

Former Leaf Holland a world away



Written By JAKE COURTEPATTE

Sometimes when you need to bring a spark back to your career, a change of pace is necessary.

NHL journeyman Peter Holland, a seven-year veteran of five different NHL clubs, may have found his spark in the most unlikely of places: New Zealand.

The 27-year old centreman headed across seas last weekend to take part in the Ice Hockey Classic, an exhibition series pitting current and former NHLers against each other in a Canada-United States rivalry.

With around 10,000 tickets sold, Holland led the Canadians to an 8 ? 5 victory with a hat trick.

?To come out and get the win was a lot of fun,? said Holland, who notched the first goal of the game on the penalty kill early in the first period. ?It's a good group of guys we travelled with, on both sides?obviously everyone's competing out there, and the crowd was really into it, which gets your blood pumping.?

Holland admitted that although the game was simply an exhibition, the rivalry burns deep between the two flags.

?Anytime you get Canada and the USA, you put on the two jerseys and it's a bit of a rivalry obviously, so bad blood starts to flow.?

After Holland notched his second in the middle frame, it was his hat trick goal that was the sixth and deciding in the third period.

Holland said he was ?happy? with where his game is right now.

?I'm working on improving some of the aspects I've targeted as weaknesses, and improving upon my strengths.?

An outdoor game was to be played in a stadium in Wellington on Sunday as well, with five-figures worth of tickets sold, though it was cancelled last minute due to strong winds.

For Holland, the exhibition may have been more than just a friendly competition. Having bounced around the NHL since being drafted in the first round by the Anaheim Ducks in 2009, Holland has skated for the Ducks, the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Arizona

Coyotes, the Montreal Canadien's farm club the Laval Rockets, and currently, the New York Rangers.

A few seasons bouncing between the NHL and AHL with the Ducks club led Holland to be traded to his hometown Leafs, where he thrived he thrived in his first season in 2014-15, putting up 25 points in 62 games.

After the 2015-16 season, Holland resigned with the Leafs to a one-year, \$1.3-million deal. In the past a tenacious, big body grinder, Holland was quickly overshadowed by a plethora of talented rookie Leaf forwards, namely Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner, and Connor Brown.

Ice time became a lost cause for the 25-year old, who was scratched for 17 of the Leafs' first 25 games of the season.

The key component in a move to free up roster space, the Leafs traded Holland to the Arizona Coyotes, in exchange for a conditional future draft pick.

The move from Canada's hockey hotbed to the dry heat of Glendale was a monstrous change for the man who grew up practicing on the family pond at the Hollands' home just north of Bolton. He attended Humberview Secondary School in Bolton.

"I'm excited to start this new chapter," said Holland at the time of the trade. "I'm looking forward to getting back into a lineup consistently."

After a half-season with the Coyotes, Holland had a stellar start to the season with the Habs' AHL Rockets, playing at almost a point-per-game pace before being traded to the Rangers, where he has one year remaining on his NHL deal.