

The Legend of 5-HOLE SAM



On occasion, an athlete appears peddling a heady dose of talent, perseverance and gamesmanship previously thought unattainable. As with Ruth, Gretzky or Jordan, these figures can achieve an almost god-like status- capturing the hearts and minds of millions, and forever changing the face of their respective sport. In other instances, however, innovators are hidden from the public eye- neatly stowed in the troves of those few, appreciative souls lucky enough to have encountered their mythical talents. Such is the case with the West-End street-hockey league's late and great goalie, *Five-Hole Sam*.

Born of the streets, and not of the ice, Sam's virtuosic abilities were entirely self-taught, if not somewhat unorthodox. The playful moniker of "Five-Hole" was handed to him early in his career, on account of his lone weakness in goal: a large, gaping cavity between his legs, where balls gently rolled, unimpeded, to the back of the net.

Despite this singular failing, Sam could stymie his foes with sheer determination. In order to save even the simplest of shots, he would often resort to the most dramatic means at his disposal. Arms a-flailing, legs akimbo, torso twisted in dubious contortions- these were the wily wares of *Five-Hole Sam*.

Whether fielding the blasts of *Klubber Kip*, or the fluttering wrists of *T-Bone Tom*, or simply poking aside the dexterous dekes of *Left-Eye Louis*, *Sam's* domain was safer than any, and could often appear impenetrable. Orange balls whistling past his ears, careening off his mask, welting his chest and back- no challenge, it seemed, could be slid beyond this young master... unless, of course, it was directed at the space between his legs.

By the end of a hard day's work, *Sam's* opponents were routinely robbed of both dignity and pride, and left in a rueful state of disbelief. Nevertheless, the damage was always done with a wide, warming smile. A champion of camaraderie and benevolence, no act of kindness or generosity could ever be put past this king of the sun-drenched pavement... unless, that is, it rolled toward the space between his legs.