

# Street Hockey Nostalgia

There is nothing quite like the first round of the [NHL playoffs](#) arriving. As I get excited to consume playoff hockey, I can recall setting up my net on the street as a kid and heading out on my own to create the game-winning goal with a stick and tennis ball. I had an imagination that took me away to the spotlight of a distant rink where it was me streaming down the wing with the puck. The wind blew in my hair as I would run towards the net, firing the tennis ball under the crossbar.

“HE SCORES!” I would hear the announcer call in my imagination. I raise my arms to the crowd in celebration.

I should have prefaced this by saying that I am an only child, and it was not uncommon for me to be out on the street playing hockey on my own. I would let my mind run wild with how I would be involved in the game (typically scoring the game-winning goal). I would create an entire game script, from puck drop to the final buzzer, with key moments and my role in the game.



Martin Brodeur

@MartinBrodeur · [Follow](#)

Tellement triste d'apprendre le décès du légendaire Guy Lafleur. Il était l'un de mes héros en grandissant. J'ai toujours fait semblant d'être lui quand je jouais au hockey dans la rue. Une véritable légende de la game. Mes sincères condoléances à la famille Lafleur.





Martin Brodeur

@MartinBrodeur · [Follow](#)

So sad to hear the passing of the legendary Guy Lafleur. He was one of my heroes growing up. I always pretended to be him when I was playing street hockey. A true legend of the game and an even better person. My condolences to the Lafleur Family.



7:13 AM · Apr 22, 2022

 1K

 Reply

 Copy link

[Read 9 replies](#)

The current change of season we are experiencing takes me back to that nostalgic place of being out on the street playing hockey as a kid. The sights and sounds of spring arriving, in combination with the excitement of the playoffs, is an energy I can still feel as an adult. The feeling you get in the pit of your stomach as something you have been greatly anticipating has finally arrived.

There is something beautiful about the emergence of spring coinciding with this wonderfully chaotic and physical [national pastime](#) of ours. The clash of this new fresh spring season with the war of attrition for the Stanley Cup will always bring me back to my childhood.

When did this version of hockey I so fondly recall start to form? Unsurprisingly, it began as soon as [roads started to get paved around the turn of the 20th century](#). Street hockey has been played informally for a long time in Canadian communities. Once the winter hockey season concluded, “street hockey” naturally formed as a continuation of the winter hockey community to something that was year-round. Street hockey was bound to be created once the snow had melted away, given that hockey is such a fabric of our Canadian identity.



NHL

@NHL · [Follow](#)

Brady Tkachuk ([@BradyTkachuk71](#)) playing street hockey with local kids on his way home from the [@Senators](#) game is so wholesome. 🧡



9:05 AM · Apr 4, 2022

 2.3K

 Reply

 Copy link

[Read 35 replies](#)

In fact, the first formally organized street hockey event is believed to have been in the [Toronto area in 1969](#). Habitat Arena hosted a street hockey summer program that was the first of its kind on record.

The approachability of street hockey has continued to engrain the informal sport as part of Canadian identity, bringing communities of kids together and strengthening family bonds. Not every kid's family has the money or means to purchase all the equipment to play ice hockey. But all it takes is one extra stick to include a new kid in the neighbourhood for a street hockey game. Such values are carried on today by the [Canadian Ball Hockey Association](#).

I think back to the times as a young boy when I had to come in for bed before I was done playing outside. I used to hate the feeling of trying to sleep when the sun was still shining and hockey was still on the TV downstairs. The setting sun's orange hue in my bedroom would keep my eyes wide open as I could hear the older kids outside still playing hockey. I would peer through the slats of my window to see the game continuing on the street below me.

I would think to myself “I cannot WAIT until I can stay out and play street hockey until the sun goes down.” Well, those days would materialize many years later. The culture of street hockey lived on as an adolescent with a community of friends that shared the same passion for the spring and summer versions of the game that I did.

Within a five-minute walk of my parent's place where I grew up was my buddy Will's place – Willy, as I call him. His house was the venue for all our games. This street was our Rogers Arena, the place where we always congregated to play. Will's place had everything we needed. Two nets, two sets of goalie equipment, and most of all a strong community of young hockey players with time to kill once the ice hockey season was over.

This was where my buddies and I would meet and play street hockey until it was too dark to see the ball. Just like I yearned for as a child. Full-fledged 5-on-5 action with subs as well. Cars would re-route and go another way to avoid interrupting the community game. Even though we were no longer kids really, there is something welcoming about coming across a random game of street hockey. Some special kind of magic that makes grown adults take a longer route home and not even think twice about it. That is just the proper thing to do to [honour the sport and the local community playing it](#).



The Original Burnsie

@burnsieoriginal · [Follow](#)

Two of the best f'n street hockey players of all time.



5:41 PM · Sep 10, 2021

 287

 Reply

 Copy link

[Read 27 replies](#)

One moment will always stand out in my memory from the games at Willy's place. There was one rule. Hitting is ALLOWED...when on the grass. If the ball ended up in someone's front yard, there was a mad rush to get there first. Knowing that your time was limited, as a buddy was likely a few steps away and willing to hit you to the grass and take the ball.

In one game, a young chap that goes by the nickname Nolte was racing after a ball in the neighbour's front yard with a fence. Willy had a propensity for enforcing this “grass rule” that he came up with. As Nolte was turning to send the ball back into play, he was met with Willy's shoulder that sent him careening into (and partially through) the fence. Our local community always embraced our big games on the street. This, however, was the first time we were met with some pushback from the fence-owning neighbour. I can still recall the sight now. A gaping, partial human-shaped hole remained in that fence until we all came together and helped patch it up for the homeowner.

Whatever version of street hockey your neighbourhood had growing up, there is always one common denominator. Community. It is the pulse that makes this game so much more than that. It is why this time of year conjures up such strong feelings of connection and nostalgia, as I tune in to the NHL playoffs. We are all kids at heart anyway, aren't we?