

BRUCE ALMIGHTY

THE ALBERT EINSTEIN OF HOCKEY PHOTOGRAPHY



BY RONNIE SHUKER

You already know the name Bruce Bennett. If you've ever perused the pages of *The Hockey News*, flipped through the features of *Fully Loaded* or clicked through THN.com, you've seen the name. It's there in the fine print, crediting some of the most memorable photos in the history of hockey.

Bennett, 57, is an icon of ice imagery. He has photographed hockey for nearly 40 years, with an estimated 40,000-plus images printed in major newspapers and magazines around the world. He has seen his profession go from film to Photoshop, the darkroom to the digital era, while the game went from the old-time hockey of the 1970s to the new-school NHL of today. The players have gotten faster and his equipment more high tech, yet his eye for what makes a photo so indelible, and louder than the accompanying words, remains the same. "When I cover a hockey game, I'm not just looking for a guy scoring a goal," he says. "I want the whole picture: I want close-ups of faces, I want to see the tension in a player's face - I want to see the competitiveness."

Bennett's first shots were in 1973 as a fan of the New York teams he rooted for as a kid. He took some photos of the Rangers from the balcony of Madison Square Garden and of the Islanders from the stands at Nassau Coliseum, then mailed those shots to *The Hockey News* and asked if we needed a freelance photographer. His photos have filled our pages ever since.

When he started Bruce Bennett Studios a year later, he made around \$4 a photo (one now goes for \$50-\$75). He ran BBS for 30 years, then sold it in 2004 to Getty Images, where he now works as director of photography, hockey imagery. Bennett still shoots up to five games a week - mostly in his home territory of the Islanders, Rangers, Devils and Flyers - and visits up to 25 arenas per season, chronicling hockey's highs and lows from every plausible angle, looking for the perfect shot. "Without a doubt, he is the No. 1 hockey photographer of all-time," says Carmin Romanelli, Getty's VP of sports. "This is a guy who owns and bleeds and loves hockey, and what he does. This is a guy that was born to do this."

BRUCE BY THE NUMBERS

4127

NHL REGULAR SEASON & PLAYOFF GAMES

8

WHA GAMES

261

NHL PRE-SEASON GAMES

20

OLD-TIMERS & MASTERS GAMES

183

INT'L TOURS, TOURNAMENT & EXHIBITION GAMES

45

MINOR HOCKEY, JUNIOR & COLLEGIATE GAMES

144

OLYMPIC GAMES

36

SEASONS

30

NHL ALL-STAR GAMES

52

ARENAS FOR REGULAR SEASON NHL GAMES

32

NHL STANLEY CUP PRESENTATIONS

1

WINTER CLASSIC GAME

4810

TOTAL GAMES SHOT THROUGH 2011-12