



Blackhawks the stars of 'The Tonight Show'

By Josh Brewster - NHL.com Correspondent

LOS ANGELES – A visit to the "Tonight Show" set by the Stanley Cup champion is becoming a welcome epilogue to the NHL season. And Monday night, Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews, Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook represented the Chicago Blackhawks to the show's Burbank set, where they took part in musical fakery, gag gifts and jokes, all in the course of a lighthearted appearance with Jay Leno. What more could you ask for out of a Tonight Show guest?

With a series-clinching Game 6 drawing the best television rating for an NHL game in 36 years, and the series' average viewership its highest in 13 years, the NHL arrived in at NBC Studios in Burbank riding high.

A cold opening featuring host Leno careening into the studio parking lot with the Cup perched on a Cooper Mini set the tone for this year's Cup night on The Tonight Show, which the host referred to as a "Blackhawks extravaganza."

After the monologue, Kane entered first with the Stanley Cup, followed by Keith, Seabrook and Toews.

The audience saw highlights of Kane's winning goal, then a big hit by Seabrook on Flyer Ville Leino that Leno cracked gave him "mixed emotions" because the player's name is so close to "Leno." Now-famous footage of Keith taking a puck to the face was next, then a clip of Toews capturing the Conn Smythe Trophy.

Keith got in a quip about being on a liquid diet, and then presented Leno a gift of a human tooth on a necklace, while Toews presented Leno with a Blackhawks jersey with the host's name on the back, adorned with the number one.

Keith's gag gift echoed his now-famous choice to stay in an important conference final playoff game against San Jose, missing only a few minutes of action after losing seven teeth. There was, however, something a little too perfect about the gleaming enamel chopper he presented to the veteran funnyman.

"They made that for me," Keith said of the prop tooth. "It was nice to give something back for having us on the show."

Kane told NHL.com that he heard about Keith's gift idea before the show.

"I found out in the rehearsal today," Kane smiled. "It was pretty funny. 'Dunc' has been getting a lot of questions about his teeth, so, it was something where he can have a little fun with it."

Even better that Leno was game enough to wear Keith's necklace for the duration of the show, during interviews with actors Josh Brolin and Ashley Greene, also musical guest Cee Lo Green.

"That was the neat part about it," Keith told NHL.com. "I noticed it on him about halfway through the show. 'Ah, he's still wearing the tooth.' It was pretty cool."

Leno invited the quartet to join The Tonight Show Band for the remainder of the show. Showmen always, the Blackhawks jumped right in. Kane placed the Stanley Cup in front of band leader Rickey Minor's perch, then opened the set on tambourine with Seabrook on cowbell. Toews and Keith joined on guitar.

"They pick up the instruments so quickly," joked Leno after a commercial break. "There's nothing these guys can't do."

With a commercial break set list that not surprisingly included the Blackhawks' adopted theme song, "Chelsea Dagger" by the Fratellis, the Stanley Cup-winning quartet seemed to dazzle the studio audience. Obviously hoping to avoid the eruption of a "Milli Vanilli-esque" controversy, however, the Blackhawks copped to faking their way through their musical performances when pressed on the subject backstage.

"I wasn't contributing," Seabrook told NHL.com of his cowbell prowess. "I was making noise."

Some observers were impressed with Toews' ability to make it seem that he was actually playing guitar, but Toews confessed to NHL.com that his musical ability is strictly show biz.

"I was fake playing the guitar," confessed the playoff MVP. "I made it look like I actually was playing, got the crowd going a bit."

Toews and company are getting to be familiar faces on the Leno set. On March 16, the entire Blackhawks team appeared while the team's Olympic participants showed off their medals.

"We were back pretty soon, so that's not bad," Toews said. "We're slowly working our way up to be regular guests. It was a pretty cool thing today and we'll be ready to give 'em some (more) stories next time."

"(Leno) has been awesome both times we've been here," Kane continued. "He's made an effort to get us into the show, to be a part of the show."

Toews says that despite days of late nights, parades, appearances and parties behind them, it's not quite time to let the summer begin, not yet time to wait for each individual's day with the Cup.

"I think we can still stretch it out a bit until our day with the Cup," a weary Toews smiled. "We're gonna have some fun here in Los Angeles and look forward to going back to Chicago."

All of the Blackhawks acknowledged the gravity of being a part of an American television institution.

"It's quite an honor to be out here," Kane told NHL.com. "It's something you kind of dream of doing and being a part of. I guess (those are) the perks of having a great season and winning."

"It was super cool," said Seabrook. "We had a lot of fun."

"I texted some of my buddies and they were just pumped," Keith said backstage. "Hopefully they can check it out and have a laugh at me."

Toews and Leno enjoyed one of the funnier exchanges of the night when Leno expressed surprise that even notoriously tough Philadelphia fans booed when Toews was awarded the trophy for playoff MVP.

"We took the boos as more of a compliment," joked Toews.

"I say that every night after the monologue," Leno shot back.

As expected, a substantial number of Blackhawks jerseys were visible in the studio audience and in the streets outside the studios.

Michael Urbach, a Lake Arrowhead, CA, transplant originally from Skokie, Illinois, figured that if he couldn't make the parade in the Windy City, this would do as a west coast parade.

Dave Blass, an 18-year SoCal resident, traveled to Game 5 in Chicago and Game 6 in Philly. The Tonight Show was a fitting end.

"I've got to be there to thank the guys for a great season," Blass said. "They all tried so hard. Keith lost seven teeth. For people who don't know hockey, that's a hockey player, right there."