

<p> <a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/utkchristie/2633061672/" target="?self" title="Toronto 7 on Flickr by UTKChristie"></a> There is nothing like it in sports. Game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals. </p> <p> In an era of pro sports going 80 games (or more) just to decide who makes the playoffs ... it's hard to get terribly excited anymore. Big salaries, no team loyalty by the players - it's all become a little boring. There are few pro team sports that I will bother to watch anymore. But the Stanley Cup finals always gets my attention - especially if it goes seven games. </p> <p> If you're a kid growing up in Canada, you play it in your head over and over again ... </p> <p> You're out playing street hockey in the fall, or on the frozen river in the winter. You probably just finished shoveling the fresh snow off the ice. There are a couple of rudimentary goal posts. They might be a spare pair of mittens, or a couple of small piles of snow. You might be out in the moonlight, or perhaps the glow of some fluorescent lights that make the bay look just like the inside of Maple Leaf Gardens - at least to those who are there, ready to play. It might have been just a pick-up game amongst the kids in the neighbourhood, but to everyone there, it was always game 7. </p> <p> And every time you hit the ice, you play the scene over and over and over ...</p> <p> "Game on" someone yells ... </p> <p> Then you've got the puck, moving right and left, heading towards the goal, yelling out to everyone around you ... </p> <p> "Besselink has the puck ... Game 7 ... Stanley Cup finals ... he shoots ... he SCORES!" </p> <p> I remember it like it was yesterday. It was every day, every time you picked up the hockey stick. It was every winter night, right after dinner. You probably even had dreams about it. Scoring the winning goal with time running out in Game 7. Or making the big save. Or raising that amazing 35 pound icon of sport, the Stanley Cup, over your head. </p> <p> Over the years, I've watched the greats of the game raise the Cup. My mind goes back to the glory years of the Edmonton Oilers, years that Gretzky, "The Great One", raised the Cup so many times. It's a special moment in sport. There is no other sport that can compare to it. </p> <p> Tonight was game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals. We didn't have a Canadian team in the Finals (again), but the series did go seven games. Not only did we get a great game, but we got a huge upset. The visiting team just doesn't win a Game 7. It just doesn't happen. But it did tonight. </p> <p> Congratulations go out to the Pittsburgh Penguins for a performance of the ages tonight. And special note of Marc-Andre Fleury's stellar sliding-across-the-crease save with only seconds left in the third period to secure the 2 - 1 Penguins victory. </p> <p> But the best part - as a Canadian that grew up with these memories - is watching the first player raise the Stanley Cup overhead. And that is worth the price of admission right there. As I get older, it stills gives me shivers to watch ... and always takes me back to those days when that was all that really mattered. </p> <p> "Game on ..." </p> <p> </p> Photo credit: <a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/utkchristie/2633061672/" target="?self" title="UTKChristie">UTKChristie</a> </p>