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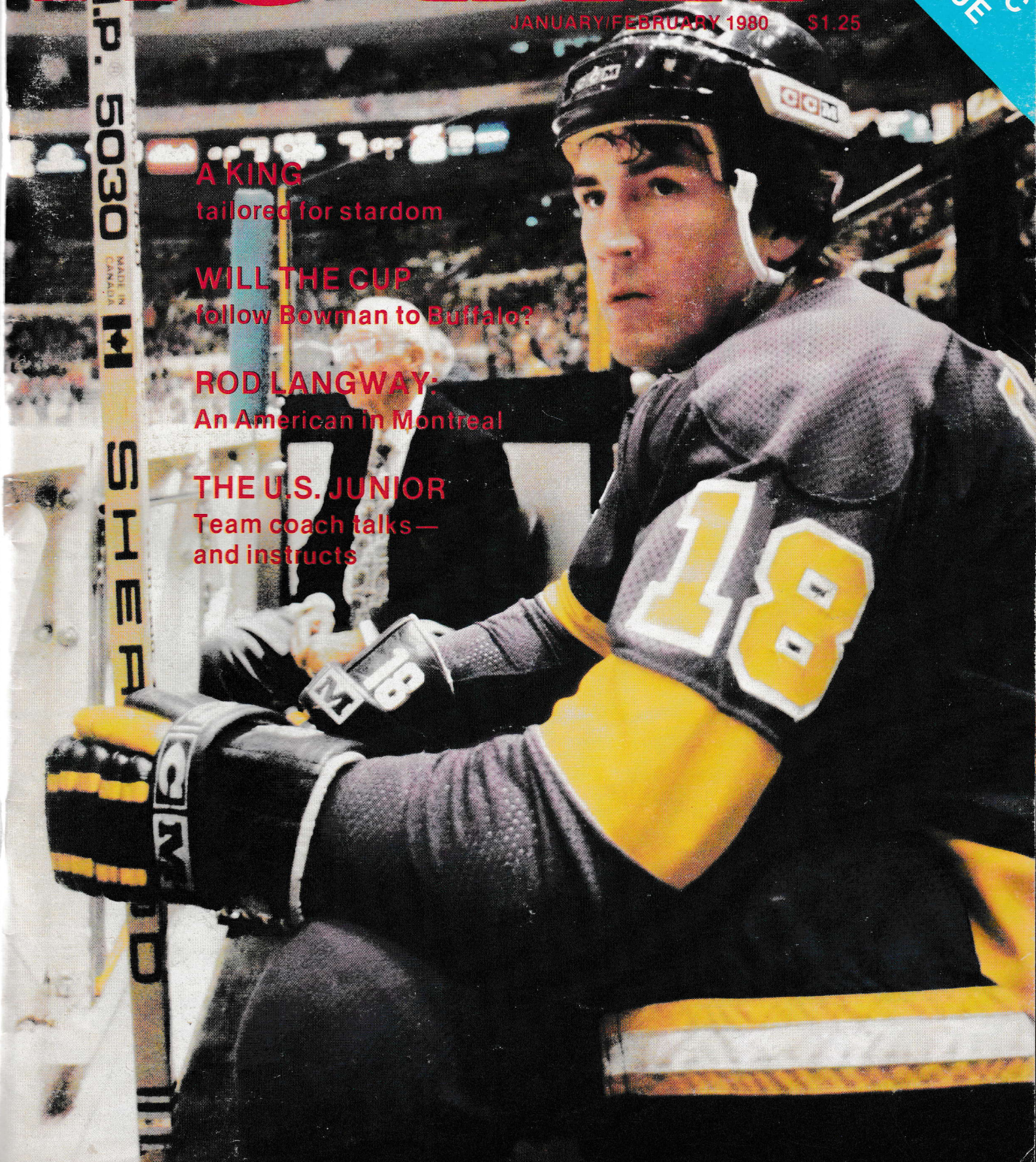
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A KING
tailored for stardom

WILL THE CUP
follow Bowman to Buffalo?

ROD LANGWAY:
An American in Montreal

THE U.S. JUNIOR
Team coach talks —
and instructs



Dave Taylor braces himself against the silver leather upholstery of the Lincoln Continental Mark V and squeezes the accelerator. The big car shoots through the intersection as the traffic light turns from amber to red. A thick haze hangs over Los Angeles, and despite the onset of hockey season, 80-degree heat makes air conditioning mandatory. Taylor swings the Lincoln off yet another freeway and points it toward a popular watering hole in Marina Del Rey. "One day I was driving along here after it had been raining, and there was a strong wind blowing," he says, motioning out into the smog with his hand. "All of a sudden there were hills all around which I hadn't seen in two years. I didn't even know they were there."

Dave Taylor, 24-year-old right wing for the Los Angeles Kings has taken to life amid the freeway-clogged sprawl of L.A.—a far cry from the small nickel-mining town of Levack, Ontario, where he was born and where he worked in the mines during three summers. "Once we had an earthquake here that was about a three on the Richter scale, but I hardly even noticed it," he says, grinning. "It shook all the dishes and everything, but it was just like a mine blast back home." Taylor is quiet-spoken and speaks with a slight stutter. "He does that only when he's under pressure or ill at ease," says Taylor's agent, Art Kaminsky. "I can talk to him for ages and he won't stutter at all. Then, as soon as conversation turns to contracts or financial matters, Dave starts. Frankly, he just doesn't like to talk about *himself*."

"He's very shy," confirms Bowling Green coach Jerry York, who coached Taylor at Clarkson College. "Some people think he wouldn't give them the time of day. Don't let that mislead you. He's a warm person, but he's nervous around others."

Taylor's is an unusual story. A low-round draft choice (210th player picked in 1975), he finished ninth in league scoring last year with 43 goals and 48 assists and, with center Marcel Dionne and left wing Charlie Simmer, is playing on the Triple Crown Line, a threesome that scored 58 goals in its first 24 games. What's unusual is that Taylor came to the Kings not from the tough-checking ranks of Canadian junior hockey but via the more unlikely route of college hockey. As a slight 17-year-old, Taylor was overlooked in the Ontario Hockey Association junior A draft, even though he had led the Northern Ontario Hockey Association with 67 goals and 76 assists in his final season with the Levack Miners. So while Levack teammates Dale McCourt, Ron Duguay and Randy Carlyle took the traditional avenue to the NHL, Taylor accepted a scholarship to Clarkson College in Potsdam, New York.

"Dave was the epitomy of the model student-athlete," says Jerry York. "At the end of his freshman year he was voted the team's MVP. He had an immediate impact. And he kept getting better." Taylor was drafted as a sophomore, but being a low draft pick with good grades, he decided to remain in school.

"When I was drafted, I wasn't ready," says Taylor. "I weighed only 145 pounds as a freshman, and 160 by the time I was drafted, then 175 when I graduated. I'm 185 now, so I needed the extra time." He went on to set a four-year Clarkson scoring record, and as a senior all-America was the NCAA's top scorer with 41 goals and 67 assists. "He should have been an all-America as a junior," says Art Kaminsky, "yet despite his play, he was ignored. After his junior year, no one could ignore him." Says York: "He couldn't have done more as a collegian. He totally controlled the game. He's finally reaching that stage in the NHL."

Taylor has been a remarkable boon to a club long

A KING TAILORED FOR STARDOM

Dave Taylor is fast becoming one of the league's brightest stars.

BY MARC EDGE

forced to take late-round draft picks. Under Jack Kent Cooke, the Kings had a history of trading high draft choices for veteran players who made little or no contribution to the team. One way or another the Kings have dispatched 11 successive first-round picks for such players of renown as Gerry Desjardins (two), Terry Harper (two), Skip Krake, Ross Lonsberry, Ed-die Shack, Bob Murdoch, Gene Carr, Glenn Goldup and Ron Grahame. Only Goldup, left wing on a checking line, and backup goaltender Grahame remain. Meanwhile, traded choices—Larry Robinson, Steve Shutt, Mario Tremblay, Pierre Mondou and Danny Geoffrion—have bolstered the Stanley

Cup-champion Montreal Canadiens. Further, NHL-ers Reg Leach, Dick Redmond, Andre Savard, Rod Schutt and Ron Duguay were also obtained with first-round Los Angeles draft choices.

So the Kings were forced to stand pat with players drafted in the lower rounds—such as Butch Goring (fifth round in 1969), Gary Sargent (third round in 1974) and Mario Lessard (ninth round in 1974). And Dave Taylor, that 15th-round bonus in 1975. “Dave Taylor is one of the most tenacious hockey players I’ve ever seen,” says Kings coach Bob Berry. “He and Simmer are both muckers in the sense that they are very good in the corners. But once they come up with



the puck, that’s where the term ends.”

For all that, the Kings almost let Taylor escape to the WHA. “We had a very tough time coming to terms with George Maguire, the Kings’ general manager,” says Kaminsky. Taylor, observed Maguire, was a low draft choice. And a college player to boot. His skating and other skills were open to doubt. But he’d give him a chance—with the Fort Worth Texans, the Kings’ CHL farm team.

This came as a shock to Tod Sloan, an ex-Maple Leaf all-star whom Taylor’s father had previously contracted to represent Dave. “I came in afterward,” says Kaminsky, “and Sloan thought Taylor was worth

a \$100,000 signing bonus—like Dale McCourt. I told Dave we’d get the best deal we could, but that he would pay the price for being a college player. It turned out, though, that Sloan was right about his value.” Taylor played well in seven games for Fort Worth and the club wanted him for the playoffs. But Maguire was reluctant to give him a contract. “Dave said fine, and went to Florida with some college buddies,” says Kaminsky. “Which took guts.”

Meanwhile, Kaminsky was negotiating with the Cincinnati Stingers on behalf of Craig Norwich. He persuaded the Stingers to take Taylor as well. “They didn’t really want him, but finally they agreed,” says Kaminsky. “Then I went to Maguire and said, ‘Cincinnati’s interested. If you don’t make an offer, Dave will go with them.’” Maguire relented and Taylor became a King. “No one realized just how good he would become,” says Kaminsky. “If he stays healthy, he’ll be the second all-star right wing. And if that happens he’ll be the first college player who isn’t a goalie to make the All-Star Team.”

Taylor has blossomed into one of the toughest, most promising young players in the NHL. He’s so intense he often hyperventilates after games. “No one works harder or gets more done,” says Marcel Dionne. “Dave Taylor has to be the best two-way player I’ve ever played with and one of the top five right wings in hockey.” Believing the myth that college players are lax defensively, Taylor honed his checking skills and last year finished second to Boston defenseman Brad Park (who played only half the season) in the league’s complicated plus-minus ratings, a barometer of two-way effectiveness. Taylor was on the ice for more goals scored for—and fewer against—than any other NHL forward. “When I came up I was known as a scorer, so I had to work on my defense,” says Taylor. “I don’t know why, but in the pros they’ve got a big thing about college players. They say they can’t check their hats.”

Certainly, Taylor has benefitted by playing with Dionne. “But people who say he scored 43 goals by playing with me are wrong,” says Dionne. “He can do it with anyone.” In fact, Dionne claims, Taylor helped *him*. “He stopped me from doing too many things. If I didn’t have a good goal scorer over there, I’d try to do it all myself. What I really love is passing. I’m not a very good fore-checker. Dave is. He’s very aggressive, and I know if he hits the man, I’m going to go for the loose puck. He lets me establish what I do best, which is skate and pass and anticipate the play. He inspires the team because you can’t intimidate him. I’ve seen him score goals falling on his knees, two men on him, one hand on his stick.”

Playing with nifty, playmaking Dionne, Taylor operates in heavy traffic in front of the opposition goal, standing his ground despite the pounding of surly defensemen. This frees Dionne to be creative with the puck, and often leaves Taylor in position to bang home rebounds. Taylor is no garbage man, though: he has impressive skating and stickhandling

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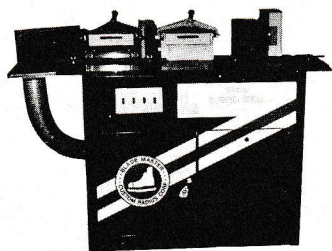
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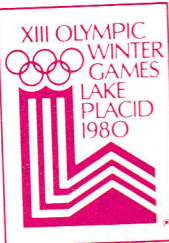
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skills and a hard, accurate shot. He blends savvy with skill. "Dave's a bright kid," says Jerry York. "He knows how to utilize his teammates on the ice. He has a great grasp of the game. And he's a natural leader."

Taylor has played on a line with Dionne since early in his rookie season, and the two spent most of the intervening time looking for a left winger who could keep pace with them. Midway through last season, Charlie Simmer was recalled from the minors and the trio went on a scoring rampage that has carried into the current season.

Dionne, who ended last year with a club-record 59 goals and finished second in league scoring, recorded his first four-goal game the first night the trio played together—in Detroit. Simmer, who had had only 11 goals in 83 NHL games in three cities, scored 21 goals and added 27 assists in only 38 games last season to finish fourth in team scoring. Taylor set a Kings record for right wingers with 91 points (the only right wingers with more goals were Guy Lafleur and Mike Bossy). And until the Montreal Canadiens shackled the Simmer-Dionne-Taylor line last November 17, it had scored at least a point in 56 straight games. "It's hard to explain," says Taylor, readying a cliché. "We just sort of 'clicked.' Marcel and I had four or five different left wingers before Charlie came along, but none of them worked out. Charlie's good in front of the net and he also controls the puck behind the net, which is important."

With the line among the league's leading scorers, rival teams are paying special attention to these three Kings. "Most of the teams have one line that has just to stop us, but they don't have to worry about scoring themselves," says Taylor. "We realize we have to keep working hard. We can skate with any line in hockey. We just have to keep skating that much harder and when we get chances, make them count. I don't try to be flashy on the ice, but I do try to be consistent. I think if you can play each game well and learn from your mistakes you're going to be a pretty good hockey player."

Last year, Taylor won team awards for inspiration and aggressiveness. He isn't a fighter, preferring instead to battle for scoring chances and check doggedly. "I don't think I got the aggressiveness award for being a goon," says Taylor. "I got it for going into the corners and mixing it up a bit. I don't consider myself a fighter at all—I've only been in five or six fights since I've been in the league. Most of those have been sort of draws. When you come into the league there are lots of players who want to test a rookie to see how you'll do. When we started getting some points last year, players wanted to get us involved in fights. I haven't had a fight all year. I'm trying to get away from it. You can't score from the penalty box."

Thursday at Fridays, the bar the Kings once flocked to for a cold, wet one after practice, just aren't the same. "The wives have taken



Marcel Dionne, a plus-35 goal scorer in each of the past five seasons, credits Taylor with helping him.

over all the good drinking spots," complains Simmer, sitting alone at the bar, nursing a beer and snacking on potato skins, the latest Southern California appetizer craze.

"Try one," he urges, as Taylor sits down. Taylor enjoys a few beers after games and practices but, says a close friend, "He's not Studio 54 material. He's got a subtle sense of humor, but he's really a pretty down-to-earth guy. Through all the sudden recognition he's remained steady."

The Simmer-Dionne-Taylor line is a closeknit trio. Says Bob Berry: "They're very unselfish, and they care about each other off and on the ice. That's something you can't teach." The trio recently collaborated on the vocals for "Please Forgive My Misconduct," a tune penned by Alan Frick, whose daughter is diabetic, for the American Diabetes Association. "David carries a cassette recording of the thing around with him and plays it all the time," says a teammate, chuckling. "We're really beginning to get sick of it. When he puts it on, the guys start screaming to go to practice. But it sounds surprisingly good. The wonders of electronics, I guess. It should be a hot seller in Canada."

Despite the line's torrid performance—on and off the ice—Bob Berry has considered spreading the talent around. "I've thought about breaking them up," he says, "but I just don't know if someone else would complement Marcel the way Dave Taylor does, or Simmer. This might go on all year or it might not.

I know that Bowman and Shero both like to switch their lines around, and I've thought about it a great deal recently."

Lakeside Villas resembles a security compound in the middle of a war zone. A guard mans the entrance 24 hours a day, and visitors are cleared by telephone before a gate rises to admit the authorized. Children play in a courtyard surrounded by more than 100 townhouses. "It's nice and secure here," says Taylor, understating the fact. "It's a pretty tough neighborhood outside." A flick of a switch lights the fireplace—burning gas, not wood.

"Hey, I wonder if Marcel gets royalties for these Pillsbury Dough Boy commercials," says Rob Palmer, as he watches television and pokes fun at Dionne's portly physique.

Palmer is Taylor's best friend. Both played college hockey (Palmer at Michigan) and both elected to graduate with B-plus averages rather than turn pro as soon as they were drafted. When Taylor joined the Kings' Fort Worth farm team for his seven-game trial, Palmer was there on the same basis. They roomed together in Fort Worth, then rented an apartment together after both made the Kings.

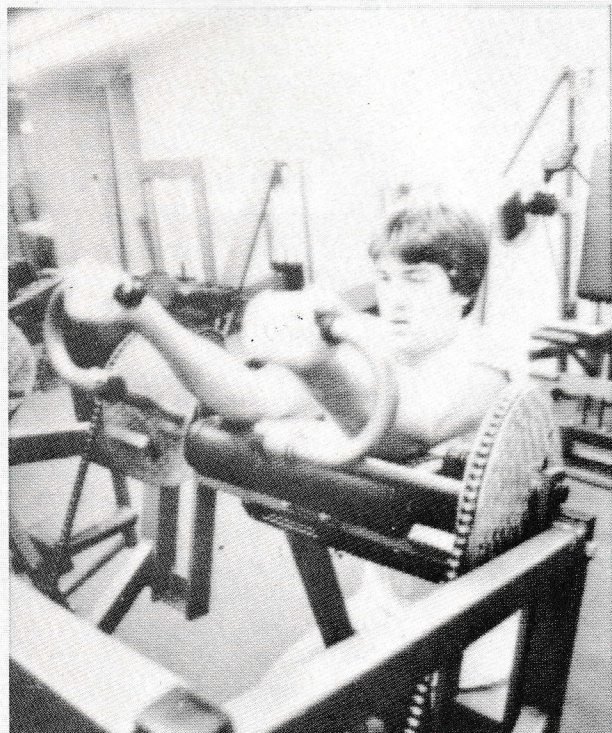
"I never knew Dave when he was a 98-pound weakling," says Palmer, "so it's tough to compare him to what he was way back when. He didn't have great stats his first year with the Kings [22 goals]. But he was injured a lot. Then he came on. No one knew about it 'cause we're on the West Coast, a graveyard as far as hockey publicity is concerned. Now he's playing up to his potential.

"If you met him on the street you wouldn't think he's a budding star. He's shy. A lot of people think they have to prove themselves. He sets high standards for himself. He doesn't need to prove anything to anybody. And you can't beat the season he had last year. He's right on target for a repeat."

Last season Taylor labored for a bargain \$43,000 at a \$1,000-a-goal pace the Kings' bookkeepers couldn't fault. (Lafleur got almost \$6,700 a goal last year.) During the summer, however, Taylor and Kaminsky renegotiated his contract to include a six-figure salary. "We got him a short-term contract because we're convinced his value will just keep on increasing," says Kaminsky.

Even though he's now paid handsomely, Taylor labors in relative obscurity with the Kings, playing to thin crowds in a city that prefers football in the fall and basketball in the winter. Says Taylor: "If I'm down at the beach, and I say, 'I play hockey,' they say, 'Oh, yeah, so what? What kind of boards do you ride?' Hockey's still really an unknown sport out here. It's kind of nice. I'm sure guys like Guy Lafleur and Larry Robinson can never go out to a restaurant in Montreal without being recognized and bothered."

Be assured that if he continues to shine in L.A., Taylor will soon garner a King's share of the spotlight.



GIVE YOURSELF A LIFT

Los Angeles Kings general manager George Maguire was head scout for the Kings when Dave Taylor was drafted. "We knew he was a good hockey player, but when he was in college, he was as skinny as a toothpick," recalls Maguire. A gaunt 145 pounds as a freshman (his girlfriend remembers his as scrawny), Taylor filled out to 160 pounds by draft time, but was still too light to play in the NHL. During his final two years of college, he embarked on a rigorous body-building program which has boosted his weight to a solid 185 pounds, hefty enough to take the physical pounding a high-scoring forward gets in front of the net. "Most hockey players are fairly well developed from the waist down because of all the skating," says Taylor. "What I worked on was improving my upper-body strength by weight lifting and also by drinking protein powder dissolved in milk."

If followed faithfully, a simple training program can strengthen any player. Taylor recommends:

- Curls, 40 pounds, 8-10 repetitions
- Rowing, 40 pounds, 8-10 repetitions
- Standing presses, 60 pounds, 8-10 repetitions
- Bench presses, 80 pounds, 8-10 repetitions
- Squats, 100 pounds, 8-10 repetitions

"Dips," an exercise performed on parallel bars, is also recommended, as are leg exercises on a Universal Gym. "The key is not lifting more weight," says Taylor, "but more repetitions."

Each circuit (or series of repetitions) should be done at least three times, and the number of circuits and repetitions increased.

Weights should not be lifted more than every second day, but "working out every second day is what makes it work."

—M.E.

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