

AMAZING HOCKEY STORIES

MITCH MARNER

Lorna Schultz Nicholson

Illustrations by D. A. Bishop



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To Erin and the whole Scholastic team. — *L.S.N.*

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When the new season started, Tavares put on his blue-and-white jersey and was indeed on a line with #16. They quickly turned into a great combination! On November 28, 2018, the Leafs played the San Jose Sharks. Near the end of the first period, Mitch broke his stick. He dropped it and raced to the bench for a new one, then dashed to the net. Somehow he managed to pick up the loose puck, find Tavares on the side of the net, and slide it over to him. Tavares nailed it. The crowd went wild.

Mitch ended up with three assists that game, including two on goals by Tavares. One television announcer later summed it up nicely during a game against Philadelphia in which Tavares scored off an incredible play by Mitch. The announcer said, "You gotta just follow number 16 around and good things happen."

Mitch played in all 82 games that season and scored 26 goals, but his standout contribution was making 68 assists. For the second year in a row, he was the points leader for Toronto, and a key player on their power play. When Mitch was on the ice, his teammates were better players because of his ability to make perfect passes.



MITCH AND JOHN TAVARES TEAM UP TO DEFEND AGAINST OILERS CENTRE CONNOR MCDAVID IN A GAME ON FEBRUARY 27, 2019.

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS

Mitch was a definite factor in the Leafs making the 2019 Stanley Cup playoffs. They finished third in the Atlantic Division of the Eastern Conference, and once again they would be up against their 2018 playoff foes, the Boston Bruins. Although Mitch is known for his playmaking skills, he moved out of his comfort zone during this round and played some gritty hockey, too. The Leafs won the first game 4–1. Then the Bruins came back to even the series

with a 4–1 victory of their own in game two. In the third game, the score was 3–2 for the Leafs with just seconds left on the clock. Boston had pulled their goalie, and Toronto was trying to hang on for the win. In those final seconds, Mitch threw himself in front of the puck twice to block shots. The Leafs won the game and got ahead 2–1 in the series. But just like the season before, the Leafs wound up losing a seven-game, back-and-forth battle to the Bruins. It was a disappointing outcome.



MITCH SCORES ON A PENALTY SHOT ON BRUINS GOALIE TUUKKA RASK IN GAME ONE OF THE EASTERN CONFERENCE FIRST ROUND, APRIL 22, 2019.

In a different sort of nail-biter, Mitch's entry-level contract had come up for negotiation. As the summer progressed, his agent and the team's management couldn't come to an agreement. Mitch just tried to focus on his training. July went by. Then August. Mitch missed the Leafs' annual golf tournament. Then the team was leaving for training camp in Newfoundland, and Mitch still didn't have a contract. Fans were on edge. Finally, on lucky Friday, September 13, he signed a six-year deal and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. All Mitch wanted was to lace up his skates and put on the jersey for the team he had always dreamt of playing for.

WHAT WAS MITCH'S
SIDE GIG FOR THE
2019-20 SEASON?

UNOFFICIAL LEAFS
LOCKER ROOM DJ!

FOR THE KIDS

Mitch worked hard to achieve his NHL dream, but he knew he had more to offer the world than just his hockey skills. “I am extremely privileged to be in a position where I can give back and make a difference in our communities,” Mitch said in an interview. “There are so many things going on in this world and we have to take care of each other.” When he was a teenager playing with the London Knights, and then later as a Maple Leaf, he saw he had an avenue to do just that.



MITCH CONNECTS WITH A YOUNG FAN AT THE LEAFS' ANNUAL SKATE FOR EASTER SEALS KIDS IN TORONTO ON JANUARY 5, 2020.

THE ASSIST

OCTOBER 2014
LONDON, ONTARIO

I'M GLAD TO DO THIS.

ME TOO.

MY NAME IS MITCH. WHO WANTS TO PLAY?

TWO!

YOU BEAT ME AGAIN!

BYE, HAYDEN. I'LL SEE YOU SOON.

MARNER
99

I WISH I COULD DO MORE.