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Blittner's Blue Line: Bruce Bennett, A Hall Of Fame Photographer

Hockeyology by [Matthew Blittner](#) - January 29, 2025 0



There's an old saying about how a picture says a thousand words. Assuming the math is accurate on that, then, as a columnist, I must tip my hat to the photographers of the world because they clearly convey a story better and more succinctly than I do.

Chief among those photographers is a man named Bruce Bennett, who has been capturing the world of sports with his camera for roughly 43 years. And as Bennett estimates, when it comes to hockey, he's shot pictures at over 6,000 games! That's a whole lot of words being conveyed by those photos! If Bennett simply took one picture at each of his 6,000-plus games, he'd be at over SIX MILLION words!

My fingers are aching just thinking about how many articles I'd have to type to get to that word count. (Forget aching, they're ready to pop right off my hands and run away at the mere thought of typing 6,000,000 words). Okay, enough about me, let's get back to Bruce Bennett.

On Sunday, July 13, 2025, Bruce Bennett is going to be inducted into The New York State Hockey Hall of Fame at a ceremony held in Troy, NY. Normally, when you think of the term "Hall of Famer" you immediately think about players. Then you think about coaches and executives. You may think about some broadcasters. Maybe a writer or two will pop into your head. But rarely does anybody ever think about photographers. (Even though they're plenty deserving).

Well, one of the best sports photographers in history is now going to rightly receive recognition of the highest order for his brilliant career. Of course, Bennett will say that he doesn't deserve the honor, nor does he want to give a speech, but, luckily, he has just under six months to prepare himself to be the focus of the cameras instead of being behind them.

So, in honor of Bennett's upcoming big day, "Blittner's Blue Line" caught up with the famed photographer to get his thoughts on being a New York State Hockey Hall of Fame electee.

*Editor's Note: Questions and Answers have been lightly edited for clarity.

Q: What does this honor mean to you?

Bennett: "It means that my line, 'who is the one person in the National Hockey League who has taken over a million shots and has never scored a goal,' that's me. I guess it was worthwhile after all, never scoring a goal."

Q: You're a native New Yorker, what are your thoughts on being honored in your own home state?

Bennett: "I can't stress how important it is to me and how much I take it seriously. I'm a New Yorker. I was born in Brooklyn and grew up on Long Island. Love the region, love going out shooting pictures. When I'm not shooting hockey games I love traveling around the New York area and taking pictures just for fun. So yeah and the induction class as well. I mean, couldn't have a better group of guys to go in with. Very, very special feeling."

Q: The whole induction class has yet to be announced, but some of the known names, along with yours are Jiggs McDonald, Billy Smith and Bryan Trottier. How do you feel being inducted alongside those individuals?

Bennett: "When I started with the Islanders in 1982 and served as their team photographer from '82 to 2004, I saw a lot of those guys up close, photographed 'em up close. I saw how great they were as players and as human beings as well. Jiggs McDonald is a whole class unto himself. He's just a sterling broadcaster and personality. To me, it's very special when you look at those guys and their body of work. I'm just thrilled to have my name mentioned along with theirs as being in the New York State Hockey Hall of Fame."

Q: When Hall Founder Rene LeRoux called to inform you about being chosen for induction, what was your initial reaction?

Bennett: "Through the last few years, I had seen it pop up occasionally and really didn't pay too much attention. I guess they weren't garnering too much publicity back when it all started. So, I was shocked. I mean, I really didn't expect it. Rene, I had never spoken to or dealt with before. He was super enthusiastic, as was I and it was a great, long phone call. We chatted about many, many different topics."

Q: Did you think somebody was pulling a practical joke on you?

Bennett: "I wouldn't be surprised, because, with my sense of humor, I'm due to get it back from everybody, every day of the week, for all the things that I do. But as I said, I had heard of them before, it just never crossed my mind that I would ever get that call."

Q: Photographers are rarely ever the story. They're the ones capturing the stories. So how are you feeling about being the subject of the photos for once?

Bennett: "Whatever photographers do show up, they're gonna be surprised, because I don't show up in film or digital. I'm like a vampire. So it's just gonna be a bunch of guys up there, but I'm not gonna be in any of those frames."

Q: Have you already started planning your speech? Or are you going to free-wheel it for the 10 minutes you get?

Bennett: "I'm already taking notes. Things pop into my head, most of them profane. So I guess I gotta tone it down a little bit. A lot of stories from, especially the earlier days. So I'm constantly dictating ideas into my iPhone when I'm driving. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I've awakened and said, 'Oh, shoot, I'm gonna forget this. I gotta write it down.' I don't know how I'm gonna pare it down. Had an interesting conversation with my wife and she said something about how 'those 10 minutes are gonna go fast.' And I go, 'It's gonna go really slow because 10 minutes is a lot of time to fill up.'"

Q: Do you know who nominated you?

Bennett: "Rene told me it was Pat LaFontaine and his Manager, Jim Johnson, who I'm pretty close with through all the years since he's been in the business. It doesn't get any better than Pat LaFontaine standing up for you. What a class individual. Anyone who's ever dealt with him or Jim Johnson knows what a combo those two are; a power combo and charitable individuals. The greatest human beings ever."

Q: Given the location of the induction, the time of year and the proximity to places like John Boyd Thatcher State Park, are you planning on doing any funny photography during your trip?

Bennett: "That's a great idea. I'm into big bird hunting, with a camera of course. I'm always on the hunt for more big birds. So I'll do my homework before we head up there and turn a one-day trip into a couple, I hope."

Congratulations to Bruce Bennett, or as he'll now be known, Hall of Famer Bruce Bennett!



Matthew Blittner

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