



Photo courtesy Bruce Bennett Studios

## Bruce Bennett: He Shoots, He Scores

by Erin Harrington-Plonski

Photographer Bruce Bennett doesn't just stay in the game - he's synonymous with it. Touted as the world's largest source for hockey photography, Bennett set his sights on a goal - and scored.

Marking his beginnings in 1972, he sent in some photos, "just as a fan," to *The Hockey News* in Toronto. Turned out, their photographer had just moved on to something else and they offered him three bucks a photo. "I jumped on it," he recalls.

Today, Bennett and his staff are the official team photographers for four National Hockey League teams, (the Rangers, Islanders, Devils, and Flyers), as well as for two American Hockey League teams, (the Women's New York Power of the WUFA Soccer league and the New York Dragons arena football league). They also service newspapers and magazines worldwide with hockey photography.

Chances are, if you're at a hockey game, so is Bruce, or one of his staff.

Bruce Bennett and his staff are the official team photographers for the NHL's Rangers, Islanders, Devils and Flyers.

"We have 12 photographers; we do about 400 games a year. I, personally, do about 120 games a season. The other photographers on the staff pick up the slack. And, after 29 years of photographing hockey, if the Rangers are home and the Philadelphia Flyers are home, than the closer team wins in my book. That's where I'm going to be," Bennett admits. When he can't be there, Bennett relies on about 15 photographers for the National Hockey League in other parts of the country that he can dispatch as needed.

How'd an Island guy who happened to love hockey and photography manage to marry up the two? "*The Hockey*



(left) - Bennett captured this action shot of NY Rangers wing Pavel Bure at Madison Square Garden on March 3, 2002.

(below) - Wayne Gretzky (l) and Bennett in April 1999

us to pick up more photographic machinery so that we could service our own clients and open the doors to the general public."

It's all in a day's work, and a heavy workload it is. He sifts through e-mails at home each morning, puts out some business proposals and answers questions clients might have. In the office by 9:30 a.m., he coordinates which photographers are going out on which assignments; makes sure that everything's in shape in the storefront and that the workflow is working properly; checks in with the office manager and the person in charge of traffic control to see if there are any outstanding issues that need to be addressed directly. Then, he packs

equipment and heads off to shoot hockey games at night. If it's the Islanders, he's home by 10. The Philadelphia Flyers, 1:00 a.m. Backed by a competent, trustworthy staff, he credits that "if I decide to take a night off, I know the game's going to be covered properly."

Bennett's secrets to a successful business are pretty

much what you'd expect. "I think showing the client that you care is the most important aspect of doing business," he states. "You can't just shoot a job and walk away from it."

Bruce Bennett doesn't walk away. He's staked out a national/international following and remains loyal to his Long Island roots. "All of my photographers come from Long Island. They're local residents. Obviously, dealing with the Long Island community is great, because it's a community that I grew up with and I'm familiar with. I'm in my own element here." □



*News* was where everyone in the hockey world would see my photos. I guess it was through that connection that someone would see something they needed and would say, 'Hey, I want to get that photo for our publication,'" Bennett reflects. He notes that he really did very little marketing through the years; word of mouth and the fact that those photos had a good showcase through *The Hockey News* brought clients to his door.

Internationally-known, Bruce Bennett Studios has photographers not only in the U.S. and overseas, but agencies around the world that also market their photography. Bennett's scope of services spans much more than merely the action on the ice, though. He also offers public relations photography services, portraits, product shots, an on-site processing lab, and digital services. In addition, Bruce Bennett Studios, in conjunction with the Long Island Association, exclusively produced two coffee table books of the

Island, amassing and archiving over 50,000 images of the region. (The photos are available for purchase to Long Island businesses looking to promote their companies.)

It's a lot to do, but Bruce Bennett Studios has earned a reputation for doing it all, and doing it all well.

"I guess, through the years, we've expanded into a bunch of different territories," he says. "We started back in '72 as hockey photographers and, from there, went on to public relations photography and to stock photography of the Long Island region. We had been in Hicksville for many years, and, about two years ago, moved to Farmingdale into a place that gives us retail opportunity and allowed