



## THE N.H.L.'S ALL TIME DIRTIEST

### The Spider's TOP-TEN N.H.L All-Time Cheap Shot Artists.

Some agreed with my choices, others debated them. Never the less, it was a gas! For those of you who missed out, Bob Probert was my personal number-one selection as the NHL's greatest Heavyweight Champ. The article also provoked an abundance of other suggestions. One in particular, which provoked some thought, was proposed by a NightHawk who wanted some of my choices as the dirtiest NHL players of all time. Whew! A tough question. First and foremost, we have to establish what is classified as dirty. Remember, over the years a great many of the game's most revered players have bent and broken the rules. Does it mean they were dirty? The answer is often relative to whom you're cheering for. Or what you perceive to be dirty. Let's face it, it's difficult to define dirty in a sports culture where fouls are as much a part of the game as the puck, stick and skates. As much as we love the coolest game on earth, in reality, it's physical, and at times extremely barbaric. Remember what the late Toronto Maple Leaf founder Conn Smythe once quoted, "if you can't lick 'em in the alley you can't beat 'em on the ice." The man who built Maple Leaf Gardens truly knew the nature of the beast. The Flyers and Bruins of the 70's were both apostles of Smythe's perfidious theory and by employing it, both franchises were rewarded with a pair of Stanley Cups.

The machismo credo of the sport habitually forces its participants to indulge in gratuitous acts of violence. Vicious transgressions that would cost the ordinary Joe Six-pack, jail time. Yet on the ice, this type of rabid behavior is not only accepted, but in many cases, it's also glorified. The players learn from early age, in order to survive in hockey's brutal existence, they must adapt to its tumultuous nature. For those who lack the pugilistic talents of the Probert's, Domi's and Howe's, there are other methods of intimidation. From my perspective, the fierce competition within the game isn't much different then that which transpires in the mean streets of the inner city. In order to keep the bad-asses from stealing your respect, you've got to act a little crazy. It's a defense mechanism. When folks think your a little loony, they tend to give you some props. Ice rowdies, like street bullies, will attempt many methods to punk you out and steel your manhood. An elbow, slash, face washing, crosscheck, trash talking is all part of the inherent machismo of the on-ice-battles. Those who choose not to retaliate will inevitably become everybody's meat. One more point. Size has nothing to do with toughness. Some who made the DIRTY BOYS LIST are among the league's smaller warriors. Pint sized rowdies who discovered effective methods to survive. But bear in mind, size does not have a monopoly

on aggression and meanness either. Some who made the list are among the bigger and stronger players. Never the less, they employed foul play.

Whether you agree, or not, here's the Spider's list of THE DIRTY BOYS.

(1) Bobby Clarke...Much has been made of his skills, tenacity and leadership and I'll give him full due in those departments. But lets not take this courage thing overboard with Clarke. This former Philly captain, with the face of a choir boy, had the heart of a cold-blooded assassin. He was as sneaky and dirty as it got. But the most despising aspect of Clarke's characteristics was his treacherous play. He kind of reminds me of this dude I used to hang out with back in the old days, named Punky. The cat couldn't lick a postage stamp if you stuck it on his lips, yet he was constantly breaking badly. He'd be standing on the corners, flashing a blade or straight razor, and bragging about how bad he was. Man, I was forever warning him about his gorilla act. Told him, someday he was going to have to dance to the music. If you could have seen how he got all postured up like a barnyard rooster. All that did was instigate him into yapping even more, "Anybody get in my face I'll cut them too thin to fry and just right to die!" he says. Well, one evening, he's shooting off at the mouth and some big dude from Detroit called him out. I'm here to tell you, Punky split that scene quicker than Heaven gets the news. We were left to do his fighting. Bobby Clarke was a lot like my man Punky. He'd be starting all kinds of trouble with his incessant yapping, slashing, sticking and spearing. When the time arrived to atone for his sins, Clarke, like Punky, would disappear quicker than the invisible man. Translation: he wouldn't drop the gloves to take a whiz! But then again, why fight when you're protected by the league's most elite goon squad. With thugs like Dave Schulz, Bob Kelly, Moose Dupont and Don Saleski as muscle, Clarke had little fear of retaliation. Those Flyer's of the 70's had more animals than Noah's Ark, and Clarke was their ring leader..And if you as much as breathed in his direction, they'd be on you like a pack of jackals. I'll give credit where it's due. Despite his diabetic condition, Clarke fought the illness to become an MVP recipient and winner of two Stanley Cups. Overcoming such odds and achieving his kind of success is truly an inspirational story. He was without a doubt the heart and soul of those great Flyer teams...and it was through his tenacity and leadership that the Broad Street bullies brought a pair of Stanley Cups to the city of brotherly love. Still, praised and adulated as he remains in Philly, the reality is, Clarke was one of the dirtiest players the league has ever produced. He was a vicious stick wielding hoodlum on skates who has, pardon the pun, "carved a niche" for himself, at the very top of my dirtiest playerratings. Example: one of his most memorable assaults transpired back in the 70's, during a game against the Leafs. Clarke and Leaf defenseman Rod Seiling were fighting for control of the puck in front of the Leaf net. Suddenly, Clarke swung around and viciously speared Seiling in the abdomen. As he lay dazed on the ice Clarke pounced upon him and pummeled Seiling into submission. It was one of the few times I can recall Clarke dropping the gloves. There was nothing courageous about the act. The Flyer captain knew from the get-go that most of the Leafs was petrified of his Philly henchmen. He was also aware that Seiling, though game, couldn't lick a postage stamp if you stuck it on his lips. Clarke was a clever unscrupulous competitor with a profound understanding about the workings of fear. He used others fear as a weapon. It gave him the strength to commit endless acts of violence throughout his career with little impunity. The fear of his Broad Street hoodlums allowed Clarke the necessary room to do his dirty thing ..and few did it better!

2) Ted Lindsay...Talk about dynamite in small packages, this former Red Wing terrorist was one of the most penalized and feared players of his era (2,002 minutes). Surprising statistics when, taken into account, he was all of 5-foot-8 and only weighed 175 pounds. Back in the late 40's and early 50's, while Detroit was earning the dubious nick-name "Murder City USA," terrible Ted's on ice maim was earning him the reputation as the meanest and dirtiest player in the league. There were as many reasons to despise him as there were to admire him, nor did he care either way, how you viewed him. But the one thing I found most admirable about him was the fact he didn't depend on others to fight his battles. In fact, in many cases, it was Lindsay who rushed to the aid of his much larger teammates. Perhaps, that's why Gordie Howe paid Lindsay the ultimate compliment by calling his line-mate the best team player he ever saw. Lindsay was one of the most competitive and fearless fighters of his era. Forget size, he wouldn't hesitate to drop the gloves with anyone...and it didn't matter if you had 50 pounds on him. When you got in "terrible" Teddy's face, he'd either knock you senseless with his fist, or carve you like a Christmas turkey with his stick. There were no boundaries to his code of rules. He slashed, speared, elbowed, and any other transgression it took, to come out on top. His countless confrontations with Montreal's great, and equally tough, Rocket Richard, is rated among the most brutal rivalries of all time. Lindsay was also as great as he was mean. He made the first all star team nine times and the second eight. In 1950, he won the Art Ross Trophy as League's top scorer, and in 1948 he led the league in goals. As part of Detroit's famed "Production Line", the scrappy left winger, along with Gordie Howe and Sid Abel, made Detroit an NHL powerhouse. Not only did they reach the playoffs six consecutive years, but they also won four Stanley Cups. Gordie Howe may have been the heart of those great teams, but Lindsay was the soul.

(3) Ulf Samuelsson...According to former NHLer Bernie Nicholls, if there was a poll taken by the players, Samuelsson would be elected the dirtiest player of his era, and you can bet Cam Neely, Brian Skrudland and Pierre Mondou would all support those allegations...and with just cause. Remember, it was back in the 1984-85 season that the sweet swinging Swede flicked his stick into Mondou's eye, causing a career ending injury. If 84-85 wasn't bad enough, then 1991 was a career year for this notorious surgeon. Both Brian Bellows and Brian Skrudland were recipients of his low checks. As a result, both sustained knee injuries. But his most infamous transgression occurred during the Wales conference finals against the Bruins in of that season. About halfway through the second period of game 3, he lined Cam Neeley up for a check. But realizing he was unable to catch the Bruin sniper cleanly, Samuelsson kneed him. It was a vicious abomination against a fellow player. Tragically, Neeley was never the same after that hit. Most think it was a deliberate attempt to pay Neeley back for some solid hits the bruising Bruin had laid on him during their long running feud. Was it a premeditated attempt to injure? I think Samuelsson's past transgressions would support just that, though he adamantly denies it. Never the less, it was this cheap-shot that eventually ended Neeley's great career. How dirty is Samuelsson? Don't take my word, or the players he's injured. Ask his mother, his own flesh and blood. By his own admission, she called him a dirty player. With all due respect maam, that was the understatement of all time.

(4) Mark Messier...If ever there was a Gordie Howe clone, it was the Moose. He was hockey's ultimate warrior, the modern day ice commando. He may be one of Hockey's

all-time greats, and has six Stanley Cup rings to prove it, but all those ticker-tape parades aside, this bone-breaker has brought new meaning to the word dirty! He has sliced, diced, elbowed, cross-checked, carved up, or just plain wailed on more opponents than any player of this era. An incident that quickly comes to mind was his vicious hit on Calgary defenseman Jamie Macoun. It happened back in the eighties when the Flames and the Oilers had this feud going that would have made the Hadfield and McCoy affair seem like a Sunday School picnic. The media called it the Battle of Alberta, and it lived up to every bit of the hype. Both teams had developed this profound hate-on for one another and whenever they clashed it was all out war!. Macoun, far from a saint himself, had developed a reputation as both a stickman and dirty player. Saying this, it's safe to assume his aggressive play had riled Messier on more than one occasion. As many can attest to, it wasn't healthy messing with the Moose. On this particular night, Messier was in one of his foul predatory moods. The look in his eyes spelled trouble. He was like a big game hunter, out looking for some prey. Macoun just happened to be in the vicinity and became the Moose's meat. It was ugly. Messier steam rolled into Macoun at full speed with his elbows and stick up in the Calgary defenders face. It all happened so quickly and so violently Macoun never knew what hit him. There was blood everywhere, and none of it was Messier's. This wasn't Messier's first, or last, cheap shot. The big center made a career out of laying hurt on the opposition. In 1996, while captaining the Rangers, he laid a vicious crosscheck on the face of Florida Panther Mike Hough. The punishment was a measly two game suspension. The light sentence was further proof of the double standard in which the NHL deals with its elite players, though I doubt a more severe penalty would have curtailed Messier's propensity for violence. He's just plain mean-to-the-bone. And don't let his off-ice soft spoken and amiable demeanor con you into thinking otherwise. Time may have mellowed him to some degree, but if I were the opposition, I wouldn't be foolish enough to turn my back on him. If provoked, he can still dish out some big hurt. Messier is like a cobra. You never know when he'll strike!

(5) Dale Hunter...In his prime, Hunter was an ornery, aggravating, late-hitting, cheap shot artist. Fortunately for the opposition, mother nature chose not to gift this little warmonger with the size of Bob Probert, Chris Simon, or Eric Lindros. If so, the NHL may have been forced to supply body bags as part of its mandatory equipment. In spite of his talent, many view Hunter as nothing more than a goon. While I agree he has goon tendencies, bear in mind, 18 years of physical and consistent production would rate him above the goon category. Fact is, he's without a doubt among the most durable competitors of this era. And that's about as endearing a compliment I'll give Mr. Hunter. Sure, I admire the bombast and heart Hunter displays for a smaller player, but I equally despise his excessive dirty antics. His foul deeds are legendary. The most infamous occurred back in the early nineties, during a playoff game between the Capitals and Islanders: a vile deed which branded him among the great cheap-shot artists of all time. Pierre Turgeon, then a New York Islander, had just scored a goal to eliminate Washington from Playoff competition. While the Islander sniper's arm was raised in celebration, Hunter swooped in like a bird of prey and nailed him from the back. It was an ugly, cold-blooded incident which resulted in Turgeon sustaining both a dislocated shoulder and a concussion. The cheap shot drew the wrath of NHL brass that leveled a 21 game suspension against Hunter. It was the longest in modern league history. His team, the Washington Capitals, also paid a heavy price. They were fined \$150,000. The most disturbing aspect of the incident was Hunter's unrepentant nature. Even to this day, the pugnacious veteran shows

no remorse, and in fact, still denies he knew the play was over. Whatever it takes to win, he'll do it, and he's never allowed his lack of size to deter him. If it means dropping the gloves, that's cool. Still, you got the sense he'd rather hack, spear, slash, or cross-check then waste his time rumbling with the giants. Congratulations Mr. Hunter, you are a bonafide member of the DIRTY BOYS!

(6) Ken Linseman...For this gutless wonder, the Weasel would be a more appropriate name than the Rat. Sure, he was a highly skilled player with tremendous speed, and in the face-off department, few were his superior. Unfortunately, in spite of all his talents, Linseman won't be remembered in endearing ways. His sneaky, dirty play, plus the fact that his stick was always camped up in somebody's face, made him loathed among his peers. He was the supreme instigator and one of the most hated villains of his era. Linseman's act revolved around disrupting the opposition. He'd stick, spear, chop, hack and swing two-handers like he was Mark Maguire; and, when he wasn't agitating, he'd be yapping your ear off. Yet in all the years, through all his perfidious deeds, I can't recall him ever dropping the gloves. When it came to fisticuffs, he wouldn't drop his gloves to go to the washroom. The "Rat" would turtle quicker than you could say, "let's get it on!" Yesir, the Rat was an outright chicken! But heaven help anyone who were foolish enough to turn their back on him during a scrum. That's when Linseman had his best moments. He reveled with sadistic pleasure at the opportunity of spearing and whacking defenseless victims, especially those who were trapped on the bottom of the pile. His eyes seemed to light up with fiendish pleasure while he stirred up trouble. On occasion, when someone would confront him to go one-on-one, Linseman seldom obliged. Another of the 'Rat's' escapades was to sneak like a jackal into a scrum and toss sucker-shots over the shoulders of his protectors. But even allies can tire of this type of spineless behavior. Rumor has it Linseman's provocateuring became so annoying that even the robust Broad Street Bullies of Philly tired of his shenanigans. Bobby Clarke, then the G.M. of the Flyers, blew him out in a trade. Linseman was the king rat.

(7) Dave Schultz...He was the symbol of the violent 70's and also the Flyers' most celebrated hit man. Schulz was truly the essence of a goon. As the lead henchman for the Broad Street Bullies, this violent, brawling madman was issued a hunting license by management to track down and eliminate the opposition. His job as the club's number-one enforcer was well defined from day one. He was in the lineup to intimidate, terrorize and beat up on the opposition. To score knockouts, not goals. From 1973 through 1975, Schultz conducted his duties with such passion that he led the league in penalties. 1975 was his most fruitful year in the sin-bin when he amassed 472 penalty minutes. To his credit, Schultz rarely used his stick. His forte was fighting. Unfortunately, he brought a back alley style into arena's throughout North America. His Neanderthal no-holds-barred included pulling hair and biting on opponents. Once, during a game against the Rangers, Schultz attacked defenseman Dale Rolfe and pounded him into a bloody pulp. It was a play that started innocently behind the Ranger's net where Rolfe and one of Schultz's comrades were scuffling for possession of the puck. Nothing dirty or hostile enough to provoke what transpired. Suddenly, the Philly enforcer came bulldozing into the fray...and boom! He was all over Rolfe and pounding away at his face. Poor Rolfe's head resembled a speed bag: it was pouncing all over the place. Schultz's eyes were popping out of his head like he was insane, and none of the other Rangers wanted any part of this madman.. It wasn't enough that he had badly beaten the bloodied Rolfe, Schultz, then

displaying the bestial nature of a wild animal, snatched Rolfe by his hair, jerked his head back and continued to pummel him. When the officials were finally able to pull him off Rolfe, the big Ranger looked more like a prime candidate for the Red Cross than a hockey player. It was Schultz at his brutal best. Another time, during an altercation against Leaf enforcer Kurt Walker, Schultz pulled a Mike Tyson and bit Walker on the nose. During another incident in Vancouver, without warning, Schultz sucker punched Canuck's rookie defenseman John Vanboxmer and knocked him colder than a Polar bear's lunch. Those are just a few chilling examples of how Schulz terrorized the league during the early 70's. Rules didn't mean squat to him. Dave Schultz was the ultimate bully.

(8) Gordie Howe...He is undoubtedly, hockey's most distinguished ambassador. But don't be deceived by Mr. Hockey's folksy smile and firm handshake. He may be considered a saint these days, but during his playing days, Howe was an unholy terror! Back during the heyday, Howe was nothing short of a nightmare on skates. Not only was he mean and dirty, but the big right-winger was also the most feared fighter of his time. At six-foot and weighing 205 pounds, the massive shouldered, bullish necked Howe, was considered a big player for that era, and he knew how to use every solid inch of it to his advantage. He was also the architect of the elbows as lethal weapons. They were every bit as dangerous and intimidating as his stick and fists. It's wasn't that Howe always played it dirty. Trouble was, you never knew when he'd cross the line. As one player stated, "messing with Howe was like having a death wish". Still, there were a few non-believers who felt a compulsion to challenge his credentials. Ranger enforcer Big Lou Fontinato was among those who did. One night during a game between the Wings and Rangers back in 1959, Fontinato, then one of the most feared fighters of that era, rushed to the rescue of teammate Eddie Shack. Shack had mysteriously sustained a bad cut during a mix-up with Mr. Howe. According to witnesses, Howe had laid the stick on Shack. Fontinato who was Shack's muscle, skated in and warned Howe to cool it or else!. On the next shift, big Lou went looking for Howe and smashed him into the boards. It was in retaliation for the Shack attack, and it was on! Howe snatched Fontinato's jersey with his left hand and unloaded a series of haymaker right hands to Lou's kisser. The big Ranger gamely traded punches, but they were like feather dusters compared to the thunder Howe was tossing. It was one of the ugliest and one-sided beatings I've ever seen. It was also the most publicized hockey brawl of that era. Big Lou, battered and beaten, sustained a broken nose and had to be rushed to the hospital for repairs. Thus began the reputation that followed Howe throughout his career. Don't mess with Gordie, he's the baddest of the bad! Howe was as good with his elbows as he was with his dukes, but it didn't stop there. He could also use his stick with the precision of a surgeon, when provoked. Often this meant simply impeding his progress. He had the opposition so intimidated, that he'd hack, slash and elbow with little fear of retaliation. It was in such subtle and crafty ways that few officials ever caught him in the act. In fairness, Howe seldom went after the little guys...unless they provoked him. It was a treat watching him perform at Detroit's old Olympia during the late 50's and early 60's. I've lost count of the guys who went flying into the corners with him and never made it out. The National Hockey League should have registered his elbows as lethal weapons: they were devastating. Howe was as dirty as he was great.

(9) Wayne Cashman...The former Bruin left-winger was a notorious stick man and probably the most dangerous of the infamous "big bad Bruins". He was a rowdy, treacherous, hard-nosed, pugnacious hellion who didn't give a hell how he won. Truth is, I doubt the Bruins would have won those two Stanley Cups without his tenacious efforts. Yea, I know about Orr and Esposito's enormous contributions. Nor will I debate that the great number 4 is arguably the greatest player of all time. But it was the over aggression of Cashman who set the tone for those 'big bad Bruins.' He was the one who battled in the trenches and along the boards to feed Esposito, Hodge and Orr the puck. In 1970 when the Bruins won their first Stanley Cup in 29 years, it was Cashman's gritty performance that helped lead the way. The great Bobby Orr may have been voted the playoff MVP of the those playoffs, but Cashman's the one who got dirty in the trenches so Esposito could get all those goals, and the glory. Bruins coach Harry Sinden was so impressed by Cashman, that the following season he placed the rambunctious forward permanently on the line with Esposito and Hodge. It was pure chemistry, and they became the most productive trio in the NHL, scoring an astounding 140 goals and 336 points: a new league record. Cashman's job was to get the puck out of the corners and to make room for Esposito: to do the dirty work..and I mean dirty! It was risky business when you flew into the boards with him. They were his forte. He attacked them like a man-demon possessed. Hacking, slashing, whacking at ankles and using the elbows, Cashman turned the corners into a living hell for opposing players. And heaven help those who were offended by his foul tactics...and retaliation wasn't healthy. With muscle like Terry O'Reilly, Stan Jonathan, Derek Sanderson, Teddy Green and John "Pieface" MacKenzie, Cashman got away with murder.

Taking on those Bruins of the early 70's was like attending a mugger's convention in Central Park. They were a wolfpack, and Cashman was dirtiest among them. Truth is, in spite of how the ministers of propaganda lauded his pugilistic talents, Cashman rarely answered the call with league's heavyweights. As fearless as he was in the corners, he wasn't foolish enough to challenge the likes of Larry Robinson, Dave Schultz and Big Clark Gilles. His most celebrated confrontations were against smaller players like New York Islanders' 5'8" Gary Howatt. When it came to fisticuffs, this former Bruin captain would rather ram his stick down your throat and feed you a splinter sandwich than drop the gloves. Dave 'Tiger' Williams, no shrinking violet himself, told Hockey writer Brian McFarlane of a scary incident that occurred between he and Cashman back in the 70's. According to Williams, Terry O'Reilly had wrestled him to the ice surface during a brawl at the Boston Gardens. Cashman then eased in and kicked Williams in the head with such velocity that the blade sliced through his helmet and opened a cut that required six stitches. O'Reilly whispered to Williams to tuck his head under his shoulder, preventing Cashman from inflicting any further damage. The Tiger stated during that interview, if it hadn't been for O'Reilly's quick response, he may have suffered a serious head injury. The Cashman was a big value to the Bruins. But when it came to the opposition, he had no sense!

(10) Claude Lemieux...Here's a guy who has spent an entire career crossing the line and has the rap sheet to prove it. Violence follows this vile player like a 5 o'clock shadow. Where do we start? He's a cold blooded mercenary who has probably cut up more people than Freddie Kruger. He's so obnoxiously dirty that many of his present and former teammates have criticized him. When he broke in with the Montreal Canadiens in 1985-

86, he was disliked for what they viewed as a cocky and arrogant loudmouth. His constant yapping, slashing and late-hits also provoked far too many fights to their liking. Lemieux's style is to get under your nerves and into your head; to get the opposition off their game, and few can do it better. It is his antagonistic nature which has made him effective and lifted him to such heights that he is now viewed among an elite group. A money player who knows what it takes to win big games. Proof of this is a Conn Smythe playoff MVP award in 1995, plus three Stanley Cup rings. Nevertheless, his hit and run, hack and whack style, has branded Lemieux Public Enemy No.1: the most hated player in the league. Ask former Boston sniper Cam Neely. Following a series in which he effectively shadowed Neely, the Bruin sniper was so angered by the foul tactics, he was promoted to call Lemieux a "gutless Puke." Can't say as I blame him either. His animosity was well grounded after being subjected to Lemieux's abuse. Still, credit must be given to Lemieux for containing a tough deadly sniper in Neely. Bottom line is, he got the job done. And forget all that crap about how he turtled when Neely challenged him to a dance. No surprise there. The only time Lemieux ever fought was when he knew the odds were in his favor. As former Bruin Brent Hughes once said, "there are a lot of guys who will give you cheap shots, but they'll back it up. Lemieux does it and hides behind a phone booth". Perhaps, sour grapes form Neely and Hughes remembering, it was Lemieux who went on to the big dance and not them. It was also he who was instrumental in winning the Devil's first and only Stanley Cup. His transgressions toward Neely may have been sleazy, but they were child's play compared to some of his other assaults. During a game against the Islanders back in the 1994-95 season at the Nassau Coliseum, Devils defenseman Scott Stevens and Bret Lindros got into a scuffle. While Stevens had Lindros pinned over the boards, Lemieux snuck in and landed a series of sucker shots to the big rookie's head. It was another gutless display. The episode cost him a three-game suspension. His late hit from behind on Detroit's Chris Draper during the 1997 playoffs has to be one of the most cowardly and vicious incidents I've ever witnessed. It was a cold-blooded and nauseating attack. It's one thing to play hard: that's what the game's all about. But to run a player from the back when he's in such a vulnerable and defenseless position is unacceptable. The hit on Draper has sealed Lemieux's fate. No matter how many Stanley Cups he wins, this scornful misanthropic marauder will always be remembered as one of the league's dirtiest players.