

PRIOR TO THE INCEPTION OF THE MAPLE LEAFS

Once known as the Blueshirts, Shamrocks, Marlboros, Arenas and the St. Patricks, Toronto's premier hockey franchise became known as the Maple Leafs after a group headed by Mr. Conn Smythe purchased the team on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1927. Taking over a club that earned Stanley Cup championships in 1918 (Toronto Arenas) and 1922 (Toronto St. Pat's), Smythe soon started laying the foundation that evolved into the current appearance of the storied Toronto Maple Leafs.

Now in charge of Toronto's National Hockey League entry, Smythe's patriotic pride led him to decide on a Maple Leaf as the team's namesake and crest. The Maple Leaf was a proud national symbol to Smythe due to his military career. It is also said that he admired the team name of the East Toronto Maple Leaves whom he scouted regularly. The uniform colours remained green and white for a year after he purchased the team out of respect for the previous organization. He then changed the colours to blue and white, likely due to his long time involvement with the University of Toronto Blues hockey team who have the same colours. Past Public Relations Director, Stan Obodiac was fond of saying the blue represented the blue of the Canadian sky and the white represented the white of the Canadian snow.

1928-33

The Leafs' second uniform consisted of a blue home jersey with a series of thin-wide-thin striped bands on the arms, leggings and shoulders, and a 47-point Maple Leaf on the chest with the words "Toronto Maple Leafs" on the crest. The Leafs road uniform of the time was white with three stripes of equal width on the top of the chest and on the back, three stripes on the waist, three stripes on the stockings and the same 48-point Maple Leaf on the chest.

1933-34

Same design, excepting that the thin-wide-thin stripes on the neck and shoulders were replaced with three thin stripes of equal width.

1934-37

The basic design of the Leaf uniform for the next four decades was established just prior to the Ace Bailey Benefit Game. The leggings remained the same - three sets of triple stripes - but the jersey itself consisted of two stripes of equal width on the arms and on the waist. There were no stripes on the shoulder, just a simple white band around the collar. The maple leaf crest remained unchanged. The road uniform was similar, with blue stripes and collar.

1937-67

The home uniform remained virtually unchanged during these years except for some subtle alterations to the Maple Leaf crest. The appearance of veins on the Leaf and the word "Toronto" curving downwards appeared in 1937. A 35-point Leaf crest was introduced in 1942. In 1947, the words "Toronto Maple Leafs" appeared in red, but the innovation was largely ceremonial and only lasted one semester. The first appearance of the captains' "C" and the alternate captains' "A" appeared during the 1946-47 season. Other modifications included highlighting the Leaf crest with a white border (or blue border) and variations to the veins of the Leaf. In 1958, the neck was outfitted with a six-eyelet lace and tie, and this remained a feature of the Leaf uniform until 1973.

In 1958, a major alteration was made to the Leafs' road uniform when a solid blue yolk was added to the shoulder, extending from the neck to just above the stripe on the arm. In 1961, when the Leafs began to put numbers on the sleeves of the jersey, this stripe was tapered back to the top of the arm.

1967-70

The first major modification in four decades was made to both the Leafs' home and road uniform prior to the start of the 1967 playoffs. The standard 35-point Leaf crest was replaced with a solid 11-point Maple Leaf - similar to the Maple Leaf displayed on the new Canadian flag - in celebration of Canada's centennial year. "Toronto" still curved slightly downward. The two stripes on the arm and waist were replaced with one set of thin-wide-thin stripes, not unlike those on the Leaf uniform of 1928. The road uniform still retained the solid blue yolk on the shoulders.

1970-92

Another distinctive change was made to the Leafs uniform prior to the start of the 1970-71 season, when the NHL introduced legislation requiring the home team to wear white uniforms at home. The crest remained unchanged except the word "Toronto" which was now straight across the crest, parallel to the words "Maple Leafs". The arm stripes on both home and away uniforms was discontinued, replaced with a solid yolk extending from the neck to the wrist. A solid stripe on the waist, three solid stripes on the stockings and a miniature Leaf crest on the shoulders completed the new uniform design.

In 1975, the Leafs went to the v-necked collar for the first time for the 1972-73 season, but went back to the tie down collar for 1973-74 to 1975-76. In 1976-77, the collar went back to the V-neck shape. In 1975, the leggings were altered to have two stripes instead of three. In 1977, names appeared on the back of the road uniform and by 1979, on the back of the home jersey as well. Ceremonial patches, such as those celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Gardens, commemorating the Heart and Stroke fund, and dedications to King Clancy and Harold Ballard were common features in the past decade.

1992 TO PRESENT

During selected games of the 1991-92 season, the Leafs wore an "Original Six" styled uniform, similar in design to the classic jerseys of the 1940's. The fans greeted the "old style" design enthusiastically and with that in mind, the first design changes to the Leafs uniform in 22 years occurred in 1992-93. The uniform is a mixture of the old - triple stripes on the legs, two stripes on the arm and waist with the solid shoulder and arm stripe being discontinued - and the new, with the distinctive 11-point Leaf crest remaining. The shoulder patch features an old-styled Leaf, much like the one featured on the "Original Six" uniform. Honoured sweater numbers were commemorated by special shoulder patches on two current Leaf jerseys beginning in 1993-94. In 1997-98, the numerals and letters on the back of the sweater were modified to match the exact letters of the Maple Leaf logo. A mesh-styrene under-arm was also incorporated. In 1998-99, in commemoration of the final National Hockey League action at the venerable Maple Leaf Gardens, a special jersey was worn for five home games and five road games. It featured a 35-point Leaf crest on the front and solid blue yolk along the shoulders. The jersey also incorporated the six-eyelet lace and tie which was a feature of the Leaf uniform from 1958 to 1973. Beginning in the 2000-01 season, the Maple Leafs altered the jersey with a new Varsity Block number design and a stylized TML logo as a shoulder patch.