

# Hot Coffey helps wake up Pens

By ALAN ROBINSON  
AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH — They had to pay a high price for it, but a strong dose of hot Coffey has been exactly what was needed to revive the Pittsburgh Penguins.

The Penguins completed the NHL's biggest trade in years last week — acquiring five-time All-Star defenseman Paul Coffey in a seven-player deal with the Edmonton Oilers — with one purpose in mind. That was to make the playoffs they've missed for five consecutive seasons.

And if Coffey's first three games in a Penguins' uniform are any indication, making the playoffs may be the least of their worries.

"I'm happy with the deal, I hope Edmonton is," said Coffey, a two-time Norris Trophy winner as the NHL's premier defenseman. "I had the chance to play on three Stanley Cup winners in Edmonton, the chance to play with Wayne Gretzky."

"But now I have the chance to play with Mario Lemieux, and I think the talent is here to make the playoffs. But it takes all 20 guys, not just one or two."

It took four guys — promising center Craig Simpson, first-round draft choice Chris Joseph and veterans Moe Mantha and Dave Hannan — to pry Coffey and left wings Dave Hunter and Wayne Van Dorp from the defending Stanley Cup champion Oilers. The Penguins also will get the first opportunity to negotiate with free-agent goaltender Andy Moog after the Olympics.

General Manager Eddie Johnston has been accused of mortgaging the Penguins' future for a quick playoff fix now — and, possibly, to save his job, since it long has been rumored he would be replaced if Pittsburgh missed the playoffs again.

But while Johnston agrees the Pen-



AP Laserphoto

Pittsburgh's recently acquired Paul Coffey (No. 77) — shown here in his debut against the Quebec Nordiques last Wednesday — has helped revive the Penguins' offense. The Pens are 2-0-1 in their last three games since Coffey came over in a trade from the Edmonton Oilers.

gins paid a big price, he said. "How many times you do get the chance to trade for a guy who's scored 140 points? We needed a quarterback to run our power play. We needed a guy to run the ship."

Coffey hadn't played in a game all season after demanding that the Oilers trade him, yet he was on the ice for 27 minutes as the Penguins rallied from a four-goal deficit and beat the

Quebec Nordiques 6-4 last Wednesday. He had three assists and helped the Penguins convert three of their final four power-play opportunities.

In less than a week in Pittsburgh, Coffey has:

- Helped the Penguins to two wins and a tie in three games, including their first road victory of the season.
- Revived a dismal Penguins' power play that had been converting

only 14.7 percent of its opportunities. He's contributed five assists in three games, all on power plays, as the Penguins cashed in on 7-of-17 power play chances.

• Given Lemieux, the center who's considered hockey's second-best player to Gretzky, the world-class teammate he's lacked the past three seasons. "I know we are going to complement each other very well," Coffey said.

**"I think the talent is here to make the playoffs. But it takes all 20 guys, not just one or two."**

—Paul Coffey

Scotty Bowman, the former Montreal and Buffalo coach, compares the Lemieux-Coffey tandem with the old Phil Esposito-Bobby Orr duo of the Boston Bruins.

"It is difficult to defend against two great players on the same team," Bowman said. "I used to dread playing Boston when they had Orr and Esposito."

• Brought to Pittsburgh the confident air of a winner. "There is a fine line between winning and losing, and I hope Dave (Hunter) and I can bring some of that here," Coffey said. Hunter has two goals and assists in his first three Penguins' games.

• Generated playoff-like enthusiasm in Penguins' fans who have endured 20 years of mediocrity. After selling out only three of their first nine home games, the Penguins have sold out both of their Coffey-era games and advance ticket sales are up.

# Froese shocked by scoring touch

By KEN RAPPOPORT  
AP Hockey Writer

NEW YORK — As an NHL goaltender, Bob Froese of the New York Rangers knows to expect the unexpected.

But even he was surprised by the first goal of his professional career. "That was beyond my wildest dreams," said Froese, who was credited with a goal in Sunday night's 3-1 victory over the New York Islanders.

It was only the second time in the 70-year history of the NHL that a goaltender had been credited with a goal. Billy Smith, who ironically was in the nets for the Islanders Sunday night, had the first, against the Colorado Rockies on Nov. 28, 1979.

Even more ironic, the goal credited to Smith was almost identical to the one awarded to Froese.

There was a delayed penalty call in the Colorado game against the Islanders, allowing the Rockies to pull their goaltender for an extra attacker. Colorado defenseman Rob Ramage attempted a pass from the corner, but he missed his man at the point and the puck sailed all the way to the other end and into the Rockies' net. Since Smith was the last Islander to touch the puck, he was credited with the goal.

At Madison Square Garden Sunday night, the Islanders pulled Smith out of the nets for an extra attacker on a delayed penalty in the second period.

Denis Potvin skated down ice on a breakaway and fired a shot that hit the metal bar under the net and bounced to the faceoff circle. Brent Sutter pounced on the puck and attempted a pass to the point. However, he missed his man and the puck sailed all the way to the other end of the ice and into the empty Islanders' net.

"I missed hitting my defenseman on the point," Sutter said. "They were getting a penalty and Smitty was out of the net. There's not much you can do. It's history now and we lost the game. It's not the first time it's happened. Unfortunately, it happened tonight."

"I'm not going to dwell on it . . . the loss bothers me more." But there was some question after the game whether Froese legally deserved the goal. Even he questioned it.

Under NHL rules, a player must touch the puck in order to be credited with a goal. Froese had kicked a leg at Potvin's shot and was the closest Ranger to the puck before it went into the Islanders' net. But Froese admitted after the win that he never touched it.

"I don't think I touched it," Froese said. "I think it ought to be changed."

According to a strict interpretation of the rules, the goal would belong to Lucien Deblois, who touched it last.

"My puck is in the Hall of Fame," Smith said. "If he didn't touch it, it should be changed. He doesn't deserve the record."

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