**Spirit of the Goal Posts: St. Patrick**

         In Quebec City on the fifth of October in 1965, a legend was born. At the age of 7 he knew he wanted to be a goalie. Driven by a passion for defending the goal, he would bring victory to the only two professional teams he would play for in his career.

         Patrick Roy *(pronounced Wah)* started off playing for his local hockey team, the Sainte-Foy Gouverneurs. He started off professionally with the Sherbrooke Canadiens in the American Hockey League (AHL). In 1984, he was drafted to the Montreal Canadiens of the NHL (National Hockey League). He would play with them until the season of 1995, when he was traded to the Colorado Avalanche. Roy had already been making quite a racket during his years with the Canadiens, but what stands out above all, is his time with the Colorado Avalanche. The year of 1995 was significant to Colorado. Before then, there was no championship win by a sports team in Denver.

         Before they became the Colorado Avalanche, the team was known as the Quebec Nordiques. Roy was a big fan of the Nordiques, but his draft to the Canadiens was an obstacle, a disappointment. Even though he had made it to the big leagues, the team he played for was the rival of his favorite team. Even after securing 2 Stanley Cup Championship wins and several awards (2 Conne Smythe MVP Trophies, 3 Vezina Trophies for best goaltender, and 4 William M. Jennings Trophies), he was traded at the beginning of the 95-96 NHL season. The Nordiques had been sold and relocated to Denver, becoming the Colorado Avalanche, and that’s where Roy found his home. That would arguably become the best season the Colorado Avalanche ever had.

         With many saves, Roy was instrumental to snagging the Stanley Cup for the Avalanche. Playoff game 4 against the Blackhawks would open up room for him to show his wit off the ice. Roy blocked Blackhawk player Jeremy Roenick, when Roenick was tackled by another Avalanche player. No penalty shot was called but Roy later told reporters that he would’ve stopped the shot anyway. Roenick turned around and said, “It should have been a penalty shot, there's no doubt about it. I like Patrick's quote that he would've stopped me. I'd just want to know where he was in Game 3, probably getting his jock out of the rafters in the United Center maybe.”  What happened next, would follow Roy for the rest of his career as a shining greatest moment. When asked about Roenick’s statement, Roy simply said: “I can’t really hear what Jeremy says, because I’ve got my two Stanley Cup rings plugging my ears.” The Avalanche went on to beat the Chicago Blackhawks and then the Detroit Red Wings, sending a blizzard to Miami, Florida. Jeremy Roenick never won a Stanley Cup.

         The very last game (Game 4) against the Florida Panthers showcased a battle between goalies. For three periods, the game went scoreless. Patrick Roy and Panthers’ goalie John Vanbiesbrouck both went save for save. During that game, Roy probably kept to his gameplay superstitions. On days that he was scheduled to play, he never talked to reporters. He also never stepped on the red or blue lines of the ice with his skates consciously. He always stepped over. His most famous superstition, however, was talking to the goalposts. “They are my friends,” he would say. They certainly were sticking with him that night. In what would turn into 3 overtimes, the Colorado Avalanche finally stuck a shot into the goal, winning the Championship. Roy, at the beginning of each game, would skate up to the goal backwards, turning at the last second and imagining that the posts have shrunk. Perhaps there’s more truth to this than we’ll ever know, because the Panthers couldn’t get a single thing into them. Florida had been shut out.

         The Avalanche swept the Panthers in a landslide victory for that series, winning all 4 games. Roy finally got to play with the team he always wanted and helped lead the team to their greatest victory. The Avalanche was the first team to win a championship in Denver, as well as the only hockey team to win a championship the first year of relocation. They are also the second team in U.S. sports history, following the Washington Redskins (NFL). Roy is a hockey legend, being ranked 22 in a list of 100 greatest hockey players, and goes by the nickname of St. Patrick for his ability to protect the goal from opponents’ shots. His spiritual relationship with and respect for the goal, while superstitious and silly seeming, may have been just what helped lead him to victory and greatness. His number, 33, has been retired by the Avalanche and Canadiens. He is now coaching the Colorado Avalanche (2013-present).