

## *Hockey Can Be a Cruel, Cruel Game*

by Hollie Mendillo from a blog post on AFanDivided.com from June of 2013

Hockey can be a cruel sport. Last second or overtime goals can be as painful as a punch in the stomach for both the players and the fans. Walk-off homers, final second field goals and amazing buzzer beaters can certainly knock the wind out of you, but hockey is different. Something about the game makes it worse.

It's a function of the pace and scoring difficulty. Baseball has innings. You are either on offense or defense. You have time to reset in between pitches, and, when all else fails, the home team has the bottom of the ninth. Football has time outs, the two-minute warning and one hundred yards between goal lines. Basketball's pace is similar to hockey, but when is the last time you saw an NBA game end with a score of 3-2?

Hockey is unique. There's no time to breathe. There's no sending your opponent to the foul line in moments of desperation. You can't intentionally walk a strong player to get to a weaker one. You can't run the clock out by kneeling down. If you could, the Bruins' hopes of a seventh Stanley Cup would likely still be alive.

I haven't experienced this kind of a loss, as a fan, in quite some time. In the past decade, the Red Sox are two for two in the World Series. The Giants are also undefeated in the Super Bowl beating the Patriots twice. The Celtics won in 2008, and when they lost in 2010 it was to the Lakers. The LA Kings were the reigning Stanley Cup champs this season and, of course, the Bruins won it all back in 2011. It has been a pretty spectacular ride.

Of course, there have been some bumps along the way. There was Andy Roddick's loss to Roger Federer at Wimbledon in 2009. That match certainly took the wind out of my sails. There was also the "Best Play in NFL History"—please don't get my started on that—but DeSean Jackson's punt return was as shocking and soul crushing as two goals in 17 seconds.

Then, there was Sidney Crosby's overtime goal in the Vancouver Olympics. We could taste the gold medal, and, then, just like that it was gone. Snatched right out of our grasps by a Pittsburgh Penguin. That was the last time I felt like I did on Monday night.

Interestingly enough, the gold-medal game, despite being devastating, was what got me into hockey. The disappointment from the loss didn't prevent me from recognizing the brilliance of the game, and a hockey fan was born that day.

My appreciation and knowledge of the sport has grown since. Someday soon I may even understand the icing rules. Still, I have to admit I'm afraid of falling in love with it. If the Red Sox or Giants had been out there on that ice and suffered a loss like that, I would have likely gone into hiding for days or weeks or had a heart attack long ago.

Hockey is not for the meek. Losing can be excruciating—just ask Toronto—so why do we keep coming back for more? Perhaps, it is because the agony makes winning all that much sweeter.