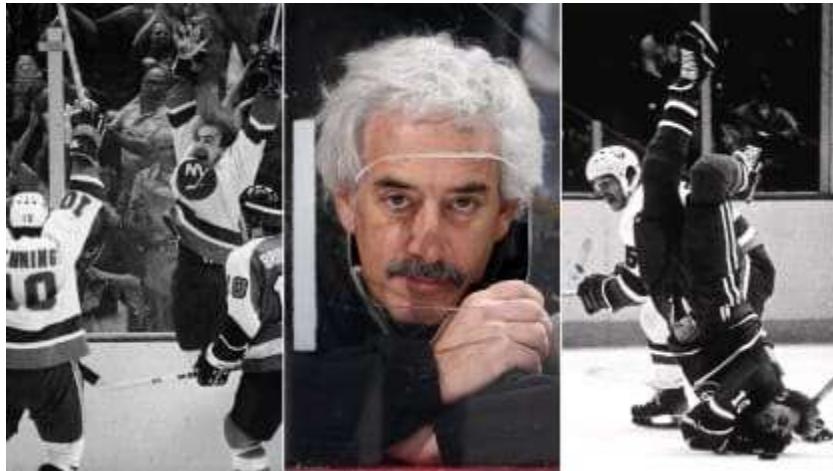


Isles Photographer Bruce Bennett to be Enshrined in the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame

Bruce Bennett becomes first photographer to be inducted into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame in Minnesota



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By **Rachel Luscher**

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For over five decades, the NHL world and New York Islanders fans have been getting to see hockey's greatest moments through the eyes and lens of legendary photographer Bruce Bennett.

The man responsible for some of hockey's most iconic moments will be rewarded on Wednesday night, as Bennett will become the first photographer to get the nod into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame with a ceremony in St. Paul, Minnesota.

"It's kind of strange to be the first photographer in US Hockey Hall of Fame, and the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto doesn't have any photographers there either," Bennett said. "To earn a living taking hockey photos is kind of bizarre, and then to be rewarded after all these years, that's even stranger."

It's his second huge honor in one year, as he was inducted in the New York State Hockey Hall of fame over the summer.

"It's kind of scary, quite honestly, that I'll have to do a little speech again, like I did in New York," he added. "I'll try to top the one I did in New York."

Among the 6,000 hockey games, six Olympic games, 45 Stanley Cup-deciding games he's covered, a few stand out as Bennett's personal favorites, although his most-treasured shots change day-to-day, month-to-month. Some famous shots include a black and white photo of Wayne Gretzky at 18 years old, an action shot of Denis Potvin delivering a signature hip check on Guy Lafleur, and of course a picture of Bob Nystrom scoring his Stanley Cup winning goal in 1980.



© Photographer Bruce Bennett photographs a battle between the Tampa Bay Lightning and the New York Islanders circa 1990 in Uniondale, New York. (Photo by Bruce Bennett/Bruce Bennett Studios via Getty Images).

He's taken over 2.5 million photos. He can still remember the first time he held a camera.

At 12 years old, he was off to a class trip to the Bronx Zoo and his father let him borrow a Kodak Instamatic camera for the day. He was thrilled, snapping photos of all the animals he saw on his adventure. He came home with no film left, but the initial spark of a life-long purpose.

"I came home and had used all the film that he had given me, I think he was upset because of the cost," Bennett said. "I just remember the feeling of that camera. It's changed a little bit since those days."

It wasn't until a few years later when he started photographing hockey.

"I was a naive 18-year-old kid, shooting pictures from the blue seats at Madison Square Garden and in the photo box at Nassau Coliseum, my cousin Don snuck us in there," Bennett recalled. "I made some black and white prints and sent them up to the Hockey News and asked them if they wanted to buy some photos."

He got a gig with the Hockey News in 1974, which then opened doors into other sports magazines. Bennett made a name for himself, covering hockey all over the Metro NY area,

taking photos at every rink that he was able to drive to, including the Islanders, Philadelphia Flyers, New Jersey Devils, Washington Capitals and New York Rangers. Nassau Coliseum had a special place in his heart, as Bennett is a Long Island native.

His stills captured the attention of Islanders General Manager Bill Torrey. Bennett got a call from Les Wagner, the Islanders public relations director at the time, with a golden opportunity in the middle of the dynasty years.

“I had no idea Mr. Torrey knew I even existed,” Bennett said. “So, I started in 1982-83 season, and basically became the de facto team photographer of sorts, even now through the Getty Images days where I work now.”

Bennett serves as the Director of Photographer at Getty Images and is still a mainstay at Islanders home games. He’s photographed all of his fellow inductees - Scott Gomez, Zach Parise, Joe Pavelski and Tara Mounsey, capturing their triumphs in their sports careers. On Wednesday, he’ll earn a triumph of his own.

“I’m super excited,” Bennett said. “The class is great. I’ve shot Gomez, Parise, Pavelski, and Mounsey. So, looking forward to it.”