

## SHUTTERBUG BENNETT GETS THE PICTURE

Bruce Bennett is the National Hockey League's most prolific photographer. That seems a safe assumption.

Bennett and his assistants have shot, by his estimate, 800,000 frames since 1973. The 34-year-old photographer has accounted for about 85 per cent of those himself since first offering his services to *The Hockey News* 15 years ago.

"I was just a kid with a camera," remembers Bennett, whose first pictures were taken from the blue seats at Madison Square Garden. Quantity, not quality, was his early trademark. Since then, the quality of Bennett's photographs has caught up with the quantity, as evidenced by the pictorial feature on hockey in Harlem, and many other photographs in this issue.

After earning a diploma in accounting from W.C. Post College on Long Island, Bennett joined a local magazine. Two years later he went into business on his own. Through the years, he has established himself as a growth industry. Bennett now employs nine people at his Hicksville, N.Y., studio.

Seventy per cent of his work is hockey-related. He is team photographer for the New York Islanders and Philadelphia Flyers, but annually shoots at about 10 of the 21 NHL arenas. Including playoffs, he will photograph about 140 games this season. His assistants will cover an additional 20 to 30 games.

Bennett's most familiar subject, as you might expect, is **Wayne Gretzky**. The shutterbug figures he has about 6,000 frames of Gretzky as an Edmonton Oiler and another 1,000—already—as a Los Angeles King.

Just what will Bennett do with 6,000 shots of Gretzky in an Oiler uniform, you ask? Good question. Not much, for the most part. That's one of the hazards of the trade—so to speak. The worst day of the year each season for Bennett is the first or second Monday in March, the NHL's trade deadline. Generally, there is a flurry of 11th-hour deals that render hundreds of Bennett photos out of date.

Bennett insists The Great One is as



difficult to capture on film as he is on the ice.

"**Mario Lemieux** and Gretzky are very hard to shoot," he says. "They do a lot of floating around—waiting for the puck to come to them."

Yet, recording Gretzky's 77th goal in 1982—which broke **Phil Esposito's** single-season record—remains one of Bennett's fondest memories. That, and a devastating hit **Denis Potvin** once laid on **Guy Lafleur**.

subjects, for the grim determination with which they approach their work.

Ex-NHLer **Dennis Polonich** wasn't as easy to shoot—off the ice. Nor was **Dan Maloney**, one night in Toronto.

Bennett had Polonich in his sights during a game at Nassau Coliseum. "I focussed in on him squirting water into his mouth," recalls Bennett. "I guess he didn't want his picture taken, because he turned it around and hosed me down pretty good."

Another time, Maloney didn't appreciate Bennett's presence during a post-game conference. Then coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Maloney started towards Bennett, fixed one of his menacing glares on the photographer, and suggested he see what was developing elsewhere.

Bennett retreated faster than the Brit-



Bruce Bennett got into a one-sided water fight with NHLer Dennis Polonich.

His favorite targets are players whose facial expressions mirror their intensity. **Tomas Jonsson** of the Islanders is among the best, because "he's always making great faces." Calgary's **Joe Nieuwendyk** is another favorite because he usually has his tongue hanging out. **Bob Gainey** of Montreal and **John Tonelli** of Los Angeles are also excellent

ish at Dunkirk. Get the picture? Well, Bennett didn't—for one of the few times during his career.

*Steve Snyder*