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Pair inject some fighting spirit into Leafs lineup

Stajan, Colaiacovo hope new workout regimen will help team punch above its weight in the standings

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Don't expect Carlo Colaiacovo or Matt Stajan to take on NHL heavyweights such as Georges Laraque or Chris Neil this season, but the pair of young Toronto Maple Leafs spent time over the summer working on the finer points of pugilism.

In addition to their road work and weight-room sessions, Stajan and Colaiacovo worked out under the watchful eye of former amateur boxing champion Wayne Bourque at his Toronto gym, Centre Ring Boxing, in the hopes the extra work would improve their overall conditioning.

"When I told people I was taking boxing classes, they didn't think, but you really have to experience it to see how much it helps," said Colaiacovo, who had an assist in the Leafs' 5-4 preseason loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins at the Air Canada Centre last night.

"It really has helped my cardiovascular endurance and my muscle endurance. I think it's something that I'm going to



Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby scores on Maple Leafs netminder Vesa Toskala during the third period of their exhibition game in Toronto last night. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

keep doing."

Colaiacovo and Stajan would hit the gym twice a week for hour-long workouts with Bourque, the cousin of Calga-

ry Flames forward Rene Bourque.

The NHLers hit the heavy bag, worked on staple boxing exercises such as pushups and

abdominal crunches, as well as the all-important footwork aspect of the fight game.

"We hear it time and again from coaches, that the boxing

workouts are adding a crucial cross-training effect that not only enhances player conditioning, but adds a bit of variety that help players stay motivated in their training," Bourque said.

Colaiacovo and Stajan are hardly heavyweights. Each player has only one major penalty to their credit since the 2004-05 lockout.

Toronto's Ryan Hollweg and Paul Bissonnette of the Penguins fought in the second period last night, just after Leafs teenager Luke Schenn scored his first preseason goal.

The young defenceman has now played three games in a row. He will sit out tonight's affair in Buffalo against the Sabres, but is expected to play in the remaining exhibition matches.

Schenn has been impressive, but remains a long-shot to make the roster as there are nine veteran defencemen in training camp and the Leafs will be careful not to rush the former Canadian junior team member.

"Again, it will depend on who's playing the best," Wilson said when asked about

the likelihood of Schenn beginning the season in the NHL. "So far, nobody has failed."

Toronto goaltender Vesa Toskala was solid in his first preseason action, making highlight-reel pad save on ney Crosby in the second od.

The Leafs led 2-1 after the first period, after speedy Iminic Moore scored his second short-handed goal in many games and Alexei P. karovsky tipped in Colaiacovo's point shot. Schenn put the Leafs up 3-1 early in the second with a screen shot.

Janne Pesonen and Martin scored for the Penguins in the first and second periods respectively, and Crosby tied the game with a breakaway goal in the third period.

On the very next shift, Toronto blueliner Tomas Kaberle scored on a wrist shot from the point.

Pittsburgh defenceman Letang tied the game at 4-4 with 3 minutes 46 seconds remaining in the third period before Matt Cooke knocked a rebound for the winner 1:35 left.