with the French edition ( entitled Devant le filet ) published in 1973 . In his book , Plante outlined a program of goaltender development that included off @-@ ice exercises , choice of equipment , styles of play , and game @-@ day preparation . He also advised on best coaching methods for both young and advanced goaltenders . His book remained popular with coaches and players and was reprinted in both French and English in 1997 , 25 years after it was first published .

Starting in 1967 , Plante was one of the instructors at École moderne de hockey , a summer hockey school for young players . His reputation as a teacher spread , and he traveled to Sweden in 1972 at the invitation of the Swedish Hockey Federation , teaching the top goaltenders in the country and their coaches and trainers . During his first and second retirements , Plante also coached goaltenders and consulted for several NHL teams , including the Oakland Seals , Philadelphia Flyers , Montreal Canadiens and St. Louis Blues .

= = Retirement and death = =

Plante finally retired from hockey in 1975 , after the death of his youngest son . He moved to Switzerland with his second wife , Raymonde Udrisard , but remained active on the North American hockey scene as an analyst , adviser and goaltender trainer . He was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1978 . In the fall of 1985 , Plante was diagnosed with terminal stomach cancer . He died in a Geneva hospital in February 1986 and was buried in Sierre , Switzerland . When his coffin was carried from the church following the funeral mass , it passed under an arch of hockey sticks held high by a team of young hockey players from Quebec , visiting Switzerland for a tournament .

= = Legacy = =

Plante was one of the first goaltenders to skate behind the net to stop the puck . He also was one of the first to raise his arm on an icing call to let his defencemen know what was happening . He perfected a stand @-@ up , positional style , cutting down the angles ; he became one of the first goaltenders to write a how @-@ to book about the position . He was a pioneer of stickhandling the puck ; before that time , goaltenders passively stood in the net and simply deflected pucks to defencemen or backchecking forwards .

Plante was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1978 , and into the Quebec Sports Pantheon in 1994 . His jersey , # 1 , was retired in 1995 by the Montreal Canadiens . The Jacques Plante Memorial Trophy was established in his honor as an award to the top goaltender in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League . The Jacques Plante Trophy was established in Switzerland after Plante 's death ; it is given out annually to the top Swiss goaltender . The main arena in Shawinigan the town he grew up in , was renamed to Aréna Jacques Plante .

Plante was selected by Sports Illustrated magazine to its 1991 all @-@ time All @-@ Star team .

His injury and subsequent donning of a mask was depicted in an installment of Canada 's Heritage Minute series .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Regular season = = =

= = = Post season = = =

= = = Coaching statistics = = =

= = Awards and honours = =