

Birth of a Dynasty



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The National Hockey League saw the birth of a new dynasty in 1980. The New York Islanders had been an expansion franchise in 1972 in the New York City suburbs of Long Island. For years they played in the long shadow of the big-city New York Rangers and were considered the league's laughingstock during their first season. Miraculously, eight years later, they were champions. Despite their mercurial rise in the 1970s--which included a first-place overall finish in the 1978-79 season--the Islanders were still considered chokers because of playoff failures. The most frustrating failure of all came at the hands of the rival Rangers, who beat them in 1979 to advance to the Stanley Cup Finals. A year later they stumbled through an injury-plagued and inconsistent regular season. When the playoffs arrived again, however, they were ready. Bolstered by the late-season addition of speedy center Butch Goring and the bitterness of the previous year's defeat, the Islanders overcame their past failures and put together an exhausting and dramatic run to their first-ever appearance in the Stanley Cup Finals. In the Finals they met the still-dominant Philadelphia Flyers, two-time champions in the 1970s. The ensuing battle demonstrated not only the promise with which the Islanders had always teased their fans, but also the maddening struggles that seemed to hold them back every year. That is, until Game 6, when Bob Nystrom, an everyman's everyman, scored the clinching goal at 7:11 of overtime to make history in both the NHL, and on Long

Island. It is a moment that, 25 years later, still lives in the hearts of Islanders fans and in the annals of Long Island, as a region and a community. It is a moment that spawned a run of four consecutive championships, the longest by any United States-based professional team and a run that has since gone unmatched. Birth of a Dynasty: The 1980 New York Islanders is the story of how it happened, how it came together, and what it felt like to be there.

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