

Block Party

Kane Is Able

We've all faced our fair share of fess-up moments in our lifetimes.

There are those for whom it's admitting to a crowd of strangers they voted for George W. Bush – TWICE. Urinating in a Gatorade bottle while driving your car on a road trip because you're an hour behind schedule (okay, I've done that one~!). Or doing something you shouldn't have while under the influence or alcohol or worse.

For me it was once having to admit I wept at the end of the movie *You, Me and Dupree* (and there I did it again). The shame in it for me isn't because the film was terrible, poorly acted or lacked plot quality but for how Matt Dillon's character resembled some of the traits I most hate about myself, and watching how his on-screen wife Kate Hudson quickly took him back in again.

But more so it was because I had to come to grips with the fact I had allowed a Coldplay song to get to me. I'm easily "gotten" to be honest, but this was new low.

The moment of inspiration for this piece recently came from not the oddest of places for me. Late one Wednesday evening in an Irish pub just off the CTA Blue Line while pounding out a night with my favorite bartender, some hipster-chick, obviously with a dollar to spare from her mid-week drinking allowance, punched up "Fix You" on the Touch Tunes just as the bar's last call lights lit. As I sat there defying the call with my, well, let's just say another pint of Stella Artois, and accompanying Caucasian on the Rocks..... they were just the 'right' tones and the 'wrong' time, in my hour of weakness, on this recent Wednesday to remind me of how much of an asshole and/or screw up I can be from time to time.

Like how I somehow manage to use the worst possible words at the most inopportune time. My "here one moment and gone the next" reclusive nature or staunch independence which in circles is admittedly unfairly distant. Or just how you sometimes have all the words to say but can't muster voice to make them real.

But yet, somehow, in almost every case, I'm seen by those around me as just special enough to keep being welcomed back. It's nothing to take heart in.

Patrick Kane and I have a few things in common and then we have our differences.

Kane lived in Stan Bowman's basement for a season while I lived just down the street from the Blackhawks' GM. Now Kane lives in Trump Tower while I'm still watching shingles fly off the roof of my same garage every time the winds blow too stiff.

Patrick is a 20 year-old hockey phenom who will soon be recognized and idolized, in hockey circles, and the globe over for being one of the brightest stars in the game. I too played hockey in my youth but now I'm a fat, lanky Committed Indian writer also known as a guy who sometimes shares a little too much information on his radio show.

While details of his fateful night out on the town in early August with cousin James Kane in the Buffalo Chippewa Street night life district remain and will probably always be sketchy, the story itself I know is tired. However, the fact it happened and that Kane plead guilty to the charges shouldn't be dismissed by the public just because its old news. Everyone who knows Kane saw something like this coming.

The ramifications of those unfortunate actions are still yet to be played out. Blackhawks team president John McDonough and his public relations staff will be working overtime this year in attempts to rehabilitate Kane's perceived image. And while they do so, hockey operations, if you're one of those misguided folks who believe McDonough disassociates himself from those matters, is currently debating whether life without Kane is a good or a bad thing?

As good and well-rounded of a captain as is Jonathan Toews, it's difficult to argue that Kane isn't a more important figure on this team. Everyone on the Hawks looks better when on the ice with #88 and that's no mistake. Joel Quenneville dropping Kane to Dave Bolland's line is more of an admission that Bolland isn't the center everyone thinks he is or can be than it is Quenneville's desire to spread the offense around. It's the same case as it was last year with Martin Havlat. Bolland is a nice player, but he's not a puck distributor. And this is something that will become even more of an issue once Hossa makes his Hawk debut around Thanksgiving. Chicago won't be getting full-value out of Hossa if he doesn't skate with someone who can get him the puck. Bolland can't do it. Toews won't consistently and the Hawks have no one else in the system this year or for the foreseeable future who would be able to either. Toews is at his best when he's with Kane, but so will Hossa. But then who skates with Bolland and are the Hawks willing to risk becoming a one-line team?

Just a month shy of his 21st birthday, Kane is quickly approaching Gretzky-like resemblances carrying the puck. Not so far-fetched. The sight of Kane setting the pace, ragging the puck or threading the needle through traffic will raise the hairs on your neck and make your liver quiver. He will score 50 and average 100-plus points for many years and with a little luck, raise Lord Stanley's Chalice in the red, white, and feathers. You're crazy if you think Gretzky could put up 200 points a season in

today's game. The competition now is twice as good as in the early to mid-80's, and while the Great One would've been just that in any era, his numbers would not be nearly the same. Furthermore, Gretzky didn't play defense either. Any insinuation that Kane isn't worth the \$6-7 million contract he's going to get next summer just because he doesn't play great defense is asinine and are simply musings of the hockey stupid. Thoughts like that are akin to a Bears' fan complaining that Robbie Gould doesn't take enough snaps on third down. Stop yourselves.

Like staring through the eyes of an intoxicating woman, and to hope you not ever reach the other side, fans will wish they could pay money to watch a player like Kane skate as a Blackhawk infinitely. Throughout the doldrums of the past decade and more, Hawks fans have dreamed the appearance of such a franchise-defining player like Kane and because of such an absence of one should understand players like this only come around once every so often. Now that they have him, why would they let him walk away?

You'll put up with a lot for the special ones. Someone you cherish; the one you love; the best friend you can't replace or even recall making even the most trivial of decisions without consulting or the person you wouldn't want to go another day without.

In hockey it's the guy who electrifies an audience, melts the ice with his skill, puts three digit numbers in his point column and contributes to even more that stats don't account for in your team's favor on the scoreboard. Double-standards are all around you. That's life 101.

Now I've used many superlatives to describe 20-Cent and I don't take anything back I've said or written about Kane since his August 9th arrest. Anyone who'd use force on an elderly person, let alone a man old enough to be Kane's grandfather deserves more than verbal thrashings from anyone willing to take the time. Punk, thug, degenerate, miscreant, creep or scumbag are all pretty good characterizations of anyone who'd roughhouse a 62 year old cab driver over twenty cents change.

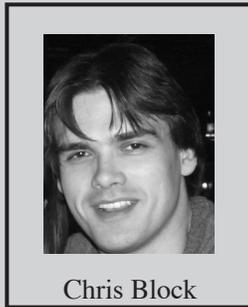
But even I am willing to take Kane back because as a hockey player he entertains me and adds value to my game night experience. I'm not ashamed of that. As a fan you reserve the right to pick and choose who you do or don't root for on "your" team. I won't cheer for him but I sure as hell want see the kid play hockey. He may be a little punk, but he's our little punk.

Would I ever befriend Kane or buy the guy a beer if I ran into him again? Probably not. I'd drink one with him if he's buying (I can be bought!). And if we ever happen to share a taxi together, I'll cover the tip and bring a set of handcuffs and duct tape just in case.

There may be a day its right to trade Kane and his bountiful talents. When that isn't however is a few years before he arrives at his prime, when he's already your most important offensive weapon and catalyst. And any discussion involving a Kane-included transaction must comprise names like Malkin, Ovechkin, Semin, Kovalchuk, Getzlaf, Lecavalier, or Chara because that's how good Kane is about to become.

To young Patrick: Chicago is your home now. There's no reason to apologize to the city of Buffalo. It's in your past. Chicago and your association with this team will give to you and your family more than you could have ever wished for in life. But before that you must treat the fans and this city with more respect. So you fucked up? There's no better way to put it. Look at the fans in this city, in this building, tell them what you did, apologize and be a bigger man. No runaround. Or arrogance in saying "I just want to move past this." Grow up and do the right thing. These city light's will always welcome you home. And know you're lucky they've already given you time to find your way.

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