

Carol “Cully” Wilson

Cully Wilson had already established a reputation as a loose cannon before coming out west to play in the PCHA. Over the course of three seasons with the Toronto Blueshirts of the NHA he showed that not only was he a talented forward, but he could also dish out the rough stuff with the best of them. During his final full season with the Blueshirts (1914-15) he scored 22 goals and led the league with 138 penalty minutes... in only 20 games!

Wilson defected to the PCHA with five of his Toronto teammates for the 1915-16 season, ending up in Seattle with the new Metropolitan franchise. Cully quickly became Seattle's first hockey “bad boy” – he holds the dubious distinction of not only taking the first penalty in franchise (and Seattle hockey) history, but he was also the first Seattle skater to be ejected from a game... all of which happened in the first game of the season! He continued to run roughshod over the rest of the league finishing the season with 57 penalty minutes (in 18 games), not only leading the team but also accounting for over 40% of its penalties.

A leg injury kept Cully out of the lineup for nine games in 1916-17, but he still managed to lead the Mets with 58 penalty minutes. He was healthy for the Stanley Cup Finals against Montreal but saw limited ice time in the series and played mostly as a substitute, though he did score a goal in the second game.

Wilson got off to a quick start in 1917-18, beating Smoky Harris of Vancouver unconscious in the season opener. His rough tactics and brawling were becoming an embarrassment to the league, and PCHA president Frank Patrick warned that he had better clean up his act or risk possible suspension.

Things finally came to a head during the 1918-19 season as Seattle and Vancouver clashed in a number of brawl-filled games, one of which left Wilson with a broken nose following an intentional high-stick to the face. The injury forced Cully to miss two games, and when he came back he was rowdier than ever. The teams met again on February 26 with first place up for grabs, and Wilson was once again struck in the face by a high stick. He returned to action after receiving stitches and took his revenge on Mickey Mackay. As the players battled for a loose puck in the corner, Wilson turned to Mackay and cross-checked him in the face, breaking his jaw and ending his season.

Cully was ejected from the game and suspended for the balance of the season by Patrick, though the suspension was lifted with the Seattle players refused to play any future games without him. His punishment was reduced to a \$50 fine, though Patrick promised to revisit the situation in the off-season.

Cully got his last shot at hockey glory in Seattle during the 1919 Stanley Cup Finals against Montreal. Seattle led the best-of-five series two games to one, and Wilson scored what appeared to be a goal at the end of the first period of game four. Unfortunately it was waived off by goal judge Roy McKittrick, who ruled that the period ended prior to the puck crossing the goal line. The game remained scoreless through regulation, and when neither team scored during the overtime period the contest was ruled a tie. Had Wilson's goal counted, the Metropolitan would have won their second Stanley Cup; instead Montreal won the next game to tie the series, which was then called off by local health officials prior to the final game due to the flu epidemic sweeping through the city.

As promised, Frank Patrick reviewed Wilson's play during the summer and banned him from playing in the PCHA for the upcoming season. While the penalty was severe, there were plenty of opportunities for a player of his skill and Cully quickly found a home with the Toronto St. Pats of the NHL (and led the league in penalty minutes his first season). Over the course of four seasons in Seattle, he picked up 198 penalty minutes in 68 regular season games, leading the team in penalties all four seasons. He wasn't just a tough guy, though – he also scored 44 goals and 23 assists during that period, averaging just under a point per game with the Mets. He passed away in Seattle on July 6, 1962 at the age of 70.

Jeff Obermeyer is a 13-year season ticket holder with the Thunderbirds. His new book, "Hockey in Seattle", chronicles the history of hockey in Seattle from 1915 to the present day. It is available at the souvenir stands or through his website at

<http://www.seattlehockey.net>.