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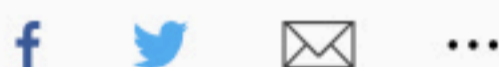
Centennial Survival Kits a hot holiday commodity

Give the gift of exclusive Leafs finds this season



The Exclusive Centennial Survival Kit celebrates the Leafs' 100th anniversary. (CONTRIBUTED)

Tues., Dec. 20, 2016



It's a Canadian seasonal tradition as beloved as gingerbread and warm apple cider: waking up on a holiday morning and slipping into a jersey worn by a big, sweaty guy with missing teeth.

No, it's not your uncle's high-school lacrosse sweater; it's an actual game-worn jersey from the likes of your favourite Leaf. And yes, it's been washed.

Game-worn gear (there are also socks, pants, sticks, skates and more) is just one example of the huge spread of gift items offered by Real Sports Apparel. Known as the authentic store of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Toronto Raptors, this game-day beacon welcomes fans at Gate 1 of the Air Canada Centre. Run by fans for fans, the shop has the largest selection of exclusive merchandise on the planet. And if you can't make it down to the ACC to shop in person, Real Sports Apparel's selection is available [online](#).

Sure to be a hot item this season is the Exclusive Centennial Survival Kit, celebrating the Leafs' 100th anniversary with a grudge match between the Buds and the Detroit Red Wings. The game kicks off the Leafs' yearlong Centennial celebration. And as the outdoor rink at BMO Field chills down for the New Year's Day match, fans in the stands can warm up in what Mark Blanchard, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment's director, retail, calls a "carefully curated bundle of items that will help get fans ready for the game." The kits, available exclusively in store, will feature the new Centennial jersey (blank or custom), a knit scarf, pom toque and a Centennial jersey patch, all of which come packaged in a keepsake case designed with Reebok. Blanchard calls the kits a surefire favourite for lucky rinkside fans or for those watching from home.

Ed Lea, a Toronto art director and Leafs fan, is already excited for it. "My wish list is topped by the Centennial Jersey, for sure," he says. "Not only does it look fantastic, it represents a positive change for the future based on the glory of the past. It's pretty poetic." Lea, who's already the proud owner of "a multitude of Leafs T-shirts, a few hats, a jersey, car mats, mini sticks and a stuffed bear or two," considers it "a nice side note" that the Centennial jersey will be worn in the debut season of Leafs' star rookie Auston Matthews — one of the team's best prospects for the future in a jersey that celebrates the past.

For fans who have it all, Real Sports Apparel has quirky gifts, too. How about Raptors festive sweaters (i.e. the ultimate ugly Christmas sweater), supersize We The North flags or player-designed hats? There's also lots of vintage-style gear from the Toronto Huskies, the city's first pro basketball team. Leafs die-hards will love the eight-ounce Centennial flask, paisley fashion scarf or 10-inch replica of the ACC's Darryl Sittler statue. For the sports fan on your list, it's a one-stop shop.