



## ICE FEUD

by Ronald Tuckwell

*A girl comes between these Maroon stars and the rink championship hangs in the balance.*

THE pre-season exhibition game ended in a satisfactory win. Maroons were in their room, mingling groans with animated conversation, as they rubbed bruises and sniffed at the pungent odor of liniment and sweating bodies.

Turning to the Coach, the veteran Maroon goalie growled, "Good kid, that defence rookie—he'll fit in nice with the Big Train!"

Slamming his locker, big Harry Flett tried to hide his elation; he knew that remark referred to himself. Striding to the

door, he joined his team-mate chum, Stan Cooper; arm-in-arm they went up the corridor. At the rink entrance a remarkably pretty girl was waiting. Flett winced at the thought that her being there just as Cooper was leaving was no accident. But, digging Cooper's ribs, he muttered, "Do your stuff!"

"Hello, Gladys!" cried Cooper. "Say, I want you to meet my pal—Harry Flett—soon to be famous in the Big Time!"

Pearl-white teeth flashed. "I believe that, Stan," she smiled. "I saw him, once, last season, with the Hawks—and I saw

him playing to-day. We're going to be mighty strong in the back-field!"

Flett eyed her striking beauty in frank admiration. He winced again at the proprietary way in which Cooper invited her to a show, and her ready, "I'll be seeing you, Stan!" Then she turned and took the arm of a stern-faced elderly man who came from the rink.

"Whew!" muttered Flett. "So that's the Boss's daughter? One swell looker! You're in pretty solid, eh? Well, see here, Romeo—I'm giving you fair warning right now—I'm not in any back-field, get me? I've just met my affinity!"

"Oh yeah?" mocked Cooper. "Listen, big boy—there's twelve Maroon sweaters spread on the slushy ground already for HER to walk on. One more won't matter—TRY and get her!"

"I'm going to!" grated Flett.

**I**N their room, Flett lounged in an armchair watching Cooper "slicking up." He had to admit Stan looked well—a fitting partner for the beautiful girl he was taking to the show. Gladys! That name suited her. Darn it—he'd never bothered much about girls before—WHY did it have to be Stan's girl!

"Funny," he mused aloud, "us both hitting the Maroons! Funny the way it happened, too—Hawks slopping over with defence-men and right-wingers, and Maroons starving for both! Lucky break for us?"

"Yeah—'specially for me!" chuckled Cooper. "Else I'd never met Gladys. There's a fan for you—notice the way she talks hockey—calls defence the 'back-field'—just like an old-timer! Crazy over the game—and me!"

"Huh!" Flett grunted. Then, half to himself, he muttered, "I'm lucky Maroons were short defence-men. When I first heard Chicago didn't want me, I was

worried. Nasty jam I got into—"

"Ha-ha!" jeered Cooper, "forget that! Everybody knew darn well that was a put-up job—you being mentioned in connection with that attempted double-crossing! Especially when you slugged the guy who tried to get you lined up in that deal. Didn't I see you wallop him—oh, boy! And say, anybody who knows you, Harry—like I do—would get a great kick out of any gang trying to swing even a rumor that YOU were crooked!"

**F**LETT grinned, then flushed. "Thanks, Stan!" he muttered.

But, when Cooper left, Flett pondered long and deeply. Of course, it was ridiculous, as Cooper said. Still, it was a rotten trick; darn hard to squelch a rumor of that kind—

What a swell guy Stan Cooper was! Funny—they hadn't been at all friendly, when they played together for Delevain, back in the sticks. In fact, he'd licked Cooper for a fancied wrong! All fancy—as it later turned out. He'd apologized, of course—but not many men would take that licking and then act like a real friend afterward, the way Cooper had! Even the room he shared was Cooper's—shared it at Stan's eager invitation when he first joined the Maroons. And—darn it—he liked Stan—he was a great chap!

Gladys! Too bad he had to cut out his friend! But, everything was fair in that game. Poor old Stan would have to like it!

Flett improved on his acquaintance with Gladys. So much so that, within a week, he took her to a show. It was after seeing her home that he strode wrathfully into the room, his face distorted with rage. His room-mate looked up in surprise at his abrupt entrance and wrathful attitude.

"You," growled Flett, "are a swell pal!"

"Hey—what's wrong?" cried the

astounded Cooper.

“Wrong? Listen—somebody told that girl that I was kicked off the Hawks for crooked work! My date to-night was one grand flop! Now,” he stared accusingly, “I wonder who that somebody might be?”

“Gosh! That’s a dirty trick, Harry! I wonder—perhaps one of the boys got to hear of that, and did it just for a joke—”

“Hell of a joke!” Flett scowled accusingly.

His room-mate flared up angrily. “Say, if you mean by that murky look that it was *me*—”

“I’m saying nothing!” grated Flett. “Once before I thought you did me dirt—out West—and later I apologized for thinking it. Now—well, I’m not so sure. But—I’m looking at you, see?”

“I’d have a job NOT seeing that ugly mug!” retorted Cooper. Then he grinned good-naturedly. “Harry, you’re all steamed up—I’m not a guy who’d knife his pal in the back—pipe down!”

Flett reddened. Then, controlling his temper, he mumbled apologies. Yet suspicion filled his mind. Cooper was far too ready with that “pal” stuff!

In the ensuing days, Flett became more and more suspicious of his roommate. Cooper, despite his friendly protestations, seemed to be avoiding him. And, far too frequently for his peace of mind, he saw Cooper and Gladys together.

Jealousy gripped him. Cooper was a professional hockey player, like himself; but—unlike himself—Cooper was by every social standard Gladys’ equal. Cooper belonged to a wealthy family—had everything to offer—money, social position, luxury even; he had nothing—

The back-field—that was *his* spot! And it hurt.

Gladys, still the darling of all the Maroons, now shared her favors entirely between Cooper and Flett. It was a

standing joke on the club—the rivalry between the two friends. And Flett knew—beyond any doubt—that he could win Gladys, but for one thing. That thing checked his desire to put his fate to the test. He had nothing to offer a girl like Gladys.

Money—if only he had scads of it—like Cooper!

WHEN Maroons met Canadiens, Flett went into the game obsessed with one idea. It followed on a week in which Cooper had monopolized Gladys’ company, while he gloomed alone. He determined not to help shed any more lustre on the flashy wing-man’s already shining record—but to go out and grab some glory for *himself*.

For the first time in the season, the famous Flett-Cooper surging rush, snap-pass, and blazing wing-shot play was missing from the Maroon attack. Teammates eyed the pair, after the game ended in a Maroon rout, in a resentful, puzzled manner; one “sub” sized it up for the others in a brief aside:

“Sore at each other—over Gladys!”

But Cooper, already in the room, showed no trace of being “sore” when Flett arrived there. He seemed, on the contrary, highly pleased.

“Harry,” he said, “there’s a fellow wants to see you—friend of mine sent him to me to ask if I’d make you acquainted. I told him to call here tonight. All right with you? I’m going out—”

“Okay!” growled Flett. Knowledge of where Cooper was going did not add to his amiability.

Half an hour later, Flett, with blazing eyes and set jaws, was making a thorough job of pitching out the visitor mentioned by his room-mate.

“You skunk!” he grated, swinging hard at the cringing fellow’s jaw, “try to bribe

me, huh? Who sent you? Tell me, or by the jumped-up—”

The man wriggled from his grasp, and, leaving his coat in Flett's hands, darted out of the door. Flett chased him—then went back. Without a qualm he searched the pockets of the coat.

Nothing! But—there WAS something—a torn bit of envelope. A scribbled, broken line—Flett's eyes devoured it: “*See Cooper, and get an in . . .*” The penciled words started a flame in his mind.

Flett slumped on the bed, thinking hard. He wondered if he had been a fool for throwing the fellow out; he'd made a staggering offer, if Flett would “let up” a bit when Maroons played Hawks. *Money*—scads of it! Enough to sweep aside the barrier, and allow—

He cursed, then, at his thoughts. Win Gladys—girl like her—with crooked dough!

But Cooper! What the deuce was Stan mixed up with crooks for? Crooks? Once before he'd thought Cooper tangled with crooks, back in the sticks, only to find out— But THIS looked raw! Nerve of him, anyway, putting them next to HIM! After that Chicago mix-up, too! Well, he'd go to the mat with Mister Cooper—there'd be no apologies THIS time!

Just then steps sounded; the door opened; Cooper entered. As usual, he was all smiles; finger-tips in his vest—the happy, successful suitor in person.

Flett grabbed him roughly; brought up his fist in a knotted ball—and Cooper sprawled on the floor.

Scrambling up, red-faced and angry, he shouted, “What the devil's wrong with you now, you surly nit-wit,” and hunched himself for a rush. Flett, teeth bared in a grim smile, stood waiting. Cooper's rage evaporated; the snarl left his face; he laughed cheerily.

“Listen, Harry old son,” he cried. “I can't help it if Gladys lets me take her out, instead of you, can I? Or even if I she likes me best? It's a free country, big boy, and remember—I saw her first!”

“You tramp!” Flett grated. “Leave her name out of this, or I'll ram it down your dirty neck! Why did you send this bribing skunk to me?”

Pop-eyed, Cooper mumbled incredulously, “Bribing—?”

“Yeah—'bribing'—I said,” mimicked Flett. “Offered me more dough than I'll ever see in one place. But I threw him out—he left his coat here—this note was in it. See—your name's mentioned.

“My name?” Cooper's face registered surprise. Flett stared hard at him—muttered disgustedly—turned away.

THERE was a note in Flett's mail, next morning. “Big boy,” it read, “we're onto you. Socking our guy won't get you no place. We know why you left Chi. Others is going to know it unless you come to time. You'll be all washed up in the Big Party then.”

Flett crushed the note savagely, and hurled it away.

Maroons played Leafs that night. Close, hard battle, it was. Five minutes from time, Leafs led by a goal. Fighting hard and desperately, Maroons could not batter through Day and Clancy. The clanging bell found the score unchanged.

Largely responsible for this further Maroon loss was the fact that, throughout the game, the famed and feared Flett-to-Cooper scoring thrust was missing from their attack. Both Flett and Cooper played bang-up individual hockey—both tried desperately to work through—but not once did the right-winger get one of Flett's made-to-measure passes for a drive at the net. The crowd knew what was lacking—and let the players concerned know they

knew it; both Flett and Cooper were given the “razz.”

Flett was savagely tearing off his dripping uniform when the call-boy stuck in his head and yelled, “Boss wants Flett in the office!” Significant glances followed the big defense-man as he dressed and left.

“What’s this mean?”

Blazing-eyed, the Boss held out a crumpled bit of paper. Flett stared—then gasped as he recognized the note he had angrily thrown away that morning. He flushed; then his head went up and his jaws clenched.

“I’ve been watching you, Flett! Playing bum hockey for me lately, huh?” He squinted suspiciously. “Started like a million. Figured I’d made a swell buy. Then you begin to flop. Then comes this rumor about you having trouble with gamblers in Chicago. THEN comes this!” He smashed his fist on the crumpled note. “Well, spill it?”

“I’m sorry—” Flett stammered. “I don’t know—I’m being crossed, some place, and—”

“Yeah? That’s what they all say!” sneered the Boss. “Well, let me tell you something—you step carefully! One more tiny sign of a coon in the sticks—and you’re through in this League! Get me?”

Flett colored hotly. Started to stammer protests. Went out.

Cooper, in the room when Flett entered, looked up in surprise at his angry appearance.

“Innocent—as usual?” snarled Flett. “Listen, you double-crossing tramp, I’m getting out of your room—now! And, LAY OFF ME! Call off your crooked friends, and keep out of my way—or I’ll flatten you!”

“Harry—listen—you’ll be sorry—”

Ignoring the startled, protesting Cooper, Flett snatched up his things and

strode out. He went to a hotel and got a room.

THE papers panned Flett for his failure to maintain his effective play. Panned Cooper, too—but Flett’s part in it being the most noticeable, he bore the brunt because that scoring play was not seen any more in Maroon games. Flett glanced over sport sheets, then threw them down savagely. His whole outlook had become bitter and sour.

Once, at a work-out, Gladys called from the rail; sombre-faced, he skated over.

“Why don’t you come around any more?” she smiled.

Then, as he tried to cover his confusion, she chided, “And say, what’s wrong between you and Stan? I read the papers—they’re printing a lot of bunk of course—but why don’t you pull with Stan like you used to?”

He grinned. Skated into a play. That “Why don’t YOU” rankled.

It rankled more when, after that workout, Coach lectured him. “You ain’t slipping Cooper no passes!” Coach accused. “Well, you better start feedin’ him some—see?”

ALONE in his room, he nursed bitter thoughts. At a knock on the door, he growled a surly, “Come in!”

He started. The man was one he’d never seen before—

“Cooper said I’d find you here—and here you are!” chuckled the stranger. “Big Shot sent me. You play the Hawks in Montreal on Thursday. This is Tuesday. Right? Well, here’s the last word—NO, no; sit where you are, mister!”

This shot out sharply, as Flett, with a savage growl, started menacingly forward. A wicked-looking automatic appeared suddenly in the man’s hand; he pointed it

at Flett.

"Takin' no chances," he barked. "You don't throw ME out!" Flett slumped back in his chair, glaring.

"The last word is," went on the stranger, "are you takin' us up—or are you takin' the works like a fool? You got till to-morrow noon' to say which. Leave a note for 'Al White'—got the name?—at the hotel desk."

"I'm not leaving any notes!" grated Flett. "I'm telling you—and whoever is mixed up with you—to go plumb to hell! Now, get out, before I take that thing away from you and throw you out!"

"Huh!" sneered the man. "That would be nice—for the undertaker!" But he went.

Flett tried to puzzle things out. The more he thought, the deeper became the tangle. Cooper—and these others—the reason for the bribe—

He gave it up. Decided to play his old game—work his rush-and-pass-to-Cooper, as he had done it before. This would put things squarely up to the right-winger. "If he falls down—or if he's playing tag with those gamblers," he muttered, "they can't blame *me!*"

Out beneath the floodlights, Flett stared around the sea of faces. Catcalls came from the Millionaires' Row; he winced as he got their drift. Riding him, as usual!

The Hawks knew that Flett-to-Cooper play. Had started planning a defence to break it. But they'd been reading the papers—keeping track of games in other ways—and now did not figure it a threat.

Which is where the Hawks made an error!

Four times in the opening period big Harry Flett smashed and twisted his way through to the blue line—snapped a pass to Cooper—and the red light flashed. The crowd howled its glee. Team-mates elatedly back-slapped the players, so

sensationally returned to form. The Coach bawled tribute from the box. Back in the Millionaires' Section, Harry Flett once more was a hero.

It was just before the period ended, as Flett skated to the box during a brief stop, that a strong presentiment of trouble gripped him. He saw Cooper resting in the box. And, just behind Cooper—crowding close—were several men who, somehow, appeared different to the hockey fans surrounding. Flett started—two of these he was sure were the men who had called on him; one in Cooper's room, the other at the hotel.

He swung back to position as the bell rang—more than ever puzzled.

Maroons played on the defensive—coasted through, hanging to their good lead. But, nearing the close, the Hawks started a smashing rally that netted three goals! Then a minor injury sent Flett to the box for repairs.

Those men, he saw, were still there. And, as he sat resting, he heard a voice snarl in his ear, "Ease up, guy—or you're fixed!"

He swung sharply around—but at that moment the Coach grasped his arm and growled, "In you go!"

Mad clear through, Flett swirled to his position, and with clenched teeth and snarling, grinning defiance hunched himself to meet incoming Hawk rushes.

**T**HEY came darting in, riding the crest in that sudden, surprising reversal . . . confident, eager . . . driving for the goal that would tie it. And Flett, snarling defiance, growling advice and encouragement to his partner, blocked them, smothered tricky passes and power plays . . . threw them back. Wave after wave of black-shirted Hawks smashed in on the big Red defence . . . smashed relentlessly in . . . receded, broken,

thwarted; fell back, like breakers on a rocky coast smash headlong into solidity, then break in disorder.

At the moment when every indication pointed to final failure of that terrific Hawk drive for the tying goal . . . when Maroons were swinging confidently back into the play and organizing a drive of their own for the winner . . . a long despairing flip-shot from the center-ice arced through the Red defence, bounced and slithered toward the netman . . . then took a crazy hop, over his waiting stick . . . *into the goal.*

Luck had done what power-plays could not. The Hawks had tied it!

Big Flett, fuming at the fickleness of fortune, threw his whole heart, sinew and muscular strength into a furious, smashing effort to win back the lost advantage. End-to-end, smashing, circling rushes, irresistible in speed and power, he drove himself to near-exhaustion, smashed his way down center, down a wings, battering at the sturdy set defence-wall at the other end.

Smashing and battering he failed to dent that wall. They threw him back, gasping. Hawks, gaining fresh confidence, swirled in lightning counter-thrusts that caused Flett to stay close, guarding his own goal.

Again he broke . . . circled at his blue line . . . smashed clear and stormed in on the Hawk defence; Cooper tap-tapped their old signal . . . he was abreast, waiting; Flett hit the defence like a thunder-bolt, then a split second before the impact, he slid the puck to Cooper . . . the winger's drive blazed at the goal . . . was smothered by the alert goalie!

Twice more in the next few hectic minutes Flett smashed up the ice, drew the defence in close, and shot the rubber to Cooper . . . only to see dismayed startling saves made by the Chicago goalie.

He faded, flesh and blood would stand only so much; back behind his blue line, he slumped, gasping; turned pained, film-covered eyes to big partner's cheery, "Nice work, lad! Sit tight for a bit."

"Sit tight!" With those blasted gamblers threatening him! With the Boss—and others—thinking him a slimy seller-out? Not by a damn-site! Not while he could wiggle a skate!

Marsh, of the Hawks, broke and winged in like lightning; Flett moved forward and out . . . edged the flying winger into centre . . . together they crushed his daring thrust, hitting him hard as he crashed into the pair, hunched together like a wall.

Instantly Flett snapped up the loose puck from the swirling skates of the fallen winger . . . broke into his stride, and stick-handled fast by challenging Hawk forwards; out-paced them all . . . drove in at the crouched defence.

They bounced him, hard, before he could fake a pass, or make one; before he could smash through or split them. Bounced him, and crashed him hard to the ice. The puck flew to the backboards.

Wearily, aching in every inch of his big body, Flett forced himself to his feet. His knees wobbled . . . legs felt like ton weights as he sought to get in motion. They still were smashing and scrambling after the puck, back of the Hawk goal. He turned to skate back . . . saw a chance for a stabbing poke-check . . . *made it!*

Whirling, he manipulated the rubber expertly past smashing, probing sticks, out toward front of goal . . . the big defence-men surged at him . . . glancing up, he saw what he thought to be Cooper, parked out on the wing, waiting . . . whipped the puck to him in a pass . . .

That is, he tried to slide it to the winger for a perfect scoring pass . . . but in the nick of time, a probing stick snared it.

FLETT turned, then, and forced his leaden limbs back toward his own goal. Tried to get there ahead of the certain counter-attack.

Suddenly he stopped . . . a sudden, triumphant roar had sounded. He saw the red light flickering. Stared, in befuddled amazement.

*In that scramble, Cooper had poked in the winning goal!*

Slumping on the bench, Flett ripped off his spangles. Joyous celebrating all around; he wanted none of it! Something made him glance up . . . and start. The Boss confronted him, eyes angrily a gleam.

"Well, Flett," he sneered, "we won—no thanks to you! Worked it slick, didn't you? Pulled some nice work at the start . . . stalled until Chicago caught us . . . then with a swell chance to feed a cinch pass to Cooper, just before the finish, you *pulled* it! We scored in the scramble, which was just too bad for you, Mister Slicker. Well, you're *through*, see!"

Face ablaze, Flett surged up in angry, amazed protest. Then, pop-eyed, he stared . . .

A grinning Cooper came up; with him were several men; at first Flett took them for strangers; gaping, he then recognized the two gamblers who had called on him.

"No, Boss . . . you've got Flett wrong!" Cooper chuckled. "These (he pointed to the two Flett now knew) "can clear up a lot. This (he indicated one shrewd-faced stranger) is an old friend of mine—name's Ed Carpenter, of Sinkerton's—who's been working for two years to round up a gang who've been trying to cook hockey games by using crooked dough as tanglefoot on the players. Flett will remember I told him his first visitor got in touch with a 'friend' of mine and got me to introduce him; well, Ed was that 'friend'—the crooked boys hadn't checked closely enough on him. I

recognized them as members of the outfit who tried to work the Hawks' players, last winter—and I cooked up a deal with Ed to trap them. *It worked!*"

"What d'ye mean, worked? Flett tried to throw us down, didn't he? He deliberately mussed up that last pass to you—" snorted the Boss. Flett still gaped in amazement.

"No—that pass was on its way, Boss—just a lucky stab spoilt it. And remember those other passes he fed me! Listen—Flett—look in your locker."

Flett opened it—then drew back, amazed. A thick roll of bills was in sight.

The Boss snorted angrily. "What did I say?" he sneered. "Flett, you can—"

"This," said Cooper, "was the plant. Whether we won or lost, it was to be found here—Flett was getting the works. They had him in a tough spot, all right! But my friend, here spoilt things—him and Flett himself! Listen, Boss—you can't BUY that boy, except in the regular way—I KNOW!"

Ed Carpenter interrupted. "Well, so long—we'll remove this excess baggage!" His men closed in on the gamblers.

The Boss extended his hand. "I'm sorry, Flett," he said "I'll make it right with you, some way."

Flett stood gaping at Cooper. Finally, he muttered, "So—once more I've got to eat humble pie. Well, Stan—I don't know any new way to apologize. So I'll just say it again—I'm sorry. Shake?"

"Sure! Mostly my fault, anyway, for not telling you all about it—but Ed and I talked it over, and decided this was the surest way to trap those lads. Mighty hard to stick with the plan, though, 'specially when I knew you figured I was mixed up in crooked work, and double-crossing you! Well—that's all over now—and listen, big boy—it's darn lonesome in my room. How about making it 'our' room again?"

COOPER and Flett lounged in their room. Suddenly Cooper blurted, "Seen Gladys lately, Harry?"

"Yeah. I'm expecting a 'phone call shortly," Flett replied.

Cooper grimaced. "Phone call, huh?" he grunted. "So—it's that way again, is it?"

"It always was 'that way'," returned Flett. "But—" the ring of the telephone interrupted.

"Yes—right first time!" Flett called. "Thanks—it was a good game—hope the papers ease up on me, now!" He grimaced wryly as he spoke. He listened for a while—then, his voice vibrating strangely, he said, "I'm sorry, Gladys—I can't come. No. To-morrow? No, I've got to—say, Stan's here; I'll send him around, right away." He hung up the receiver; his face

looked strained, and his lips were clamped tight.

"HEY—what the—what's coming off here? Where d'you get that 'send ME around' stuff?" cried the amazed Cooper.

Flett gulped. "Listen, Stan," he said quietly, "I've figured this all out. There's no way I can show you how I feel about what you've done—back at Delevain, and here. I played the ass! I didn't realize what it meant to have a REAL friend. I do now—and no girl's coming between me and my pal! Anyway, you and she are a pair—I don't fit."

"You chump!" cried Cooper. "Think Gladys will stand for that—even if I would?"

"You'll both have to," replied Flett quietly. "Me—I'm staying where I belong—in the backfield!"