



Belfry Offense

Logo Origin Story

When I committed to writing Belfry Offense, I spoke to my long time Creative Director Colin de Jersey about having a logo for the book that really encapsulates how I acquired the understanding of offense, and I thought immediately of the October 7, 2018 game between Patrick Kane of the Chicago Blackhawks and Auston Matthews of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Now before I get into the significance of that particular game, let's step back a little over a month before:

In August of 2018, we had the 2nd Annual Belfry NHL Camp in Tampa, Florida. This was also the first year for the 88 Summit which took place at that camp, over the course of which Patrick Kane and Auston Matthews played on the same team and were linemates; it was what we hoped was a sneak preview of what Team USA Olympic team might look like. The two of them worked together along with the other NHL Superstars we had there to collaborate amongst each other and use the experience as a jumping off spot for the season. There was a lot of buzz about the 88 Summit and the Camp in the weeks that followed and Alex Prewitt of Sports Illustrated wrote a fantastic article on September 19, 2018 painting the picture of just how special that event truly was. Now back to the game.

The Leafs are in Chicago at the United Center on October 7, 2018. It was the 3rd game of the season for both teams, just a few days into the start of the season. I had the game circled on my calendar as a must-watch as I was interested to see the extent of the training to game transfers I would see from both their individual training programs and the carry-over skill effects from what they learned from each other at the camp.

Matthews started the game but we pick it back up with the Blackhawks leading 2-0. Matthews wins the puck on a brilliant stick takeaway in the Leafs' defensive zone and rounds the net before using a high flip to send Kasper Kapanen on a breakaway to make it 2-1 Blackhawks. Then on his next shift the Leafs win the puck back after an offensive zone face off loss and Matthews reloads high in the OZ before taking a brilliant downhill route through the slot and goes with the catch of an interior pass from Kapanen to tie the game at 2 with 2 goals in the last 6 min of the 1st period.

With 2:09 left in the 3rd, the Blackhawks are down 5-4. Chicago pulled the goalie and Kane is on the left circle as his center Anisimov wins the puck back to him. Kane works down the wall in a down route to the goal line and tries to surprise the Leafs goalie with a high dead angle shot that just misses. Kane follows the missed shot to that side of the ice and climbs the wall as he often does before settling on the right dot while Chicago works the puck to the left side. After taking a shot the Leafs get a clear and Chicago has to organize a re-entry. Kane ends up with the puck on the reentry rim recovery in his familiar right corner; he works it to the top of the D to set up his position between the two checks the strong side D and the strong side defensive F. Kane attacks the dot before using a back cut skating skill to hold the puck on his forehand while sliding off the dot toward the corner in a slight diagonal changing the angle. The Leafs goalie doesn't adjust his feet and looks around the Blackhawks net screen to the goal line side of the body of the net front. Kane keeps the puck in a dual threat (shooting and passing position) and threatens to pass with his eyes and his body language before shooting on the opposite side of the screen to tie the game 5-5 with 1:25 left in the game.

Matthews is on for the next shift immediately following Patrick's Goal. After working the puck from the defensive zone to the offensive zone, the Leafs have control of the puck in the left corner. Matthews is the 3rd Leaf into the offensive zone and heads straight to the net front. The Leafs go low to high for a quick point shot. The point shot gets deflected and as soon as Auston sees Marleau going to get to it, he reloads to the slot backwards in perfect position for the carom and he goes backhand to forehand over the goalkeeper's glove. Once he sees it go in the net he skates directly to the side boards crowd and brings his left hand to his ear as the crowd quiets with the Leafs retaking the lead 6-5 with 1.02 remaining in the game.



With 1.02 remaining Kane is on the ice for the face-off. Similar to the previous Matthews shift, the Blackhawks have to start in the defensive zone. Once they gain possession, the puck goes to Kane in the middle of the ice with the goalie sprinting to the bench for the extra attacker. Kane weaves deliberately through center looking for an entry opening as he skates diagonally through the neutral zone; he sells he's going outside and attacks the heels of the pivoting Leafs forward defending the blue line taking the middle of the ice. Once he has the middle, he finds a Blackhawks forward attacking down on his off wing for a one timer. Kane continues his route and gets to the loose puck rebound in the right side of the Leafs goalie on the back wall and sends it again to the top. This, in peak Kane fashion, allows him to work the backside of the ice up the wall while the puck moves to the left side. Kane positions himself on the top of the circle on the right side and calls for the puck. He gets a pass he can shoot with a 1 timer and scores to tie the game with 30 seconds remaining. Kane immediately after scoring skates towards the side boards and raises his left hand to his ear, perfectly replicating the Matthews celebration from 30 seconds earlier. This time, rather than quieting the crowd, the crowd erupts as the roof comes off the United Center.



Auston leaves the game with 2 goals: one to answer Kane's game tying goal with a minute to go in the game and 2 assists, including an assist on the Morgan Rielly OT winner just 19 seconds into OT), while Kane finishes the 2 with 2 late game tying goals in the last 90 seconds of regulation.

What was fascinating in this game was how dialed in both players were on multiple puck touches in the same possession sequence, which was a prominent theme of ours in the camp. Working to get the puck, improve the conditions of the puck, and relocate into better ice to get another puck touch with improved opportunity was a focus that I was keen on watching for....and these two didn't disappoint all game long and in the goals they were responsible for.

I was watching the game live, going completely nuts watching the drama unfold between two of my longest and best clients. Immediately following the game, I put them both on a group text sharing my enthusiasm for the game, and they shared a great moment together.



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