

PHOTOTM Insider

A Unique Magazine

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Dave Biehn

Taking Pictures Further

Hans Thieme

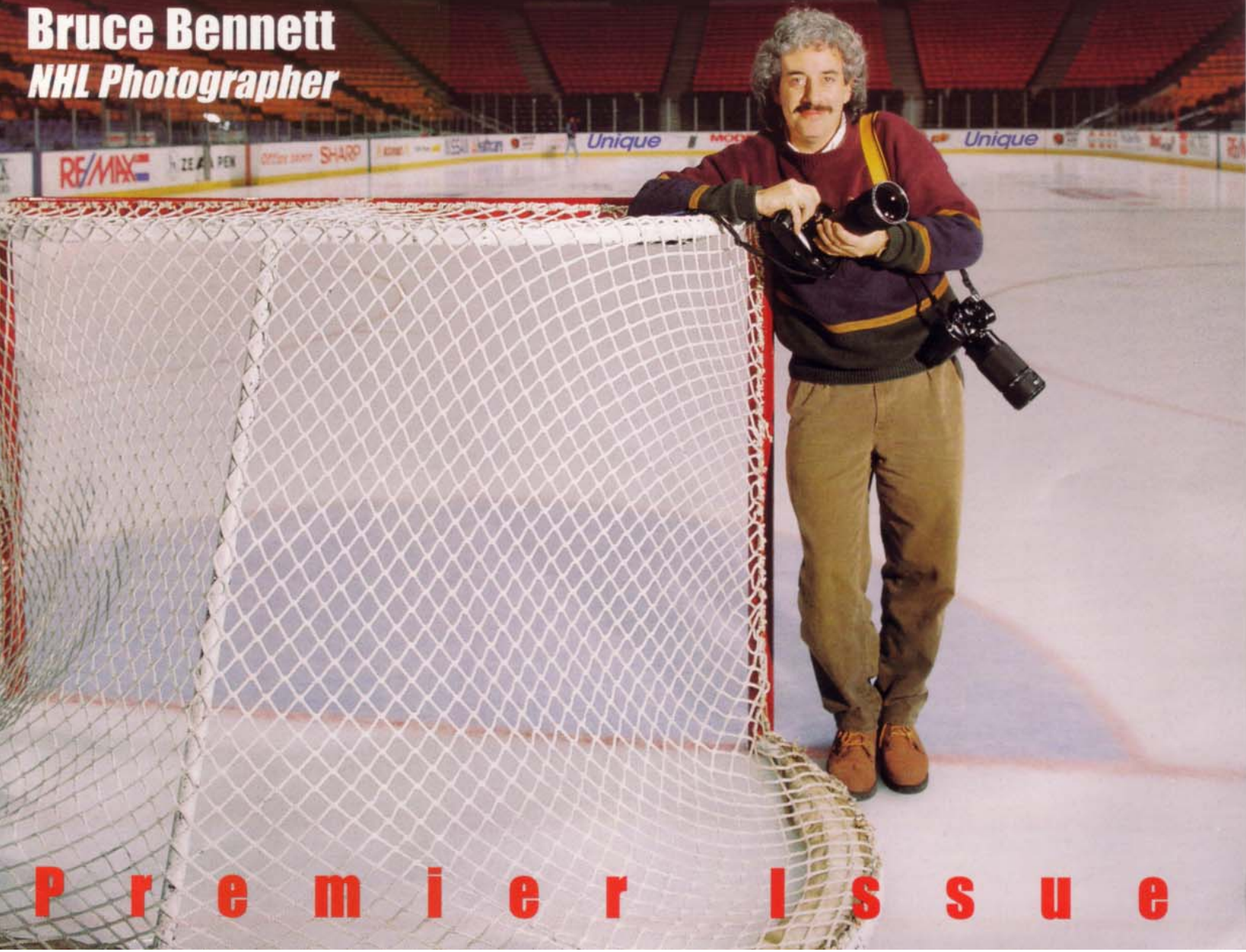
The Challenge of Change

Bruce Fizzell

Exhibition Prints

Bruce Bennett

NHL Photographer



P r e m i e r I s s u e

Focus On



Philadelphia's Mark Howe assists the Capitals Bob Babcock in flight.

Bruce Bennett

NHL Photographer

by Kathryn E. Snyder

"I just started as a fan taking pictures from the balcony of Madison Square Garden in 1973."

"I just started as a fan taking pictures from the balcony of Madison Square Garden in 1973." New York based Bruce Bennett Studios is the world's largest provider of professional hockey photographs. Within six months of those balcony shots, Bruce began to sell his pictures. The *Hockey News* (an international publication established in Montreal) paid about \$3.00 a picture for New York Rangers and New York Islanders shots. Now, his pictures appear in *Sporting News*, *Sport Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Life*, *People Magazine*, *Rinkside*, *Center Ice*, *Hockey USA* along with several other league and foreign publications.

Bruce Bennett Studios is not clearly visible from the road, but once you enter its doors you will never forget the experience. Bruce along with a staff of approximately 14, are constantly answering phones, setting up shoots, and doing research. Yes, research. Along many of the walls of the studio, from floor to ceiling, are boxes filled with team photographs. These boxes are organized by team, year, and then finally by player. It truly is an awe inspiring sight.

In his processing room are two huge E-6 machines which are constantly run-



Flyers forward Al Conroy is upended enroute to Sharks goalie Arturs Irbe.

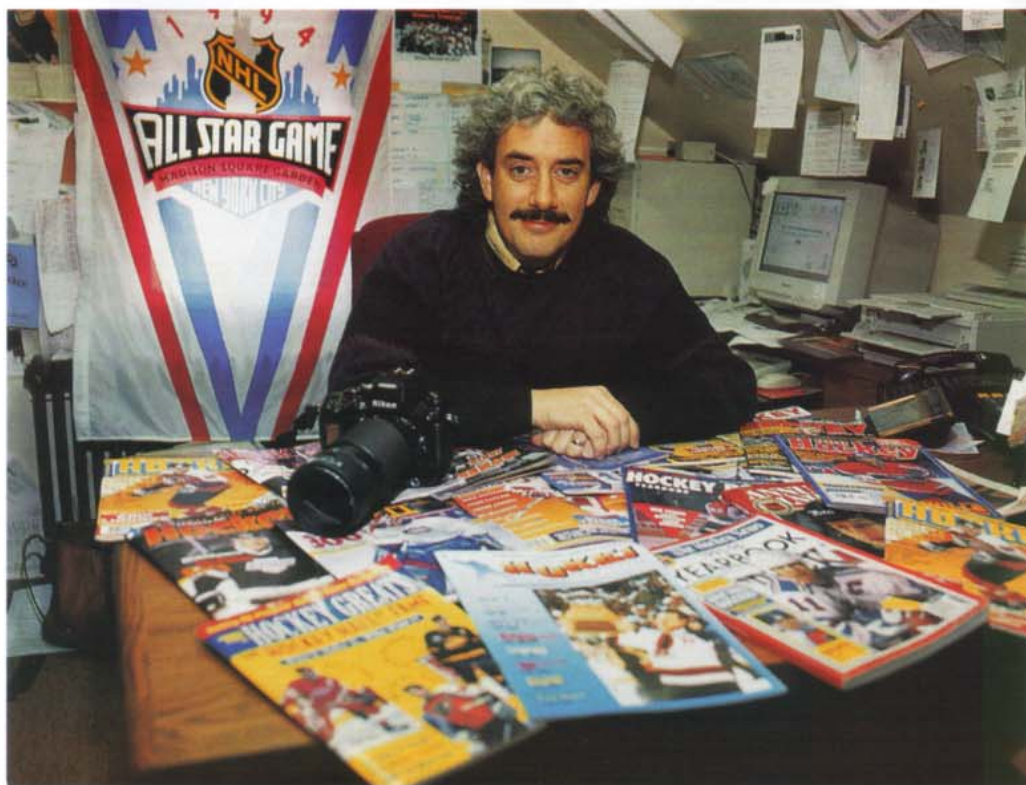
ning. The studio has the ability to handle a great deal of the work, but sometimes it is just overwhelming. All the game shots are taken on Fujichrome 100 35mm, which is processed in-house. The processing of color negative and 4x5 are farmed out.

All members of Bruce's staff are cross trained to do a variety of tasks. Although each person has a main function, the movement from job to job keeps the interest level high and allows

for multiple learning experiences. Most importantly, Bruce needs them all cross-trained in order to handle his business schedule of photographing four NHL teams (New York Islanders, New York Rangers, New Jersey Devils, and Philadelphia Flyers).

Bruce became the Islanders team photographer in 1981, with the Flyers next in 1988, the Rangers in 1990, and the Devils this season (1995-1996). Many people wonder how the studio can choose which games to photograph and how does the studio manage it all. Bruce simply chooses based on proximity. Which ever team is closest wins. It also depends on the type of contract the studio has with a team. Some teams want all of the games shot, some want just a few. Huge rivalry games are always covered because that is where the best pictures taking opportunities are. The action is more intense and there is a higher level of emotion running through the players. To cover every obligation, Bruce sends his assistants to the games to make sure every team gets their allotment of pictures.

Prepared with Fujichrome 100, he exposes his subjects with a bank of overhead flash units at f4, 1/250 sync speed. Bruce and his photographers are willing and eager to shoot 25-26 nights a month, and several public relation events during the hockey season. His photographers are switching their equipment to Canon due to the Canon's



Bruce Bennett in his studio



Double your trouble. A fan throws a puck into the fray confusing Vancouver goalie Kirk McLean.

exceptional autofocus capabilities. Bruce, however, still loves his traditional, manual focus Nikon. He is just used to focusing the camera himself.

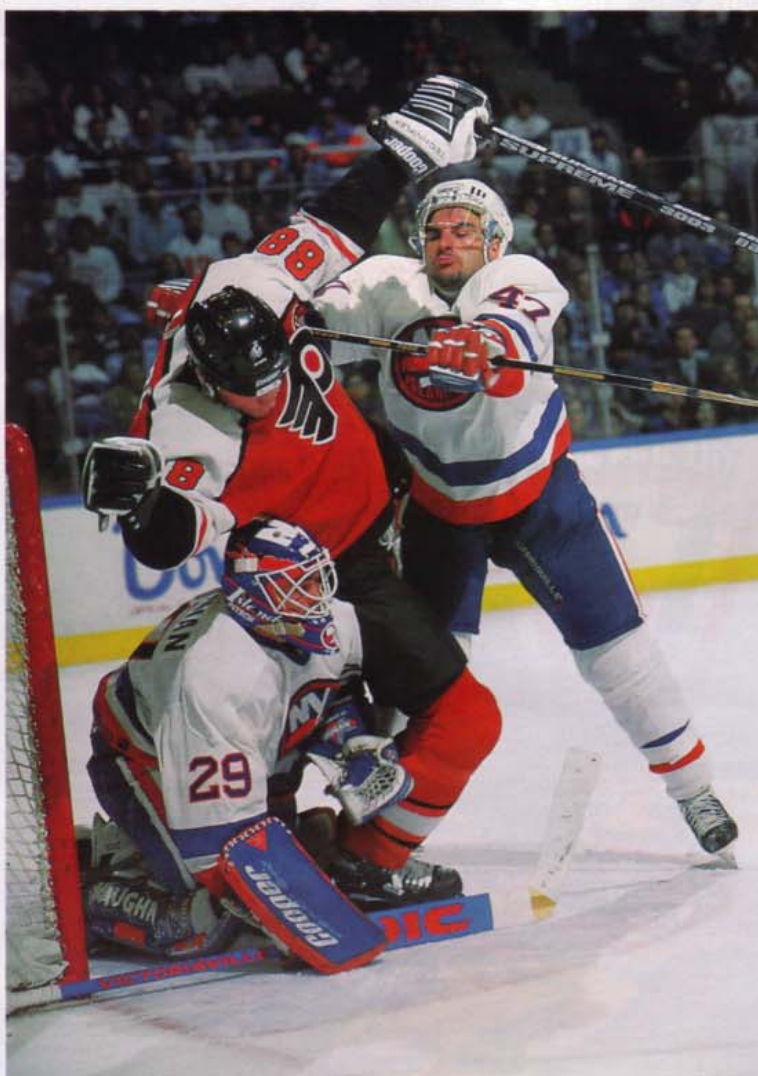


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Although lighting varies from arena to arena, no publication wants color pictures unless they were shot with strobes. Photographing for several NHL teams Bruce has the freedom to put the lighting where it is necessary and he also has the responsibility of maintaining the flashes. Bruce uses Speedotron 2400 watt/second packs with quad-tube heads in all arenas except the Spectrum. There he uses Balcar Star flashes with bi-tube heads.

When he or his associates travel they use 12-1800 watt/second White Lightning units which are nice and



Welcome to the NHL, big guy.
Eric Lindros is hit by Islanders Rich Pilon.



Wayne Gretzky pumps number 77 past Sabres goalie Don Edwards in 1981 and breaks Phil Esposito's season goal scoring record. This frame has been printed more than 30 times.

portable and have a adequate flash duration. From his perspective, considering how fast hockey moves, recycle time for the units are relatively slow. White Lightnings are easy to set up and take on road trips.

The strobes are necessary for Bruce's pictures since Madison Square Garden and other arenas are Tungsten lit which gives a yellow cast on daylight film. The strobes overpower all light in the building so that there is no color cast on the Fujichrome 100.

Bruce and the studio have been shooting the Stanley Cup for 18 years. Whether on their own or as a team photographer. Bruce traveled with the Islanders and Rangers in their bids for the Stanley Cup. After the Stanley Cup is over, it takes one week to clear out all of the pictures in the studio. Next they cover the NHL draft and NHL awards. The studio is constantly moving, all year round.

Out of all the events and record breaking occurrences, the all time favorite moment and shot for Bruce happened in 1981. This was when Wayne Gretzky scored his 77th goal breaking Phil Esposito's most goals

scored in a single season record in Buffalo, New York. Bruce felt the photograph captured the action of the moment. The picture above has been published more than 30 times and it is the shot which has earned Bruce the most profit.



CANON EOS-1NRS Body Only
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How do the players feel about having their pictures taken? Bruce tries to keep his distance from them. He does not ask for autographs and tries to keep communications minimal. Bruce thinks that there is very little in common between him and the players. He is very

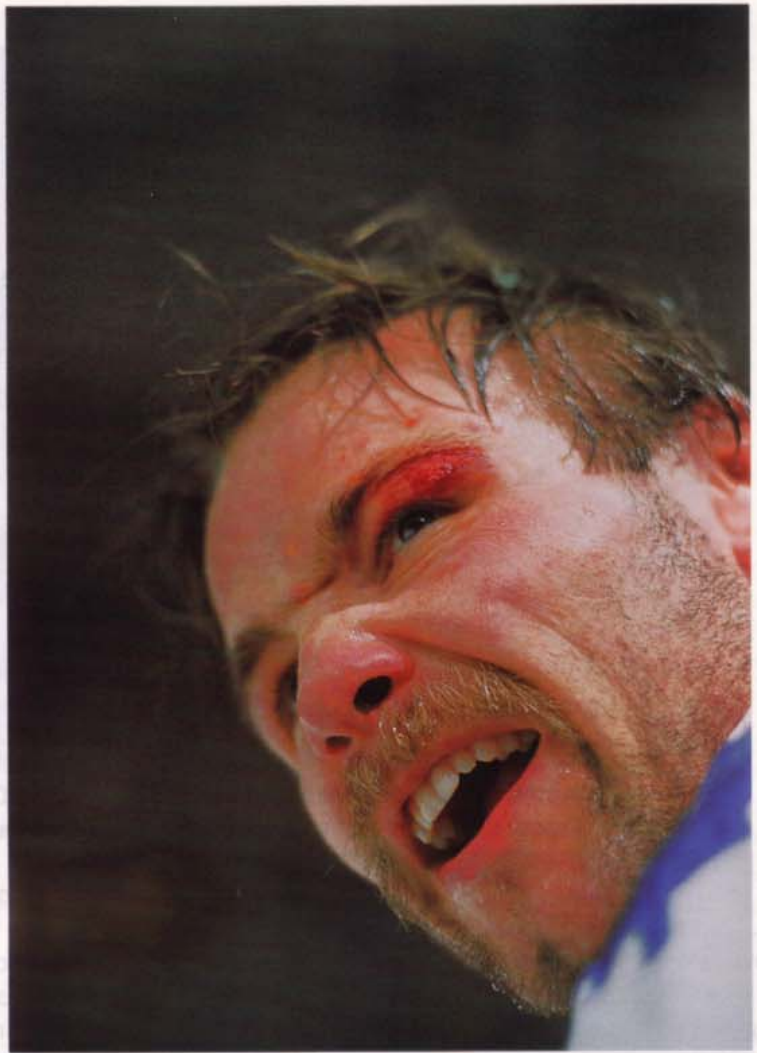
friendly with a few players since he has done 1-on-1 shots for them. Others he has known since their early years, like Mark Messier and Wayne Gretzky. Outside of the rink there is very little communication. The referees? He chuckled, "Actually, they are some of my best friends. They skate by and make sure I'm awake. Most of the time, the refs want pictures taken with the players, so they'll come over to me and try to direct the shot." Then with a somewhat straight face, Bruce spoke about how hard the refs work and how they receive very little appreciation for the job they do. "So I can completely identify with them," he added jokingly.

Occasionally players buy Bruce's work, but most often players ask their PR person, who then contacts Bruce. People also look to Bruce for purchasing pictures because he has a good relationship with most NHL teams and is always ready to help. Plus, he covers international tournaments and junior competitions so people can find pictures of almost any player at any level of play.

The studio has found another way to meet the needs of its customers. About mid 1985, Bruce and Jim Leary (his

digital Imaging manager) used TeleFinder 4.0.1 software (made by Spider Island Software) to set up a bulletin board system that allows clients to install software and then call the studio's computer system to view and download photos. This system is divided into several folders which allows for quick and easy access to the studio's library of pictures. For example, the folders are broken down by league, division, team and other classifications such as arenas, coaches, trophies, generic and so on. By clicking on particular photos the clients can see an actual preview of the picture and a short explanation including the photographer's name.

Besides these folders, there is also PC and MAC shareware, which includes useful programs, games and humorous files. The file "Hockey Today" provides daily updates of scores, statistics, transactions and news in the world of hockey. They also have an information folder (BBS News) that gives clients helpful information on how to use and get the most out of Bruce's computer system. Each day Jim scans more photos into the computer, keeping the folders full and current. The studio also provides an E-mail service, which clients often use



The face of hockey...Wendel Clarke



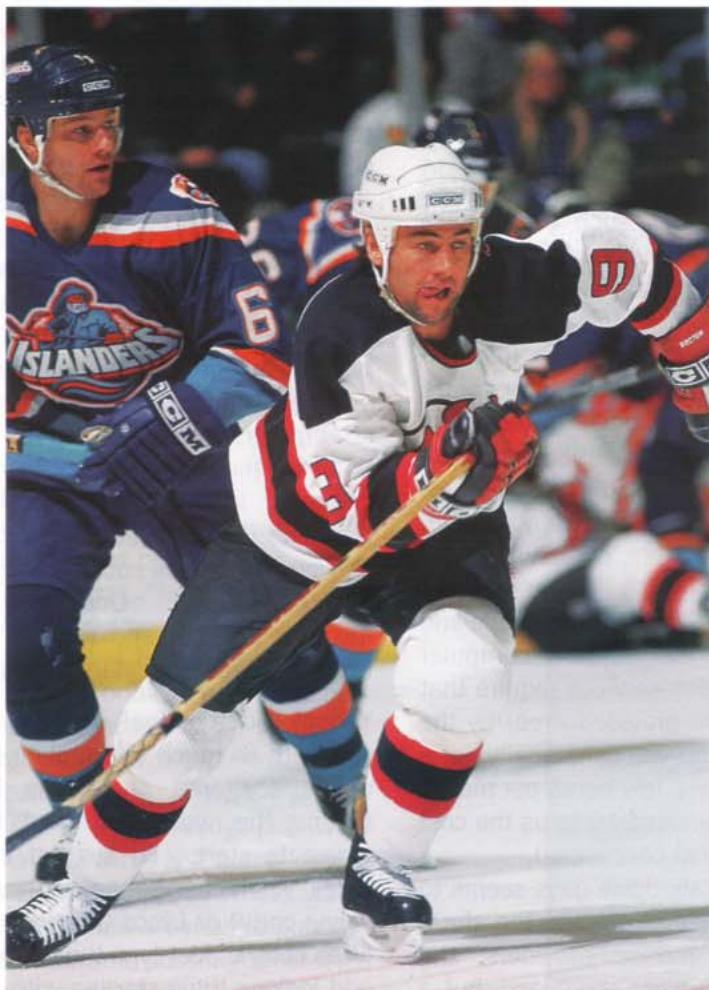
SHOOT.....SCORE! (Clarke is hit by Islanders' Rich Pilon)

to request a photo that might not currently be on the system. Jim then fills the request and places the photos directly in their personal mailbox for downloading.

The studio's photographic supplies are purchased from Unique Photo, in Orange, New Jersey. Since Bruce uses vast amounts of film, over short periods of time, he needs low prices, great service, and fast delivery. Bruce finds his account executive extremely helpful because of his extensive product knowledge. Bruce counts on quick turn around and delivery. "If you can count on that, that's half the battle." Unique Photo scores a winner for Bruce Bennett Studios every time. ●



Bruce and his studio staff (from left to right): Bruce Bennett, Glenn Levy, Jason Woolley, Alex Cutrone, John Giamundo, Jim Leary, John and Brian Winkler. Not pictured: Deborah Ross, BettyAnn Bennett, Jim McIsaac, Vinny Pugliese, Liz Fox, John Mohr, Scott Levy, Joe Lozito, and Marco Campanelli.



Neal Broten of the New Jersey Devils.



CANON USM EF 70-200mm f/2.8L
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BRUCE BENNETT STUDIOS CAREER STATISTICS:

NHL Pre-season, Regular Season, Playoffs Games	2966
Stanley Cup Winning Games	18
NHL All-Star Games	14
International Games & Olympics	259
Minors, Juniors, College, Old-timer, WHA Games	211
Rolls of film shot in BBS history	80,626
Hockey Photographs in print	47,500
Hockey images produced	3,000,000
Books with BBS hockey photos	135