



### **“Grace Notes”: Lord Stanley and Lady Byng**

Let’s face it, the Canadian game of ice hockey can still be a bit of a rough and dangerous sport, as the story of Sydney Crosby and his four concussions underlines.

Today’s ongoing finals in the NHL are illustrative. Some have called it “the cross-checking Olympics.”

Wayne Gretzky relates in his memoirs how in dethroning the New York Islanders in the early 1980s they kept losing. Then he and defenseman Kevin Lowe walked past their dressing room as the Isles celebrated the fourth victory over the Edmonton Oilers.

The smell of liniment and painkillers oozed from the dressing room and some of the best on the Islanders teams were limping around with bloody bandages assuaging wounds in key places.

“Then we realized what it took to win a Stanley Cup,” Gretzky opined to teammate Lowe.

Blocking shots, chasing opponents hard into the boards for the elusive puck, running up 26 minutes in a 60-minute game—usually at an all-out pace. This is hockey at its epitome—Viking hearts risking it all for the 25-pound silver cup Governor General Lord Stanley donated back in 1895.

But wait. Even the rough game of hockey has what we call “grace notes.” Back in 1925 the wife of another Governor General, Lady Marie Evelyn Morton Byng, was an avid hockey fan as well. That year she donated a cup for a player combining high levels of ability with gentlemanly and sportsmanship.

It is an award few outside professional hockey’s avid fans even know about.

But every year someone wins the Lady Byng, celebrating hockey’s kinder, gentler, side. Some of the winners have included five-timer Gretzky himself and skilled Pavel Datsyuk of the Detroit Red Wings.

The Lady Byng—a grace note in the midst of a fierce sport. A softening agent in a tough world.

Bible readers know all about grace notes. In our day, the Bible often gets singled out for some of its purplish content. Bears eating boys who mocked the prophet Elisha. Heroic King David forbidden to build a house for God because he had shed too much blood. St. Peter shocking a man and wife dead for lying to him.

The Bible can be as hard as it gets, as hard as it needs to be. That’s because it is a realistic book set amid life’s often harsh rough and tumble.

But...just like with the Lady Byng trophy, the grace notes sound early and often. God clothes the two original sinners Adam and Eve before they leave the Garden of Eden. God mercifully restores the evilest king Judah ever had, King Manasseh. And Jesus is the living embodiment of that gentle loving God we all like to visualize, the one who says, “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28)

Grace notes. You see them in hockey. You see them in both the Old and New Testaments. Ask God to show them to you as you go through life, especially if you’re having a rough time just now. Ask and he will answer.

### ***Neil Earle***

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