an opportunity because of our colour. The NHL owners and coaches didn't want to integrate."

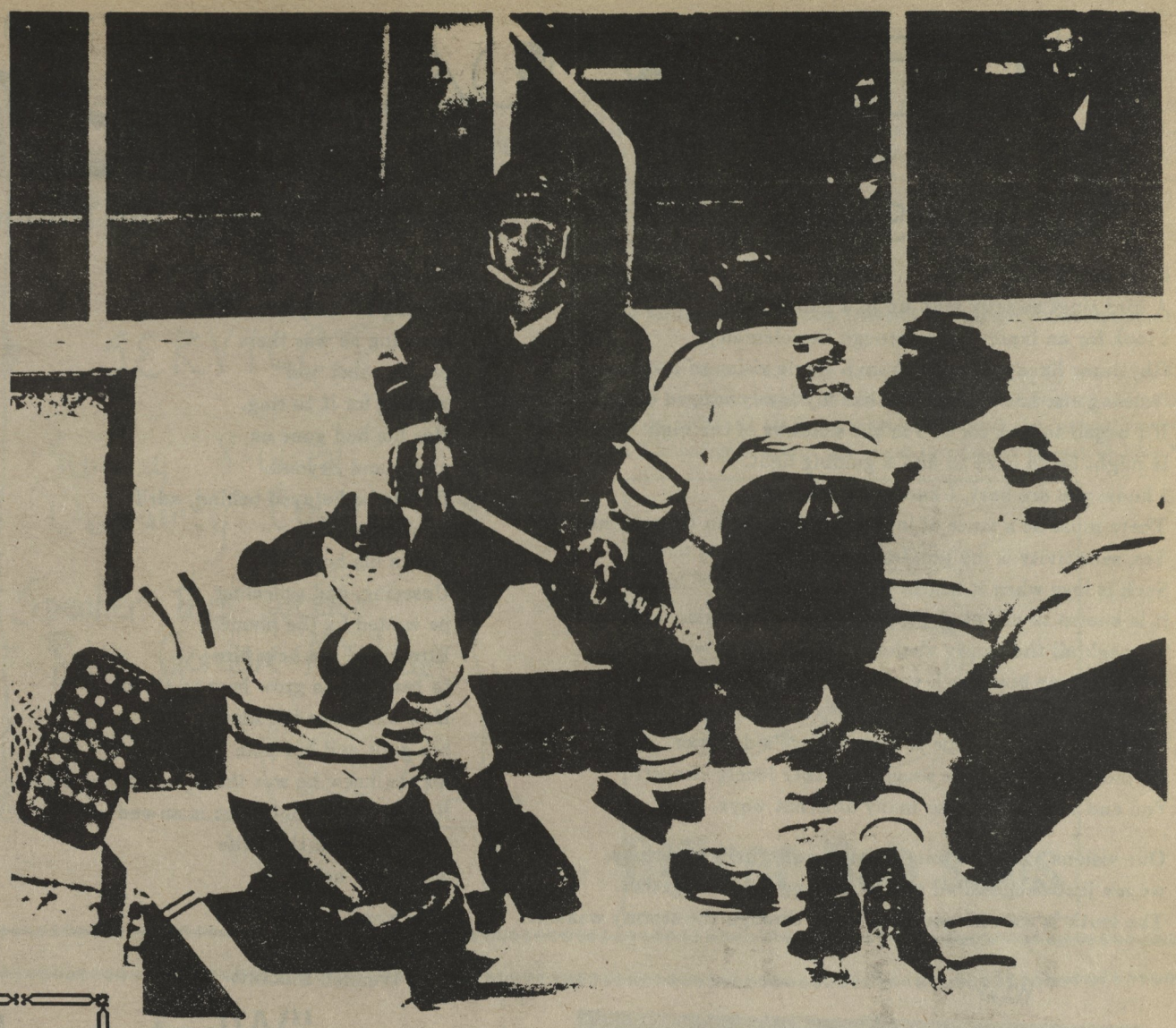
In 1948 Ritz Carleton Owner Charles Ritz envisioned an imaginative promotion and brought Manny McIntyre and Ossie Carnegie overseas to play for a touring hockey team he owned in France. The two were advertised performers and attracted record crowds in arenas across Europe. Herb Carnegie stayed behind to try the NHL again but to no avail.

In 1950, NHL President Clarence Campbell declared, "Professional hockey has no colour bar despite what has been written and said to the contrary. The National Hockey League has only one policy: to get the best hockey players. There is no policy, tacit or otherwise, which would restrict anyone because of colour or race."

But former NHL referee and Hall-of-famer Red Storey, who was refereeing Senior League games when the all-black line played, says the barrier was undeniable.

"By today's standards, they (the all-black line) could all play on any team in the NHL," says the outspoken Storey. "Herb Carnegie could have made any team I've ever seen in the world but the owners were worried about blacks not being accepted in arenas by the fans and in the hotels. I remember one time (former Toronto Maple Leafs owner) Conn Smythe said he'd give $10,000 to turn Herbie white."

Despite their failure to reach the pinnacle of hockey success, the line had become heroes to many black Canadian children, who started playing the game in greater numbers and dreamed of playing for teams like the Canadiens.



"I thought the achievements of the Carnegies and McIntyre would make the bigots realize they'd have to allow blacks in the NHL," says Richard Lord, a Montreal immigration consultant who was a member of the Michigan State University's NCAA all-American hockey team in 1952 and the first black to play NCAA hockey. "But the scouts never came knocking on my door. I deserved a shot in the NHL. If I was white I would have made it."

Lord said the situation has changed since then — but only a little, pointing to the lack of recognition Grant Fuhr has received. "How are black children supposed to develop role models when their heroes are treated like that?"

When Hilton Ruggles arrived at the Buffalo Sabres training camp in 1984, he had every reason to be optimistic. He was coming off a brilliant junior career, in which he was constantly battling current NHL superstars Mario Lemieux and Pat Lafontaine for the scoring lead.

In Buffalo, Ruggles was an immediate standout. In six pre-season intra-squad games he led Sabres scorers with 21 points, ahead of stars such as Gilbert Perrault and Phil Housley. But it wasn't good enough as he discovered one day when he recieved a notice informing him he had been demoted to Buffalo's Rochester farm team.

His brief stay in Rochester was like a nightmare for the young player. He joined another black player on the team, Valmore James, but soon realized that only one of them would make it because "team management didn't want too many of us around."

In an interview from France where he now plays in a European league, Ruggles recounts what he calls the most humiliating experience of his life.

When the team's regular video technician failed to show up before an exhibition game against Adirondack, Rochester coach Joe Crozier took the unprecedented step of demanding that a player tape the game. The player Crozier selected was Ruggles.

"I was playing very well there and you don't ask a team leader to sit out a game to do something like that. I realized then that racism existed throughout the Sabres organization. It was no accident they chose me."

The next day Ruggles complained to Crozier in his office, saying he was humiliated and hoping another such incident could be avoided. Two hours later, he received a note at his hotel informing him he was cut from the team.

Current Buffalo General Manager Gerry Meehan denies racism is a factor in player selection.

"It has nothing to do with black and white," he says. "it's a matter of who can win hockey games for you. Talent is the key."

Ruggles says the black hockey player is expected to keep his mouth shut and perform valiantly in front of jeering white crowds. He and O'Ree reserve their sharpest criticism for "house niggers," blacks like Fuhr who refuse to speak out.

"If they want the situation to change they have to fight for equal opportunity," says O'Ree. "The white people running the game have to be shaken up. They have to learn how to accept players on the basis of talent, not race. When I

Continued on Page 15

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