

Block Party

The Rules Of Engagement

Wow. That went by fast.

Perhaps you're like me and found yourself caught up in the hysteria. You partied hard. Maybe a little too excessively? Hell, for those of us who've been waiting for 30 years or longer, it's understandable.

Fortunately I wasn't one of the couple hundred thousand, oh; excuse me – 2 million people jammed onto Michigan Avenue for the parade. But if you were, my apologies. The view was great on my television.

Now, as we dig in for another grind, I hope your summers did you good. I've asked around and found comfort in knowing I'm not alone in living a summer of overindulgence.

I found true love. Then checked myself into a hotel and texted photos of my flaccid naked penis to unsuspecting local female sports reporters I fancy.

Yes, this summer, I too got drunk in Wrigleyville and awoke the next day lying in bed next to Patrick Kane. I'd have to run with the majority on this one, he's a little underwhelming.

I should stop there, but it was without question the most momentous summer of my life, and I chronicled it all in an illustrated thesis I will be anonymously submitting to Deadspin next week.

But, just as the Blackhawks themselves will admit, I must refocus on a new season of challenges, obstacles and sexual conquests.

With that in mind, I've prepared a list of resolutions, commandments, personal goals and challenges for the 2010-11 hockey season. I submit for you a few:

1. I resolve to see to it the spirit of Cristobal Huet lives on this season through every questionable goal allowed by a Blackhawks goaltender. For I've determined that Blackhawks fans were right all along. The terror of Huet's looming presence gave Antti Niemi the strength to stand tall in the blue paint and be our fearless defender of the frosty mesh in pursuit of Lord Stanley.

Did you see Marty Turco "Huet" himself on the game-winner Thursday in Denver? How about on the Leddy turnover when Hjalmarsson got back to obstruct a pass on the 2 on 1 but Turco played pass anyway, gift-wrapping the easy tap-in for Chris Stewart? Uh huh. He "Huet'd" it. Quick, someone explain to Marty he must resist the inner-Frenchie that lives inside all butterfly-style goalies before he's Huet'd to the Lega Italiana Hockey Ghiaccio.

2. I will also resolve to leave Patrick Kane alone.

This comes to me having witnessed the downfall of Tiger Woods. Poor guy. One day, he has it all - Great job; Hot Swedish wife; Adorable kids; Making lots of money; A new whore in every city on the tour. The next, he's being condemned for living every balding middle-aged man's fantasy. Now? No more hot wife; Kids asking too many questions; Half his money's gone; Gotta find new whores; Can't focus; Sucks at his job. Geesh.

I won't begrudge any athlete from partaking in the benefits that come with stardom. Christ, think about it, judging by the Tiger effect, if everyone had internet and camera phones in the late 80's and early 90's, MJeff may never have beat the Pistons and we'd still be standing in 2 inches of piss across the street.

For the love of Brian Urlacher's Hinsdale oasis babies, let PK be. The last thing we need is to see Kane lose his smile and cursing camera men. I don't care what he does away from the rink as long as it's within the same realm of laws the rest of us abide by. He can do whatever or whomever he wants. As long as he shows up for work lucid and gives every ticket buyer their entertainment dollar's worth, I don't want to hear of it. Enjoy yourself kid.

We rush to put these people on a pedestal so we can examine their lives because media tells us our's aren't interesting enough. And because we're such a voyeuristic society, we build these "stars" up to tear them down and move on to the next when we get bored with them. Whether that's "part of the deal" or fair to pro athletes or not is a discussion I won't take part in. I simply don't care. Patrick Kane is one of the greatest in the world at what he does and I feel privileged to have a seat every night to watch him perform. That's where my interest in professional athletes shall begin and end.

3. On February 22, 2011, I will exercise my vote for the next City of Chicago Mayor by writing-in Blackhawks' team president John McDonough. Honestly, I see no more obvious candidate.

The individual who replaces Richard M. Daley must possess a few essential traits. First, the citizens of this city need someone who knows how to tell a lie when it needs to be told. Someone who can deliver a line without blinking even when they know what they're saying won't pass the stink test. Check.

Chicago needs a person with experience in spending other people's money recklessly and operating within a deficit. Somehow, in the biggest revenue earning season in franchise history, John McDonough figured out a way to lose Rocky's money. Check.

Of course, to exist in politics, one must know how to effectively dodge

criticism, unfairly redirect blame and dismiss reputable people for the enhancement of their own personal and professional image. Oh yeah, he's got this.

And the sooner we get McDonough into public office, the sooner we can distract him from that other job he covets, Gary Bettman's. He's more dangerous to us there.

4. I suggest to United Center security, all fans entering the building on Chris Chelios "Heritage Night" be scanned for stupidity.

I can respect anyone's right to boo Chris Chelios because he's a member of the villainous Detroit Red Wings organ-i-zation. I acknowledge there's a portion of sports fanatics who are bound to that wavelength.

However, Dec 17th is a night to celebrate Chelios's career as a Chicago Blackhawk. To this day, he remains one of the greatest ever. He respected Hawk fans and the organization enough to pour everything he had into playing every time he took the ice in a Hawks' sweater.

Yeah, he left. But so did most of you. Did he say he'd never play for the Red Wings? Sure, before Roenick, Belfour, Suter and others bolted or were sent packing. This was a terrible place when he accepted the trade Bob Murray put together with Ken Holland. Fact is, the Blackhawks gave up on Chelios and Detroit made him an offer no person in their right mind would have turned down.

It's one night. Don't be one of those jealous, misguided, misanthropic meatheads. We've honored others who left and with worse character (Bobby H###). And a celebrated goalie who finished his career with a hated rival. And we pretended someone who made his name in a winged wheel was one of our greats. We're all hypocrites.

5. I will issue a challenge to Stan Bowman. Be your own man. Tell your daddy to go home. Take ownership of this team. Earn your own feathers. No more McD-speak. Don't respond to a question by ignoring the question. I trust you can handle this. I shall pardon you for John Scott, Viktor Stalberg and another year of Jack Skille if you can come through.

6. No more free ride for Marian Hossa. He got his Cup. Congratulations. The Hossa curse was dispelled, but excuses grew stale for this guy in the playoffs. He is a Blackhawk because he's expected to score goals. In 22 playoff games, Hossa did that 3 times. Three less than in the previous postseason with Detroit. 9 fewer than he scored with the Penguins in 2008. Completely inexcusable. Yes, he's dynamic.

Yes, he's strong at both ends of the ice. But that's not why he makes \$7.9M a year. You could have kept both Andrew Ladd and Kris Versteeg and had enough left over for another defenseman or Antti Niemi and had a better team if the playoff version of Hossa is what we should come to expect. Hossa was brought to Chicago to be more than a supporting cast member. Expect more.

7. I beg someone to come up with a valid explanation why, when anyone mentions Dustin Byfuglien's impressive playoff performances, the immediate follow up is "yeah, but he sucked all regular season." Yet, when someone mentions Dave Boland's 2010 playoff contributions, his regular season disappearing act is suspiciously ignored?

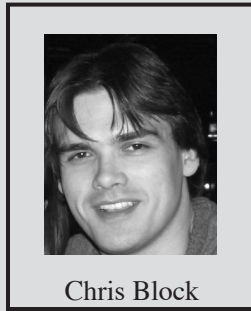
But more than anything else, I ask Blackhawk fans not to become complacent. There's nothing more frustrating than hearing someone say "We won the Cup. I can die now!" or "Whatever happens now... we won the Cup."

Please don't assume because a young nucleus is in place for the next five years this automatically keeps them team in the championship mix and thus management's work is done. In a three year span, this organization seemingly could do no wrong. No decisions, nary a move came back to haunt them. Every break went their way. The Hawks rode a perfect storm and were remarkably fortunate, all starting with winning the draft lottery and ending up with Kane instead of Turriss or van Riemsdyk. The drought would be on year 50 had it gone otherwise. Even before then, Tallon choosing Toews over the sexier pick, Phil Kessel. Almost every trade, every controversial move – it all turned up Cup.

Karma can be a dastardly bitch too. Sustaining this momentum and getting back to the place this team and fans relished this summer will be a difficult task. Made harder by the GM's questionable moves and pushing a 19-year old defenseman and another who can't skate down our throats.

I surrendered my fan badge a long time ago, so maybe I see things a little differently. Its okay to ask questions, demand the best and be critical when necessary. Heck, we're still dealing with a Wirtz after all.

Sure, what matters mostly are what the players are feeling and thinking. This is no "we" or "us" speech here. However, part of the consumer's role in this bond is to demand continued success. Not anticipate, or worse yet, hope for it. That would make you a Cubs fan. And that will sabotage anyone's summer.



Chris Block