

ACT 1: SEASON LOCKOUT

Prologue) The Phantom Menace

Cue Ice Cleaning music and enter ZAMBONI. A Commentators' desk sits C.S. facing the audience. Two penalty boxes are placed next to the desk and team benches are positioned stage left and right. After a couple of laps, ZAMBONI stops to address the audience.

ZAMBONI

I come no more to make you laugh,
Such Noble Scenes, as draw the Eye to flow
We now present. Those that can Pity, here
Be sad, as we would make ye. Think ye see
The very Players of our Noble Story:
As they were Living: Then, in a moment, see
How soon their Mightiness, meets Misery:
And if you can be merry then, I'll say,
A Man may weep upon his Wedding-day.

ZAMBONI continues to clean the ice as Players' Association Director BUCKINGHAM enters with NORFOLK and SUFFOLK. BUCKINGHAM is carrying a contract proposal in his hand.

BUCKINGHAM Who did guide,
I mean who set the Body, and the Limbs
Of this Contract together?

NORFOLK All this was order'd by the good Discretion
Of the right Reverend Commissioner of York.

BUCKINGHAM The devil speed him: No man's Puck is freed
From his Ambitious finger. What had he
To do in these fierce vanities?

SUFFOLK I do know
 Defencemen of mine, three at the least, that have
 By this, so sicken'd their Estates, that never
 They shall abound as formerly.

BUCKINGHAM Why all this Business
Our Reverend Commissioner carried.

NORFOLK Like it your Grace,
The Press takes notice of the private difference
Betwixt you, and the Commissioner. Consider
What his high Hatred would effect.

SUFFOLK Lo, where comes that Rock
 That we advise your shunning.

Commissioner WOLSEY enters and exits with his LACKEYS, laughing at BUCKINGHAM. WOLSEY holds the "great seal" (a stuffed baby seal) that he will carry with him throughout the play. He also carries a mitre and is adorned with gold chains and jewelry.

BUCKINGHAM This Butcher's Cur is venom-mouth'd, and I
 Have not the power to muzzle him!

NORFOLK What, are you chafed?
 Ask God for Temp'rance, that's th' appliance only
 Which your disease requires.

BUCKINGHAM I'll to the King...

SUFFOLK Be advis'd;
 Heat not a Furnace for your foe so hot
 That it do singe yourself.

BUCKINGHAM Sir, I thank you, but this top-proud fellow,
 I do know to be corrupt and treasonous.

NORFOLK Say not treasonous!

BUCKINGHAM To th' King I'll say't, and make my vouch as strong
 As shot of Puck. This cunning Commissioner
 The Articles o'th' Settlement drew
 As himself pleas'd; and they were ratified
 As he cried "Thus let be." Let the King know
 (As soon he shall by me) that thus the Commissioner
 Does buy and sell his Honour as he pleases,
 And for his own advantage.

NORFOLK I am sorry
 To hear this of him; and could wish he were
 Something mistaken in't.

Enter a SERGEANT with two GUARDS. The GUARDS carry a hockey net with them.

SERGEANT My lord Buckingham, and Director
 Of the Players' Association, I
 Arrest thee of High Treason, in the name
 Of our most Sovereign King.

The GUARDS lower the hockey net over BUCKINGHAM's head.

BUCKINGHAM Lo you my Lord
The net has fall'n upon me!

SERGEANT 'Tis his Highness' pleasure
You shall to th' Tower.

BUCKINGHAM It will help me nothing
To plead mine innocence.
(*pointing to the contract*) The will of Heaven
Be done in this and all things! Fare you well.

Everyone freezes – cue Soap Opera music.

VOICEOVER Is this the end of Players' Association Director
Buckingham? Indeed, is this the end of hockey itself?
Tune in next week for another episode of the "Puck and
the Stateless" here on UCSN.

*The SERGEANT and GUARDS escort BUCKINGHAM away and all
exit as we hear the familiar strains of the Upstart Crow Sports
Network (UCSN) theme.*

Scene 1) Lockout Update Part I

*FLETCHER and FALSTAFF take their places at the Commentators'
desk. FLETCHER is your knowledgeable sports-savvy type who often
plays "straight man" to FALSTAFF's obnoxious and overbearing
character. Two penalty boxes sit next to the desk. Team benches are
positioned stage left and right.*

FALSTAFF You're watching Upstart Crow Sports Network,
Toronto's only Elizabethan sports station. If you're not
watching us, it ain't iambic pentameter, folks! Good
evening Sports Fans and Fringe Fans alike! If you like
hockey – and we know you do – then you have had a
long, dry season and we're here to help. And if you like
great Elizabethan verse – and we know you do – then you
have had a long, dry season...

FLETCHER Can't help you with that one, because this is Upstart
Crow Sports Network coming to you live from the
majestic outdoor splendour of the Borden Street Stadium.
But before we get started, I'd like to thank the sponsors of
tonight's broadcast: The Mistress Ford Motor Company

and the Denmark Tourist Board: "Come for the Wine – Stay for the Ghost Tours." My name is John Fletcher and with me is that huge hill of flesh, the master of the microphone, sandwich spokesperson, and luddite extraordinaire, Jumping Jack Falstaff.

FALSTAFF Good to be here, John.

FLETCHER We had hoped to bring you tonight's scheduled matchup between the Edinburgh Islanders and the Sussex Senators, but as you've seen, League owners and the Players Union continue to be at loggerheads over a new player's contract. Looks like we are on our way to the first ever "lost season" in Elizabethan Sports.

FALSTAFF It's a tragedy, John, a real tragedy, when I think about the dashed prospects of all the young hopefuls out there. There's no season, so there's no chance for them to play the game they love. Even the Players' Association has advised its members to try to pick up contracts in the New World.

FLETCHER Hockey? In Upper Canada? Yeah, like that's ever going to take off, eh? I'm receiving word that we may have an update on the lockout. We go now to our man at centre ice, Raphael Holinshead, for a live update. Take it away, RH!

HOLINSHEAD, the intellectual who wants desperately to fit into the Sports World, is on the sidelines with HENRY VIII and WOLSEY. KATHARINE enters from the opposite end of the rink followed by the rest of the PLAYERS in a huddled mass.

HOLINSHEAD Thank you, John. I'm over at the court of Henry Eight where negotiations are at an impasse. With Director Buckingham under arrest and Commissioner Wolsey's vengeful tactics continuing without check, the season may very well be in jeopardy. Hockey's only hope lies in the pious protestations of Queen Katharine.

KATHARINE and the PLAYERS kneel before their sovereign.

HENRY VIII Arise, and take place by us.

KATHARINE Nay, we must longer kneel: I am a Suitor.
I am solicited not by a few,