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Bobby Orr's take on NHL fighting

Posted: February 02, 2009, 12:00 PM by Joe O'Connor
Hockey, NHL

For hockey has-beens and never-weres of a certain vintage the book — **Bobby Orr: My Game** — by the great Boston Bruins defenceman, was *The Hockey Bible*. It was published in 1974, and in it, the most dynamic player of his generation wrote about his approach to the game, coaching his youthful readers in the fine art of skating, stick-handling, shooting, rushing the puck and thwarting an opponents attack.

Orr also addressed the issue of fighting on page 224 of the 237-page book. So, what did Bobby Orr have to say back then about a controversial issue that will not go away, and that continues to generate vociferous debate in hockey circles?

"Despite what the purists claim, fighting is part of the game of hockey. Believe me, I am not a devoted advocate of the fighting approach, but the feverish pace and strong contact of a hockey game do produce fights. They are inescapable.

"I have won some fights, but I've lost a few dandies. In many ways, fighting is almost like shooting the puck, since I want to get as much power as possible behind my punch. To set up, I turn the blades of my skates to the outside, pointing them to about a ten minutes past ten position. By doing that, I will have better balance and probably won't slide too much.

"As I throw my punches, I lean forward — practically on my toes — and throw my body behind the punch. Not quite like a heavyweight champion would do it, but usually good enough on a hockey rink. Most fights, though, generally become wrestling matches, with words of wisdom passing between the opponents. In these skirmishes, I try to pull my opponent's shirt over his head. By doing that, I will block his vision and also tangle his arms straitjacket-style, which means that he will be unable to punch me. Some players, however, have solved the shirt-over-the-head dilemma by taping or tying their shirts to their uniform pants.

"Don't go looking for fights, but don't back away from fights either."

On the page opposite to Orr's articulation of Fighting 101 is a photo. It depicts the Bruins superstar wrestling, check-to-check, with the notorious Philadelphia Flyers enforcer, Dave [The Hammer] Schultz.

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