

Ian Cushenan

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Ian Cushenan, born November 29, 1933 in Hamilton, Ontario played in the National Hockey League and the American Hockey League for a total of ten years becoming a hometown Canadian ice hockey defence man hero. He began his professional hockey career by becoming a member of the Quebec Aces of the QHL in 1954-55, playing only six games before being moved to the Cleveland Barons of the American Hockey League.¹ It was in this year that Cushenan's professional career would begin and not end until he officially retired in 1966 after playing on a total of four National Hockey League teams. Ian Cushenan was not necessarily a remarkable super talent however he became a household name for his rough game play and was added to teams in order to bring a sting into the blue line corps. By the time Cushenan retired from professional hockey in 1966 he accumulated three AHL Calder Cups, the Stanley Cup with the Montreal Canadiens, had played in an NHL all-star game, participated in the Bill Doby night big league show, and was part of the AHL Second All-Star Team.² Ian Cushenan, in the ranks as the one of the best NHL fighters was born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario and returned to live in Hamilton after his professional hockey career.³

After leaving the Quebec Aces in 1955 and joining the Cleveland Barons of the AHL, Ian Cushenan was beginning his professional hockey career. After playing two seasons with the Barons, Cushenan was called to play for the Chicago Blackhawks of the NHL in the 1956-57 season. Cushenan maintained his spot in the roster for the following year playing well enough to even earn a spot in the NHL all-star game.⁴ However, after a 61 game season with the Blackhawks, Cushenan was bought by the Montreal Canadiens, signing a contract for the 1958-59 season after being acquired in a straight cash deal from Chicago Blackhawks.⁵ He may have only suited up for 35 games during his time as a Canadien but he helped the team to go on that spring to win the Stanley Cup for Montreal's fourth year in a row.

¹Hockey Hall of Fame. "Ian Robertson Cushenan." Legends of Hockey. www.legendsofhockey.net (viewed 27 January 2011)

² Hockey Hall of Fame.

³ Jim Proudfoot. "Rate Him Tops in 3 Classes." Toronto Star. 22 March 1958; p. 33

⁴ Hockey Hall of Fame.

⁵ Jim Proudfoot. "Habs buy Cushenan from Chi for Cash." Toronto Star. 3 October 1959; p. 22

Cushenan brought more of a sting and roughness to Montreal's defensive unit whenever he had the chance to play in the starting line up.⁶ He was claimed during the Intra-League Draft on June 10, 1959 by the New York Rangers and played 17 games for the Rangers in the 1959-60 season before his career on the NHL was put on hold.⁷ Ian Cushenan would spend the next three years of his career playing in the American Hockey League, as part of the Buffalo Bisons and the Springfield Indians. It was not until June 4, 1963 that he was claimed by the Detroit Red Wings in the Inter-League Draft and returned to the National Hockey League.⁸ By the end of the season he was traded with John Misuk and Art Stratton for Ron Murphy and Aut Erickson on June 9, 1964 back to the Chicago Blackhawks.⁹ Cushenan left the NHL after the 1964 season and would later officially retire in 1966. Ian Cushenan had a career that consisted of playing on many teams and playing in both the National Hockey League and the American Hockey League and he had gained a reputation throughout his career, becoming known as a rough and tough player that never backed down.

Ian Cushenan became a household name, especially in the cities he played for, because of his bold and rough playing style and his eagerness to never back down from anyone. The first instance clearly demonstrates this because Cushenan was fined for slugging Boston Bruins Doug Mohns and causing a double fracture in his jaw. It was the night of December 9, 1957 that Cushenan reportedly struck Mohns from behind causing him to suffering a double fracture of the left jaw and not being able to play for six weeks.¹⁰ This all came after they collided along the boards and Mohns kicked Cushenan's stick, which after the game ensued a \$100 fine. Another instance, happening in 1958, involved Cushenan spearing a Toronto Maple Leafs player during a brawl which led to Leaf's Billy Harris cutting Cushenan in

⁶ Kennedy Wells "Cushenan May Add a Bit of a Bounce to Hab's Defence." Toronto Star. 5 February 1959; p.23

⁷ National Hockey League. "Players – Ian Cushenan Notes." National Hockey League Players. www.nhl.com/ice/player (viewed 31 January 2011)

⁸ National Hockey League.

⁹ National Hockey League.

¹⁰ Gordon Campbell. "Cushenan on Carpet for Slugging Mohns." Toronto Star. 10 December 1957; p. 21.

the head with his swinging stick leaving Cushenan to need 16 stitches.¹¹ Cushenan got a minor, a major for fighting, and a game misconduct for the brawl. The brawl during the first period that led to this took the referee and the two linesman's nearly fifteen minutes to cool out Cushenan and finally get him off the ice for repairs.¹² He had become known as a good fighter and all around rough player and this is exactly what the Montreal Canadiens were looking for after buying him from Chicago. He was to play in a game for Montreal and the Canadiens coach said they were using Cushenan "in an effort to put more sting into the Montreal blue line corps," and later said, "Cushenan might hit a few of them," when referring to the liberties within their blue line.¹³ Cushenan's rough game play earned him 1,043 penalty minutes over the course of his career but the truly amazing thing was that besides his style of game play was how many achievements and awards he got in his short professional career.

Ian Cushenan achieved many awards and milestones over the course of his career which is very impressive considering many people in the NHL can't seem to in careers of twenty years. Early in his career Cushenan was nominated for the Calder rookie of the year during his first season with the Chicago Blackhawks although he didn't win the award.¹⁴ After being bought by Montreal from Chicago, Cushenan had the privilege to win the Stanley Cup which many hockey players dream of but in many cases even after lengthy professional careers some never win. Within that same year (1958) as winning the Stanley Cup, Cushenan took part in the NHL All-Star game which is a huge honour when playing professional hockey as only the select few ever take part. In 1959 he took part of the Bill Dobbyn Night Big League Show, raising \$25,000, which was a fundraiser for Bill Dobbyn who has lost the sight of his eye during a hockey game.¹⁵ While playing in the American Hockey League Cushenan won three Calder

¹¹ Red Burnett. "This is Hockey? Hawk cut for 16 Stitches." Toronto Star. 22 September 1958; p. 17.

¹² Red Burnett.

¹³ Kennedy Wells "Cushenan May Add a Bit of a Bounce to Hab's Defence." Toronto Star. 5 February 1959; p.23

¹⁴ Jim Proudfoot. "Smythe Protests Baun Omission." Toronto Star. 19 December 1957; p. 24.

¹⁵ Red Burnett. "Bill Dobbyn Night Big League Show \$25,000 is Raised." Toronto Star. 18 February 1959; p.26.

Cups, with the Springfield Indians in 1960 and 1961, and with the Buffalo Bison's in 1963.¹⁶ He also played on the AHL Second All-Star team in 1963, not as impressive as the NHL's All-Star game, but still impressive in itself.¹⁷ Ian Cushenan may not have been a Wayne Gretzky and accumulated mass amounts of points and become a legend but he became known for his playing style and his achievements over the course of his short professional career.

Ian Cushenan, a Hamilton born professional hockey player, was a fascinating character on the ice and had a remarkable short professional career. After moving up the ranks and playing on multiple American Hockey League teams and four National Hockey League teams, Cushenan became known to many until his retirement in 1966. Ian Cushenan was a rough teammate that every wanted to have at their back and he got in many fights during his career some of which really stand out, especially fracturing Mohns jaw in two places. In the time span of his career he achieved many of the great awards that players chase after during their whole careers. Ian Cushenan retired from hockey in 1966 and is in the ranks as one of the best NHL fighters born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario and returned to live in Hamilton after his professional hockey career.

¹⁶ Hockey Hall of Fame.

¹⁷ National Hockey League.