

STOPS 'N' STARTS

IHL Has Changed, So Have Its Players

How Lowe can you go? Well, twice during his career, Darren Lowe decided that rock bottom was the International League. And it represented a depth to which he had no intention of plunging.

He turned down invitations from the Pittsburgh Penguins and Edmonton Oilers to play in 'The I,' choosing instead to continue his education at the University of Toronto.

But this year, at age 27, the former Canadian Olympian is playing in the IHL for the first time. Seems kind of late for a change of heart, doesn't it?

"It's actually not a bad league now with six teams directly affiliated with NHL teams," says Lowe, who could be accused of being a wee bit behind the times.

The IHL actually hasn't been a bad league for some time now. It just got stronger this year with the infusion of more NHL hopefuls than ever before.

Don't count the new Flint Spirit amongst the latter group. There is nothing starry-eyed about this right winger. While others dream of the NHL, he yearns for a return to Europe where he played most of last year.

Lowe's first choice this year was to play in Europe, but he delayed his decision to play there long to catch on overseas. The Toronto native's bid to try out for nearby Newmarket of the American League met with disinterest from the Maple Leafs, Newmarket's parent club.

He did play a brief time with the national team early this season, but that was only to help Dave King's team out of an injury-induced bind.

Lowe's brief tour with Team Canada rekindled fond memories—the 1984 Olympic experience. He was a member of the Carey Wilson-Patrick Flatley line that derailed Team USA 4-1 in the first game for both the Americans and

Canadians at Sarajevo. The U.S. never recovered and the defending Olympic champs didn't make the medal round. Canada went on, thanks in part to a key goal Lowe scored against Finland, but finished fourth.

"When they called me back, I got a little excited that there might be a small chance that I might be able to catch on and play in the Olympics," recalls Lowe.

He was told, however, no guarantees would be extended him that haven't been passed along to any of the players trying out for the Canadian national team.

So, Lowe opted for the Spirits and five games into the season, he had no reason to regret the choice. He had four goals and two assists playing on a line with former Vancouver first-round draft pick Dan Woodley.

He retains an uncommon desire to play the game. Despite holding a teacher's certificate—he has substituted at Toronto schools the last two years—Lowe remains a student of hockey.

"I just love to play the game," he says. Lowe comes by it honestly. His 64-year-old father, Art, skates every day in the winter. So

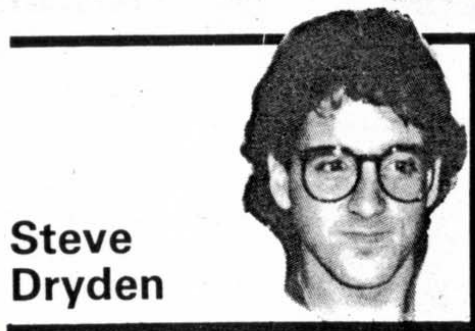
If Bruce Bennett had his way, there would be no trades in the NHL. Nor changes in players' preferences of sticks and helmets. Nor big linesmen.

They are but a few of the things that make life a little less pedestrian (and lucrative) for one of hockey's most prolific photographers.

Perhaps, the most prolific.

Last year, he shot his 1,000th game. This year, he reached the 750,000-picture mark. Yeah, that's right, 75 and four zeroes. Heck, he's got 2,000 alone of Mike Bossy. Another 1,500 of Denis Potvin.

The industrious Bennett, 32, has been in the



Steve Dryden

business for 14 years. In that time, he has established himself as one of the hardest working photogs around. Nobody else specializes in hockey like he does—providing innumerable magazines, among them THE HOCKEY NEWS, with the best in action shots.

He's also the New York Islanders' team photographer and a regular at Philadelphia Flyer games.

Bennett, of course, is busy but he's happy, too. He'd only be happier if he had veto power over NHL trades.

"Every time there's a trade all pictures of the players involved are instantly outdated," says Bennett. "Outside of the immediate rush, when everybody's interested in the players, the pictures can practically be thrown in the garbage."

Tough luck. Only 700,000 to go. He's not keen on uniform changes, either. Nor commemorative patches. They also date pictures.

What he does like are chances to shoot the stars in set-up situations. That is, of course, as long as he's in control of the circumstances. One time, in particular, he wasn't. His subject wasn't pleased.

"The only guy that's ever given me a hard time was Tiger Williams and that's because we almost set him on fire," recalls Bennett. "We were doing a center-spread for *Goal* magazine

and there was one light directly behind him. We put a red gelatin filter over it."

The light's heat was too much and the filter began to smoke.

"I was looking through the lens and I could see Tiger's nose beginning to twitch. He was beginning to smell the smoke. Well, I knew I'd only get a few more shots before the thing went up so I shot quickly."

Williams bolted from the chair and it's lucky he did. Otherwise, he might have been...

D Just like one of the Hartford Whalers' favorite expressions. And now, like his favorite book.

Williams collaborated with Kasey Wilson of Vancouver on *Done Like Dinner*, the Tiger's very own cookbook. Sprinkled with a light seasoning of conversation between the co-authors, the book is every goon's guide to eating.

Included are Opening Face-off appetizers, First-Period salads and soups, Offside brunches and lunches, Power-Play main dishes and Play-off deserts.

Accompanying the recipes is commentary. Tiger introduces his crustless pizza, as *Pizza for crustless players. There is no backbone in this so we all know which players will love it.* For Luc Robitaille's lasagna omelette, he says, *Inspired by the hotshot L.A. rookie. This is carb-loading at its best.*

And for the Kings pocket pita with crab, *Michel (Dionne) wishes he was still in L.A. to enjoy this.*

Tiger, too, probably wishes he were still in L.A. to enjoy it. The book is full of pictures, by the way, of Tiger and his food...and his Kings' uniform.

Now, according to Bruce Bennett, that would make this book outdated.