

THE FISCHLER REPORT

HOCKEY'S WEEKLY THINK TANK

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HOCKEY CELEBRATES THE MAN BEHIND THE LENS:



You won't find his name in the NHL record book nor Ripley's Believe It or Not but it should be.

Bruce Bennett of Old Bethpage, Long Island has earned the title, Mister All Time Hockey Photographer – and he has the pix to prove it; not to mention the games as well.

With a click-click here and a click-clack there Bennett knocked of his 5,000th night of hockey photography Tuesday April 8th, at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum. Landmark event did not go without notice. In fact, Bruce the media man became the center of media attention himself the night of game 5,000.

Bennett's remarkable numbers include over 4,500 NHL games, 192 international games, and even eight WHA games. Throughout his storied career he has shot 33 NHL Stanley Cup deciding games and worked in over 50 different arenas.

In Part One of this two-part interview, our Scott Charles had a chance to go on one-on-one with Bennett.

*** WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED OUT IN THIS BUSINESS, HOW FAR DID YOU THINK IT WOULD GO?**

When I originally started, all I was thinking about was getting into games for free. I really didn't have any illusions about making it into a career or even a part time job. I was just happy to be getting press passes and going to games for free.

*** ARE YOU SURPRISED BY HOW FAR YOU HAVE COME THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER?**

The number is surreal. I call it stupid

Spending 5,000 nights doing anything is kind of crazy. When I broke it down into a number of different categories, I came across an astonishing number. It was 16 ½ years spent at hockey games. To me that is sillier than the 5,000.

*** WHAT HAD BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PHOTOGRAPH?**

Putting together promotions and some publicity I dug back as far as I could. The one that stands out is a black and white image of Denis Potvin giving one of his patented hip-checks to Guy Lafleur. It was black and white with a sequence of three or four frames and there was one frame with Lafleur perpendicular to the ice with his face landing on it.

*** WHO HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PLAYERS TO PHOTOGRAPH THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?**

I used to say my favorite Islander was Tomas Jonsson, simply because he would make such great faces throughout the game. He would show every emotion on his face.

Other than that, Denis Potvin just epitomized that power on ice with his skating ability. Bobby Orr was the same way, just a fluid, beautiful skater. Wayne Gretzky was always a challenge to shoot. Just because he had so many moves that you really couldn't anticipate where he was going to go. He was just a highlight reel.

(NEXT WEEK BENNETT REVEALS HIS 'MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT' AMONG OTHER TALES OF THE CAMERA.)