

= Howie Morenz =

Howard William Morenz (September 21 , 1902 ? March 8 , 1937) was a Canadian professional ice hockey player . He played centre for three National Hockey League (NHL) teams : the Montreal Canadiens (in two stints) , the Chicago Black Hawks , and the New York Rangers . Before joining the NHL , Morenz excelled in the junior Ontario Hockey Association , where his team played for the Memorial Cup , the championship for junior ice hockey in Canada . In the NHL , he was one of the most dominant players in the league and set several league scoring records . A strong skater , Morenz was referred to as the " Stratford Streak " and " Mitchell Meteor " in reference to his speed on the ice .

Considered one of the first stars of the NHL , Morenz played 14 seasons in the league . He was a member of a Stanley Cup ? winning team three times , all with the Canadiens . During his NHL career he placed in the top 10 leading scorers ten times . For seven straight seasons , Morenz led the Canadiens in both goals scored and points . Three times in his career he was named the most valuable player of the league , and he led the league once in goals scored and twice in points scored . He was named to the NHL All @-@ Star Team three times .

Morenz died from complications of a broken leg , an injury he suffered in a game . After his death , the Canadiens retired his jersey number , the first time the team had done so for any player . When the Hockey Hall of Fame opened in 1945 , Morenz was one of the original nine inductees . In 1950 , the Canadian Press named him the best ice hockey player of the first half of the 20th century .

= = Personal life = =

Born in Mitchell , Ontario to William Frederick Morenz and Rosena (Rose) Pauli , Howie Morenz had three sisters , Freda , Erma and Gertrude , and two brothers , Wilfred and Ezra . Morenz learned his hockey by playing shinny on the Thames River . At the age of eight , he played his first organized game as a goaltender , where he allowed 21 goals in a game . After that game , a coach switched Morenz to rover , a defensive position . Starting the 1916 ? 17 junior season as a goaltender , Morenz became a forward when it became apparent his speed was much more suitable for an offensive role , and he helped the Mitchell ice hockey team win the Western Ontario junior championship . After the Morenz family moved to Stratford , a nearby community , in May 1917 , Morenz tried enlisting in the Canadian military but was refused when recruiters learned he was only 15 years old .

At the age of 18 , Morenz became an apprentice with the Canadian National Railways (CNR) factory in Stratford . When not playing hockey , Morenz bet avidly on horse races and played the ukulele . In 1926 he married Mary McKay ; together , they had three children : Howie , Jr. in 1927 , Donald in 1933 , and Marlene in 1934 . Marlene later married Bernie Geoffrion , who played for both the Canadiens and Rangers from 1950 to 1968 . Their son , Morenz 's grandson , Dan , played for the Canadiens in 1979 @-@ 80 . Dan 's son , Blake , played with the University of Wisconsin and won the Hobey Baker Award as best collegiate player in 2010 . Selected in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft by the Nashville Predators , he made his debut with the Predators in 2011 , the first fourth @-@ generation NHL player . Blake was traded to Montreal in 2012 , meaning that all four generations of the Morenz @-@ Geoffrion family have played within the Canadiens organization .

= = Playing career = =

= = = Early career = = =

In 1920 Morenz joined the Stratford Midgets junior team (under 20 years old) , leading the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) in assists and points during the 1920 ? 21 regular season , and goals , assists and points in the playoffs . The Midgets won the league title and played in the 1921 Memorial Cup against the Winnipeg Falcons . While Morenz scored a hat trick (three goals) in the

second game in the series , the Midgets lost the total @-@ goals series 11 ? 9 . His performance in the Memorial Cup tournament earned him an invitation to play for the Stratford Indians , a senior league team , for the 1921 ? 22 season . While he joined the Indians , he continued to play for the juniors as well . During the playoffs , he led both leagues in goals , assists , and points and he also led the senior league in penalty minutes . Playing exclusively in the senior league in the 1922 ? 23 season , he led it in regular season assists , playoff goals , points , and penalty minutes .

During a CNR hockey tournament held in December 1922 in Montreal , Morenz scored nine goals in a game for Stratford . A friend of Léo Dandurand , the owner of the Montreal Canadiens of the National Hockey League , refereed the game and told Dandurand how good Morenz was . Dandurand went to Stratford in January 1923 to watch Morenz play , and decided he wanted to sign him to the Canadiens . In April he met with William Morenz , because at the age of 20 , Howie was still legally a minor . William told Dandurand that he wanted Howie to finish his apprenticeship at the CNR factory , which would take another two years . However , in July Dandurand learned that Morenz and his father had been in contact with the Toronto St. Patricks , a rival team in the NHL . Fearing that Morenz would sign in Toronto , Dandurand sent his friend , Cecil Hart , to Stratford with instructions to sign Morenz at any cost . On July 7 , 1923 , Morenz signed a contract with the Canadiens for three years with a salary of \$ 3 @,@ 500 per year and a \$ 1 @,@ 000 signing bonus , a considerable amount for a first @-@ year professional .

Right after signing the contract with the Canadiens , Morenz began to reconsider joining them . Stratford residents , as well as his senior team , wanted him to stay , and Morenz yielded to the pressure . He wrote a letter in August to Dandurand , explaining that he could not leave Stratford , and included the cheque given to him as a signing bonus . After receiving the letter , Dandurand phoned Morenz and told him to come to Montreal to talk in person . In Montreal , Morenz began explaining his reasons for not signing to Dandurand but began crying and could not finish . In response , Dandurand falsely threatened that if Morenz did not join the Canadiens , his professional hockey career would be over . Hearing this , Morenz relented and agreed to report to the Canadiens ' training camp later in the year .

= = = Montreal Canadiens (1923 ? 34) = = =

On December 3 , 1923 , Morenz arrived at his first Canadiens training camp and quickly impressed his new teammates . He made his NHL debut on December 26 , 1923 , in Ottawa against the Ottawa Senators , scoring a goal . At the conclusion of the 1923 ? 24 season , Morenz 's first in the NHL , he finished with 13 goals and 3 assists in 24 games . Finishing first in the league for the first time in five years , the Canadiens faced the Senators in the playoffs for the NHL championship . In the first game of the two @-@ game , total @-@ goals series , Morenz scored the only goal , and added another goal in the second game as the Canadiens won the series , five goals to two . As the champions of the NHL , the Canadiens played two teams from Western Canada for the Stanley Cup . They defeated the Vancouver Maroons of the Pacific Coast Hockey Association (PCHA) in two games of a best @-@ of @-@ three series and then faced the Calgary Tigers of the Western Canada Hockey League (WCHL) . In the first game against Calgary , Morenz scored a hat trick as the Canadiens won by a score of 6 ? 1 . He scored another goal in the second game , as Montreal defeated the Tigers 3 ? 0 to win their second Stanley Cup championship and Morenz 's first with the team .

The following season , Morenz scored 28 goals and 11 assists for 39 points , placing second on the Canadiens and fourth in the NHL in scoring . That was followed with seven goals and eight points in six playoff games , as Montreal lost in the Stanley Cup Finals to the Victoria Cougars of the WCHL . Morenz tied with linemate Aurèle Joliat in leading the Canadiens in scoring in 1925 ? 26 with 26 points , finishing fifth in the league . In 1926 ? 27 he finished third in the league in goals , with 25 , and points , with 32 , to again lead the Canadiens . The one goal he scored in four playoff games was a series winner in the quarter @-@ finals , eliminating the Montreal Maroons from postseason contention .

The 1927 ? 28 season was one of Morenz 's best in the NHL . On March 24 , 1928 , in the final

game of the regular season , Morenz earned two assists , tying the then @-@ NHL record for assists in a season with 18 and becoming the first player to score 50 points in a season , finishing with 51 . As the league leader in goals , with 33 , assists and points , Morenz was named the recipient of the Hart Trophy as the league 's most valuable player . Though his scoring totals went down in 1928 ? 29 , with 17 goals and 27 points , Morenz still led the Canadiens in scoring , and tied for third overall in the league .

During the 1929 ? 30 season the NHL changed its rules to allow for more scoring . As a result , Morenz finished seventh in the league for scoring with 50 points , including scoring 40 goals for the first time ; this included a game against the New York Americans on March 18 , 1930 , in which he scored five goals . In the playoffs , he added another three goals , including his second Stanley Cup @-@ winning goal , as the Canadiens beat the Boston Bruins for their third Stanley Cup . In the 1930 ? 31 season , Morenz scored 28 goals and matched his career high with 51 points , winning his second NHL scoring title , and being awarded the Hart Trophy for the second time . He was also named to the newly created NHL All @-@ Star Team , being selected as the first @-@ team centre , as the top player in that position . In the playoffs , the Canadiens reached the Stanley Cup Final for the second consecutive year , playing the Chicago Black Hawks . Playing with an injured shoulder and being held back by the Black Hawks , Morenz only scored one goal throughout ten playoff games , the final goal of the playoffs , as he won his third Stanley Cup with the Canadiens .

The 1931 ? 32 season was another productive season for Morenz . With 49 points he finished third in league scoring , and became the first player in NHL history to win the Hart Trophy for a third time , also being named to the First All @-@ Star Team again . In a March 17 , 1932 , game against the New York Americans , Morenz scored his 334th point with an assist , passing Cy Denneny as the NHL record holder for career points . Minor injuries led to Morenz 's point totals going down the following season as he finished second on the Canadiens in scoring behind Joliat , the first time in seven years he did not lead the Canadiens , ending up 10th in the league with 35 points . In the playoffs , he had three assists in two games . The 1933 ? 34 season also saw Morenz 's goal and point totals fall , to 8 goals and 21 points . Even with his decline in scoring , he still managed to reach a significant milestone , once again passing Cy Denneny to do so . Against the Detroit Red Wings on December 23 , 1933 , he scored his 249th career goal , to become the NHL leader for career goals . On January 2 , 1934 , Morenz twisted his ankle in a game in New York , bruising the bone and tearing ligaments . It was the first serious injury of his career , and he was unable to play for a month . After returning to the team , Morenz was unable to play at his previous level , and the Canadiens ' fans began booing him .

With the decline in production , reports of the Canadiens wanting to trade Morenz began appearing in Montreal newspapers . When the Canadiens began their playoff series against the Chicago Black Hawks , the Canadiens ' general manager , Léo Dandurand , confirmed that several teams wanted to acquire Morenz . After playing the first game with his usual speed and skill , Morenz broke his thumb in the second game , finishing with a goal and an assist for the playoffs .

After the playoffs , Morenz addressed the trade rumours , telling a reporter that he would only play for the Canadiens , saying that " when I can 't play for them , I 'll never put on a skate again , " though the Canadiens ' management knew he was too passionate about hockey to quit . During the summer of 1934 , Morenz became concerned about his future with the team . Newspapers continued to write that Morenz would be involved in a trade involving several players and teams . Adding to Morenz 's concern was the lack of response from either of the Canadiens ' owners , Léo Dandurand or Joe Cattarinich , informing him of what was happening . The rumours ended on October 3 , 1934 , when Morenz was traded along with goaltender Lorne Chabot and defenceman Marty Burke , to the Chicago Black Hawks for forwards Leroy Goldsworthy and Lionel Conacher , and defenceman Roger Jenkins .

= = = Chicago , New York and Montreal (1934 ? 37) = = =

In his first season with the Black Hawks , 1934 ? 35 , Morenz played in all 48 games for the team , scoring 8 goals and 34 points , an improvement over the previous season . The Black Hawks

reached the playoffs , though Morenz was held pointless in the two games played . The following season was not as good for Morenz . He did not feel comfortable in Chicago , and was being benched , playing fewer minutes than he was used to . After 23 games with the Black Hawks , in which he scored 15 points , Morenz was traded for the second time in his career ; he was sent to the New York Rangers on January 26 , 1936 , for forward Glen Brydson . Playing 19 games for the Rangers , Morenz scored 2 goals and had another 4 assists for 6 points , giving him 21 points over the season .

Over the summer of 1936 , the Canadiens re @-@ hired Cecil Hart to be the coach of the team . Hart agreed to the job on one condition : that the Canadiens bring Morenz back to the team . On September 1 , 1936 , Morenz once again joined the Canadiens , his contract being purchased by the team from the Rangers . The Canadiens spent most of the 1936 ? 37 season as one of the best teams in the NHL ; Morenz contributed regularly , occasionally showing the speed that had made him notable at the start of his career . By mid @-@ January , he had 4 goals and 20 points , far better totals than previous years .

= = = = Final game and death = = = =

The Canadiens played the Chicago Black Hawks in Montreal on January 28 , 1937 . In the first period , Morenz went after the puck in the Chicago end while being chased by Black Hawks defenceman Earl Seibert . Morenz lost his balance and fell to the ice , crashing into the boards and catching his left skate in the wooden siding . Seibert , unable to stop , landed on him with full force . The resulting impact snapped Morenz 's left leg , creating a noise heard throughout the rink . Helped to the Canadiens bench by his teammates , Morenz was taken to Hôpital St @-@ Luc , where it was found that his leg was fractured in four places .

While recovering in the hospital , Morenz received many get @-@ well cards and visits from his teammates and players from other NHL teams . So many of them brought drinks that a teammate remarked that " the whisky was on the dresser and the beer was under the bed . " Though there were many visitors , Morenz often found himself alone in the hospital room , unable to move off his bed . To pass the time , he read newspapers to stay up to date with the Canadiens as they finished the season . Since his injury , the team had dropped in the standings , causing Morenz to worry . He began to think he would never play hockey again and became depressed .

The Canadiens ' team doctor , Dr. J.A. Hector Forgues , visited Morenz in late February and determined that he had suffered a nervous breakdown . To help Morenz , Dr. Forgues banned all visitors to his room , except for family and Canadiens officials . Mary , Morenz 's wife , and their oldest son , Howie Jr . , visited on most days , and William Morenz , his father , travelled from Stratford during the first week of March and stayed through March 5 . Three days later , on March 8 , Morenz began complaining of chest pains , which doctors attributed to a heart attack . Mary Morenz and Cecil Hart were called to the hospital ; around 11 : 30 pm , Morenz tried to get out of bed to use the washroom but collapsed on the floor and died minutes before his wife and coach arrived . He was 34 .

The Canadiens were scheduled to play the Montreal Maroons the evening of March 9 , a game the NHL offered to cancel in honour of Morenz 's death . However Mary insisted the game be played , saying that Morenz would have wanted the game to continue . The players on the Canadiens and Maroons wore black armbands for the game , and prior to the start , two minutes of silence were observed in his honour . A similar event happened in New York , where the New York Rangers and New York Americans had a moment of silence before the start of their game .

A funeral was held on March 11 , 1937 , at the Montreal Forum , the arena where the Canadiens played . Fans were allowed to file past the casket , laid at center ice , and 50 @,@ 000 people paid their respects . A rotating guard of honour of four Canadiens stood around the casket which was covered in flowers including a large wreath from Aurèle Joliat that was shaped like the number 7 , Morenz 's number , and a note from Morenz 's three children . The entire service was broadcast on the radio , and after its conclusion he was buried in Mount Royal Cemetery in Montreal .

= = Legacy = =

The city of Montreal mourned the death of Morenz for months . To honour him , the Canadiens retired his jersey number , 7 , on November 2 , 1937 , the first time the team honoured a player in that fashion . Five days later , on November 7 , 1937 , a benefit all @-@ star game was held at the Forum to raise money for the Morenz family . A team composed of players from the Canadiens and Maroons was defeated 6 ? 5 by a team of players from the other NHL teams .

One of the most skilled players in the early NHL , Morenz led the Canadiens in both goals and points from 1926 until 1932 , though he tied with Aurèle Joliat for points in 1926 . At the time of his death , he had set an NHL record for most career points with 472 . When the Hockey Hall of Fame was established in 1945 , he was among the first group of nine inductees . A 1950 Canadian Press poll named Morenz the best ice hockey player of the first half of the 20th century . In 1998 he was ranked 15th on The Hockey News ' list of the 100 Greatest Hockey Players .

Through his exciting play , Morenz encouraged the growth of the NHL , helping bring professional hockey to the United States . Watching Morenz play during the 1924 Stanley Cup Final between Montreal and Calgary , Morenz 's first season in the NHL , Charles Adams , the owner of a chain of grocery stores , went back to Boston wanting a hockey team based in the city . That summer , the NHL granted Adams a franchise for the following season , the Boston Bruins . Boxing promoter Tex Rickard , owner of Madison Square Garden , also saw Morenz play early in his career and agreed to add ice to his building for an NHL team known as the New York Americans . As part of the agreement , Morenz and the Canadiens played the first game against the Americans on December 15 , 1925 .

Morenz 's daughter Marlene married Bernie Geoffrion , who also played for the Canadiens and Rangers , and was later inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame . When the Canadiens retired Geoffrion 's number on the night of his death on March 11 , 2006 , the team recognized the link between the two men . As Geoffrion 's banner was being raised to the rafters , Morenz ' banner was lowered halfway to the ice . Once Geoffrion 's banner reached Morenz ' banner , the two were raised together .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Regular season and playoffs = = =

All statistics are taken from NHL.com.

= = Awards = =

= = = NHL = = =