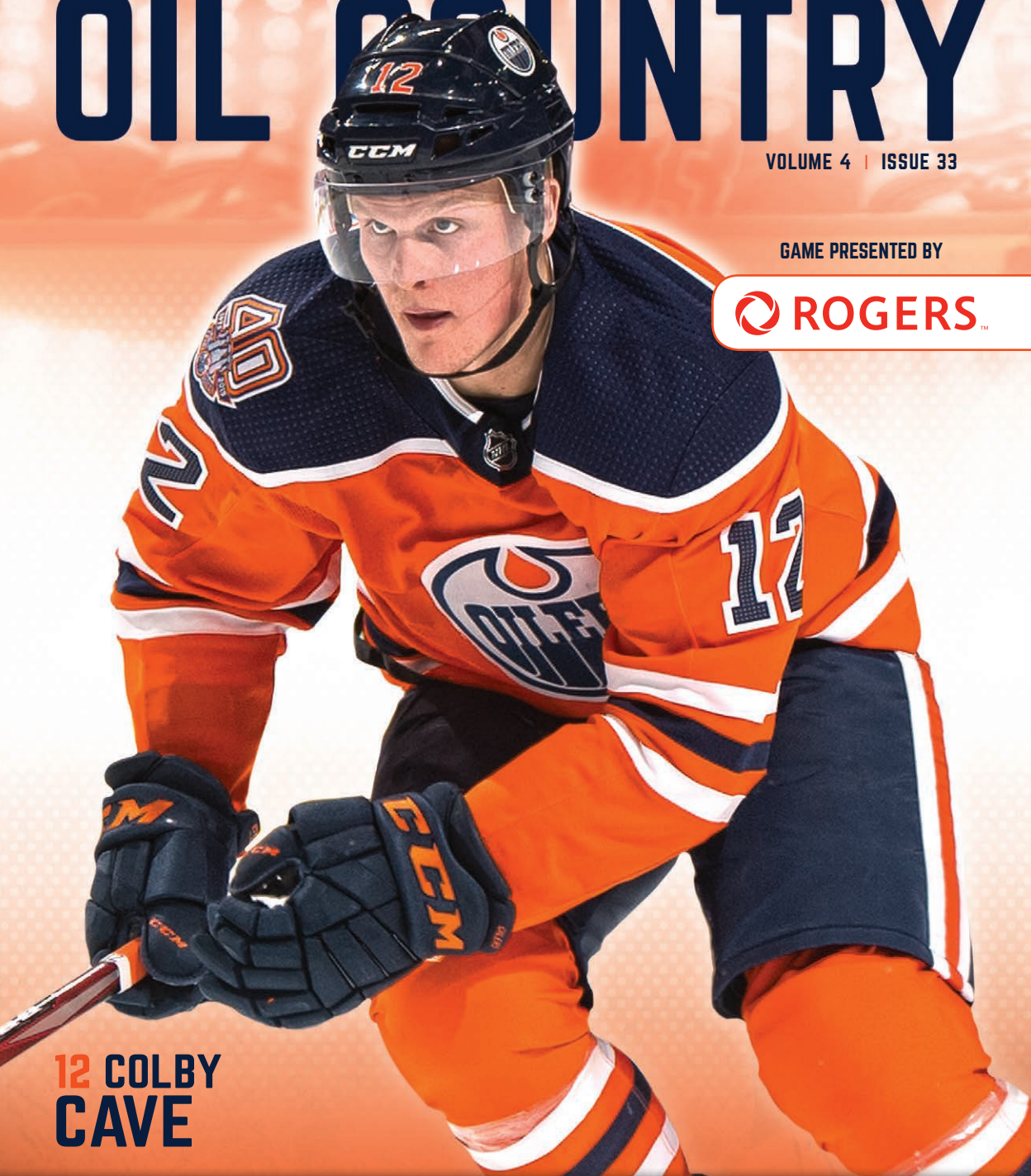


OIL COUNTRY

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 33

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INSIDE OIL COUNTRY

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE EDMONTON OILERS



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After he was selected 31st overall by the New York Islanders in 2009, Mikko Koskinen's first attempt to stick in the NHL was unsuccessful. But following seven seasons of honing his goaltending craft overseas, including winning a pair of KHL championships, the towering Finn decided it was time to attempt a return to the sport's grandest stage. Koskinen has since solidified his place in the NHL and emerged as the Oilers go-to puck-stopper this season.

41 AIR FORCE GREAT ONE

The 1978-79 World Hockey Association season has just begun and the Indianapolis Racers feature an up-and-coming forward named Wayne Gretzky. However, with the team on the verge of folding, we revisit the story — as told by WHA franchise owners, Oilers alumni, Edmonton media and archived newspaper articles — about the deal and subsequent plane ride that brought the National Hockey League's all-time leading scorer to Oil Country.

53 BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

The Oilers hosted Hockey is for Everyone Night on Feb. 19 to celebrate diversity and inclusion in the sport. The league-wide initiative uses the game of hockey to drive positive social change, foster more inclusive communities and celebrate all players, coaches, athletes and fans who are passionate about the sport, regardless of race, colour, religion, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

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KOLOSSAL KOSKINEN

BY JAMIE UMBACH

Two summers ago from his home in Helsinki, Mikko Koskinen decided that the upcoming season for SKA St. Petersburg would be his last in Russia, and that the mountain of the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL) had been conquered.

He'd come to similar conclusions multiple times before during his career, like he did joining the New York Islanders for his first North American stint in 2009 as a drafted rookie, returning three years later to Europe to dominate the crease in his native Finland and the KHL, or when given the chance on more than one occasion to represent his country on the international stage.

The next big step needed to be taken.

Four years between the pipes for the renowned Russian hockey club provided the Finnish giant the platform needed for him to establish himself as one of the KHL's elite goaltenders and win

two Gagarin Cups, which he holds up to this day as his greatest hockey achievements.

But an abundance of ambition, and a lack of time, was pushing him back to close the book on the one chapter of his career he hadn't fully been able to finish – the National Hockey League.

"I won a few times in the KHL and felt there wasn't much more of a challenge left for me there," Koskinen said of his three-year tenure in Russia's second-largest city, about a four-and-a-half-hour drive from his hometown of Vantaa just north of the Finnish capital.

"I want to challenge myself as a goalie every day, and I felt it was the right time to come over and show to myself that I can do even better."

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Koskinen, who'd always elect to have his actions in goal speak far louder than his few words, finished his final year for SKA with poise, posting a commanding 1.57 goals-against average and a .937 save percentage during the 2017-18 KHL regular season while catching the eye of a handful of North American clubs in the process.

He also made five appearances for the blue and white of Finland at the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang that year, climbing another step up the ladder after already earning two silver medals at the IIHF World Hockey Championship in 2014 and 2016.

Through rigorous KHL training camps in Siberia and St. Petersburg, international tournaments, and a long-awaited return to the NHL with the Edmonton Oilers, Koskinen maintains the strong sense of resolve he uses to block out white noise when he steps onto the ice for another 60 minutes in the blue paint.

"This is my last opportunity for me to come back here and prove myself," he said. "That's what I'm trying to do every day."

Koskinen maintains an image of mystery to the many fans and media pundits alike who poke and prod at the motivations of the netminder, whose physical projection more than makes up for his lack in commentary.

The 30-year-old has no reservations about his position on the ice, in the Oilers dressing room or as a netminder making what could be his final foray into the ranks of the hockey hierarchy.

If he did, he wouldn't be the one to tell you.

"Yeah, it's better that way," Koskinen said with a smirk of his silent and independent approach. "I can do my own thing and keep it like that."

Arriving in Edmonton with plenty of mystery surrounding him, 'Mikko Koskinen' might have been the most-searched name in Oil Country on April 1, 2018.

Signing a one-year contract worth \$2.5 million with the Oilers last spring led many fans down the rabbit hole of countless HockeyDB, Elite Prospects and Wikipedia pages, where you'd learn of a hulking Finnish goaltender who put up powerful numbers in Europe across Finland and Russia, and internationally after suiting up for only four NHL games.

It should've been expected that a goalie who wears number 19, and already split the mantle of league's tallest goaltender with Dallas Stars netminder Ben Bishop at a staggering 6-foot-7, would garner the attention that he did.

But as a man of minimal conversation, he'd rather leave the rest up to the imagination of fans, media, and even his teammates.

"He seems pretty quiet," Leon Draisaitl stated simply of the man known as Kossu or Kolmen metrin Koskinen (three-metre Koskinen) in his home country. "He has some good stories about Russia."

Koskinen played 51 games over three years in the ECHL, AHL and NHL as part of the Islanders' farm system from 2009-12, highlighted by four starts with the big club during the 2010-11 NHL season that yielded a 4.33 goals-against average and .873 save percentage.

Behind on the depth chart on Long Island, a loan and eventual permanent move back to the Finnish Elite League with KalPa, and one season in the Helsinki capital region with the now-defunct

Espoo Blues, led the netminder to Sibir Novosibirsk of the KHL in Siberia — an area of southwest Russia that, for Edmontonians, bitterly compares to central Alberta with its warm summers and well-below freezing winters.

He spent another half-season in Novosibirsk and was traded to the prestigious SKA St. Petersburg, earning 2014-15 honours as the KHL's best goaltender before manning their net for three more seasons and winning two league titles alongside NHL hallmarks like Artemi Panarin, Ilya Kovalchuk and Pavel Datsyuk.

"It was a great thing to be around great players and legendary Russian players," Koskinen said. "Great coaches too, and overall the organization was great. Then it made it even better that we had success there, so it was a fun four years there."

Entertaining multiple offers to come back to the NHL, Koskinen came highly recommended to the Oilers management staff by European scout Matti Virmanen, and even shared an agent with fellow Finn and now-teammate Jesse Puljujarvi.

He visited Edmonton with his wife Karolina and seven-month-old son Lukas before signing a contract, and it was an easy transition.

"We visited the city a few weeks earlier and really liked the city," Koskinen said. "It compares a lot for us to Helsinki and feels comfortable for us."

The visit also gave the netminder and Oilers Goaltending Coach Dustin Schwartz the opportunity to connect one-on-one and set goals early with training camp more than three months away.

"The initial conversations were about getting to know each other more than anything," said Schwartz, a former goaltender for the Red Deer Rebels and the University of Alberta Golden Bears. "Building a bit of a relationship and talking a little bit about where his game was, because obviously there's a transition period from the European game."

"We talked a lot about why his game was successful overseas and what he could bring with him, along with some adjustments that we might have to consider once he got over to North America and started playing in the NHL."

A surprise phone call from legend Jari Kurri the night he and his wife arrived in Edmonton led to the two Finns connecting later in person when Kurri was in the city, giving Koskinen plenty of background on the club, its history, and what could be possible for him as an Oiler.

"I think that eased his mind knowing there was that Finnish connection and that he had a tonne of success as an athlete in this city."

It was a cathartic moment for members of the Edmonton media during Oilers training camp.

After delivering a number of short, to-the-point answers during a post-practice interview that would soon become his trademark, a question on comparisons between NHL and KHL training camps raised microphones and recorders a little higher and closer to the oncoming voice of the giant netminder.

continued on page 13





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"It's night and day," Koskinen answered. "You can't compare these camps to what I've been through these last five years. Here you can stay three hours a day at the rink, but there you can do three practices in a day."

It takes a different kind of player to survive and thrive in the KHL.

"We always started the day around 7am with no breakfast," Koskinen later expanded. "Straight to running for about 45 minutes then some jumps and stuff like that. There would be breakfast and a half-hour rest, then our first skate. After that more gym and a little bit more rest, then a second practice, rest, and a third practice in the evening for one hour. Then an hour-and-a-half in the gym after that."

"They were long days. It was four days of that, then one rest day, then four more days on again. It took months, so it's quite long."

To bookend the misery at the end of the season, teams who failed to make the playoffs or were eliminated early often skated until the official end of the KHL calendar. But Koskinen and SKA St. Petersburg didn't have to endure that often.

"We always played well, so we didn't have to do that," Koskinen said. "The other teams there are usually practicing even if they're out, so they keep practicing after the end of their season then they go home for the summer break."

Just as he left no expectation for the media after arriving in Edmonton, only a player with a different mental make-up like Koskinen would stamp out any sense of expectation from the get-go.

"I didn't have any expectations," said Koskinen, who was originally slated to step into the back-up role behind Cam Talbot from the onset. "I didn't give myself any expectations because every time you start with high expectations and something goes wrong, then you're going to feel bad."

"If I do my best every day, I should be fine. I don't have to worry about that."

The netminders had already been introduced to one another in Moscow during the gold-medal game of the World Championship in 2016, where Koskinen was crowned the tournament's best goaltender.

"I think we won 2-0, but we might have outshot them 33-16," said Talbot, who has since been traded to the Philadelphia Flyers. "He stood on his head and almost stole the game. That was really the only game I'd ever seen him play, but he was very impressive."

"I knew he was a big guy that would take up a lot of the net, but then once he got here you realize how big he actually is. He's very competitive and a good teammate as well."

Beginning his tenure as an Oiler during pre-season with his first taste of the Battle of Alberta against the Calgary Flames, 23 seconds was all it took for the first puck to get past before another two snuck through in the opening 20 minutes for not the most ideal of starts.

Re-adapting to the NHL pace and its smaller ice provided an early test to Koskinen's resolve as he allowed 10 goals on 69 shots with an .855 save percentage in 162:35 of total pre-season action.

It was always going to be a long-term play.

Koskinen continued to take to the ice early with Schwartz every practice, following a routine centred around crease movements and quick shots that has remained consistent since the two met earlier in the year.

"It's set up for a specific reason," Schwartz said. "They're different types of movements that present themselves during a game, and then we build on it and add layers to it where there's challenges or areas where we want to continue to stay sharp in."

If Schwartz wasn't serving as the shooter, the role was often filled by his countryman Puljujarvi. The Finns occupy adjacent stalls next to one another in the Oilers locker room and are regularly found conversing in their native tongue.

"Jesse has been around for a few years and I'm new to the NHL and don't know all the things going on, so I'm asking him how it's going and I try to help my best also," Koskinen said. "It's good to have someone to talk to. The nature of

the language always makes things easier."

For Puljujarvi, Koskinen and his wife Karolina provide a sense of familiarity in their home away from home.

"We are good friends," Puljujarvi said. "We talk every day here and we hang out sometimes the day of games. It's pretty nice to be able to speak Finnish sometimes here too for jokes and stuff like that. Some days I visit their home and they'll make dinner for me."

Despite being at different points in their careers and following different paths, the two help one another through the process.

"I think Mikko is such a good leader in his own quiet way, I think he's well-respected by his teammates, and Jesse is a young guy who is learning the ropes and Mikko has kind of taken him under his wing," Schwartz added. "With Mikko having a family here, it's a good thing for Jesse to have that stability that gives him some familiarity and comfort knowing Mikko can speak his language and understand him."

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"I think that's been a really good relationship for both of them transitioning, but probably even more so for Jesse."

After starting the regular season on the bench for eight straight games behind Talbot and having not played an NHL game since February 13, 2011, Koskinen earned a huge victory on the road in his Oilers debut on October 27 in a 5-3 road decision over the Nashville Predators, breaking a 13-game hoodoo for the Oilers against the club.

He introduced himself to the applause of Rogers Place five days later in a 4-0 blanking of the Chicago Blackhawks, making 40 saves for his first career NHL shutout.

"The fans are rising, and they're rising for the Finn, Mikko Koskinen," said Oilers Sportsnet play-by-play voice Kevin Quinn as the clock ran down.

It would not be the last time Koskinen would have the home crowd on its feet.

Koskinen shut out the Dallas Stars 1-0 on November 27, before shutting out the Flames 10 days later on December 9 — all part of a seven-game win streak on home ice.

Koskinen, astute in his approach, could once again only downplay to the media the idea of three shutouts and a 9-3-0 record to begin his return to the NHL.

"I don't really care about the numbers," Koskinen said. "The only thing I care for is the wins, because we need to win the games here if we're going to be a successful team and win something big at the end of the year. It doesn't matter if it's 6-5 or 1-0, a win is a win and that's why we're here."

Even when results have slipped, Koskinen sticks to the game plan.

Head Coach Ken Hitchcock, who consulted his former Dallas defenceman and Koskinen's St. Petersburg coach Sergei Zubov after taking the helm on November 20 to find out exactly what kind of goaltender he had in the Finn, lauds a player like Mikko who can coach himself through the ups and downs.

"He's been such an underdog his whole life," Hitchcock said.

"He's had to work for everything and he's not afraid of doing that stuff. He bounces back fine, but this is a different league than the KHL is, so he's having to stop pucks and learn on the fly here.

"I love his attitude. I love the way he works and I love the way he looks at things. He's very analytical and he's not afraid to look in the mirror, and I think quite frankly that's what is going to make him a really good NHL goalie."

It's been a grand start to life back in the NHL for Mikko Koskinen.

From the ECHL, to Europe, to being back in North America with the Oilers, it's the journey through the ranks that pushes the colossal crease protector to grow as a goaltender and take to the ice before his teammates every practice to continue the process.

"His work ethic is incredible," Schwartz said of his netminder.

"Elite character, he's a hard worker, he understands his position well and is very coachable. He's put a lot of time into making those adjustments to his game, and the biggest thing is he puts in the work and the repetition. It really starts to become what his game is and what his game is all about.

"It's taken some time and the good part about him is he continues to look and try and find ways to be better than he already is. That's the sign of a real pro."

Until he's reached the pinnacle of puck protection, Koskinen will continue to keep his cards close to his chest in the media, downplaying his individual accomplishments for the benefit of his team.

It's all an on-going personal evaluation of himself to prove he's not the same goalie who couldn't find a groove in the NHL a decade ago.

"I was a kid when I came over," Koskinen said. "My mentality was not there yet. I'm a different person and a different goalie than I was all those years ago."

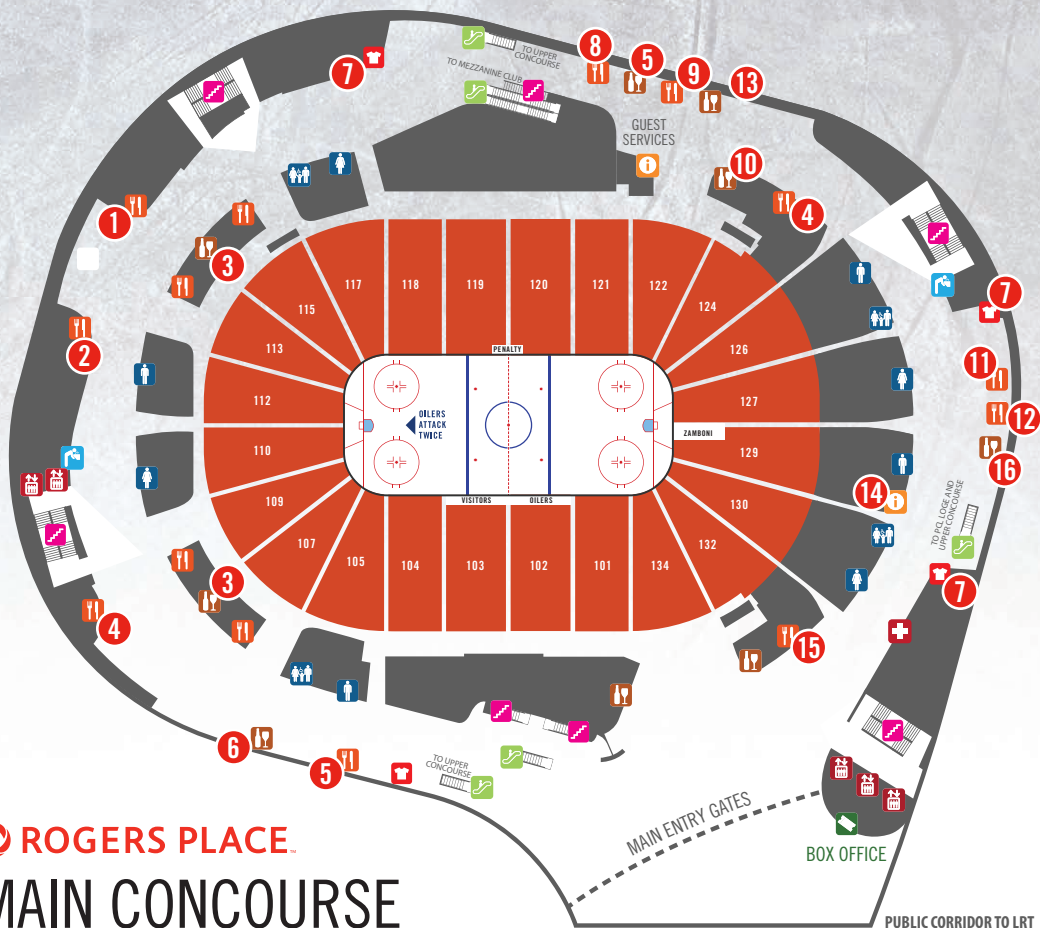
The netminder that he's evolved into this season has been rewarded for his efforts as the Oilers signed Koskinen to a three-year contract extension in late January. 🔴





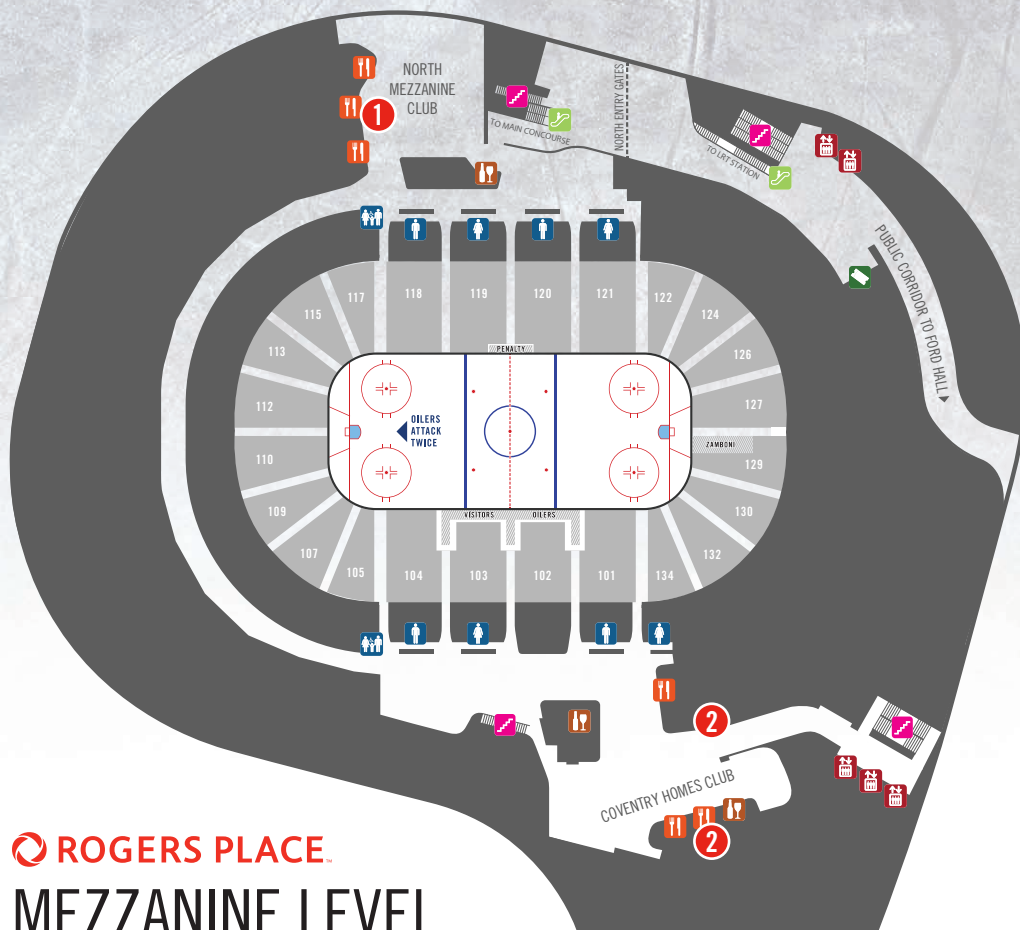
FREEZE FRAME

Josh Currie became the 20th player born in Prince Edward Island to score a goal in the National Hockey League on Saturday, Feb. 23 when he tallied his first big-league marker during the 2-1 Oilers victory over the Anaheim Ducks. The 26-year-old had scored 24 goals in 49 games with the Bakersfield Condors prior to his call-up.



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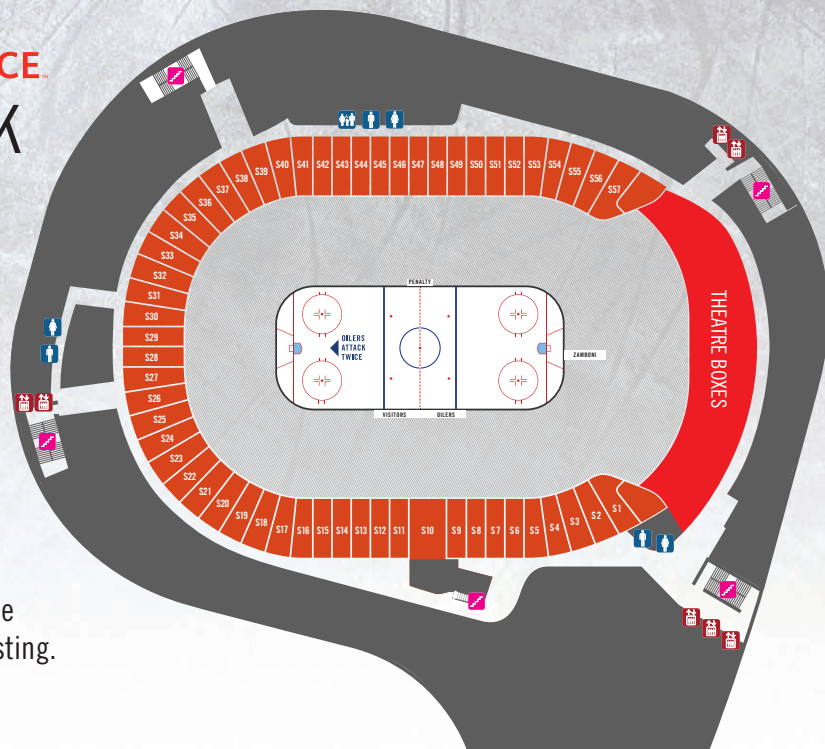
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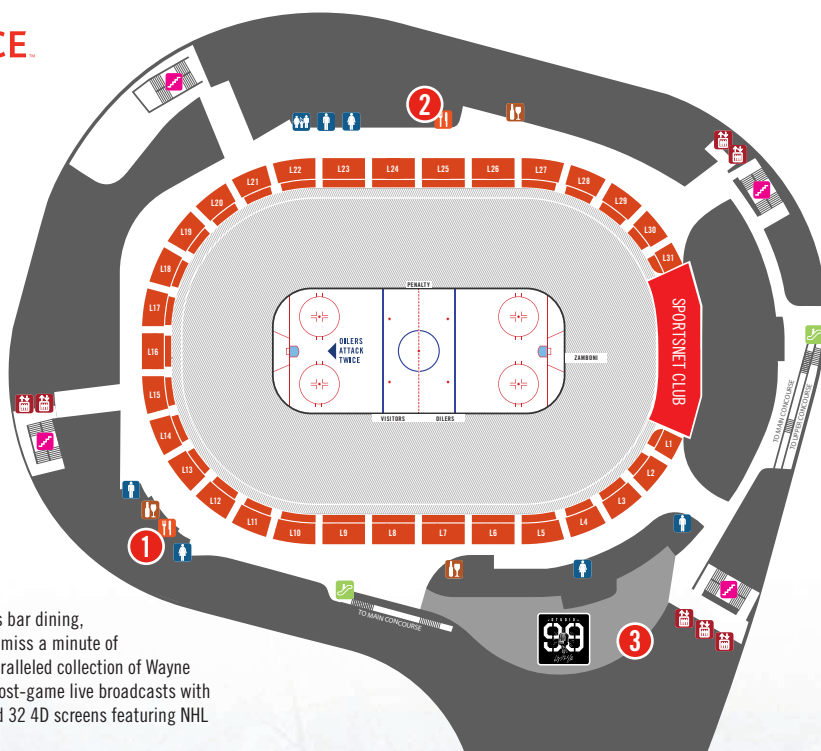
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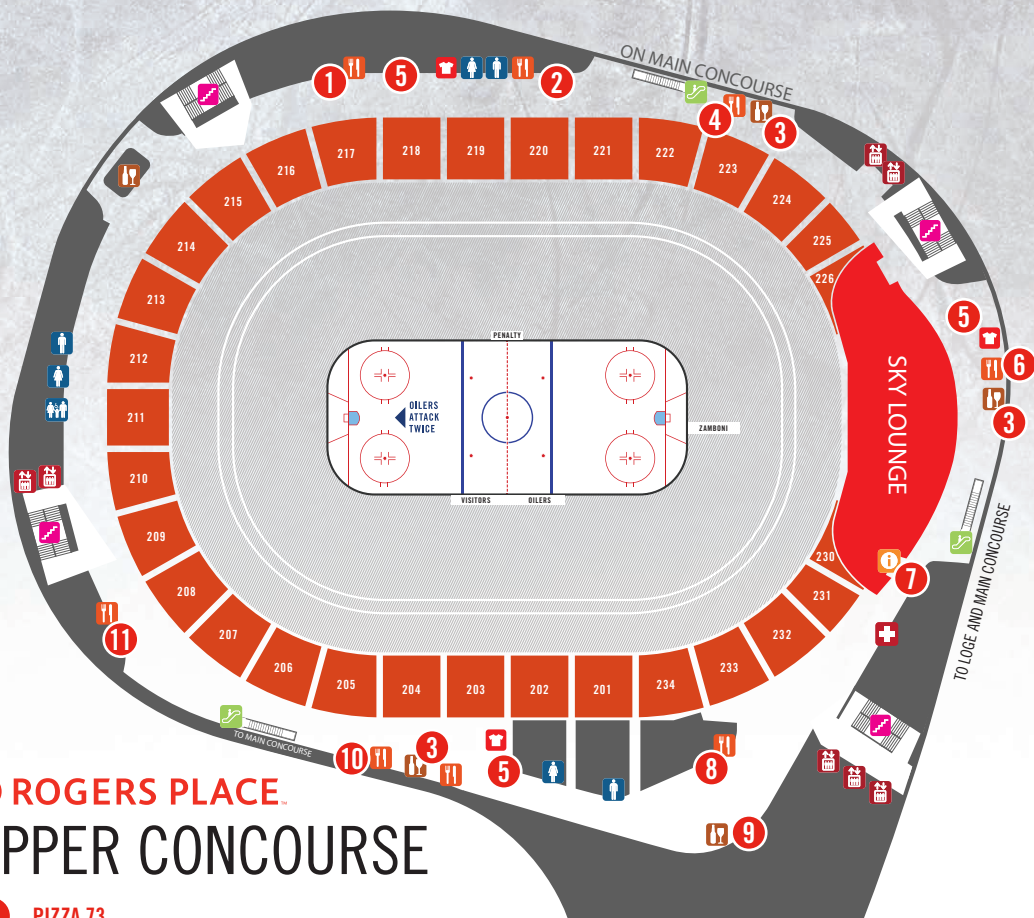
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THE SOCIAL SCENE

Sam Gagner @89SGagner · Feb 16
Back to where it all began! @edmontonoilers instagram.com/p/B9CMPolpK/...

Jeremy Thompson @Imahockeyguy
Replying to @89SGagner @EdmontonOilers
Welcome home, buddy. We missed you.

12:03 PM · 16 Feb 2019 from Crowley, TX

6 Likes

Crazy Legs @bjornstad17

Replying to @89SGagner

welcome back!!!!!!



Jordi @jordi_yag

Replying to @89SGagner

Once a part of Gagner's Gang, always a part of Gagner's Gang! Welcome back!



Feb 2019

sgagner89



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Liked by harrisonkatz_ and 7,729 others

sgagner89 Back to where it all began! @edmontonoilers

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7 Likes

Carpenter Girl @pnmom · Feb 16
Replying to @89SGagner

Welcome home #OnceAnOilerAlwaysAnOiler #LetsGoOilers



Sam Gagner @89SGagner

I am so excited to be back with the @EdmontonOilers. I have so many great memories from my first time here and can't wait to create more. The community and fan base has always been great to my family and it feels like we are coming home.
#LetsGoOilers

Edmonton Oilers @EdmontonOilers · Feb 18
Sam is excited to be back where it all began too! 😊



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It was an emotional homecoming for player and fans alike when it was announced that former Oilers forward and favourite Sam Gagner would be making his Oil Country return when the club acquired him from the Vancouver Canucks on February 16. Edmonton's sixth-overall pick from the 2007 NHL Draft departed the team via trade in 2014 after 481 games played, and did not hesitate to share his excitement when it was announced he would be back in orange and blue, looking to add to that total. Oilers fans were equally as enthused with the move and took to social media to immediately welcome him back into the fold.



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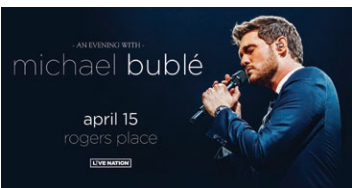
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Friday, May 10
@ 7:30PM

With special guest Dustin Lynch



STARS ON ICE

2019 TOUR

Sunday, May 12
@ 4:00PM

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Meagan Duhamel & Eric Radford

All tickets are available via RogersPlace.com,
Ticketmaster and the Rogers Place Box Office.



LONG TIME COMING FOR CURRIE

BY TONY BRAR

For Josh Currie, it's been a long time coming.

The 26-year-old has made an impact for the Oilers since his call-up from AHL Bakersfield, recording two goals and two assists in eight appearances, including his first multi-point game in the NHL last Thursday against the Ottawa Senators.

But his road to the show was a path less traveled.

Currie captained his home province Prince Edward Island Rocket in 2012-13 for his fourth and final season in the QMJHL. He scored 104 points (49 goals, 55 assists) in 68 games that season.

However, throughout his junior career, Currie never heard his name called at the NHL Draft. Soon after his time with the Rocket, he signed a minor-league contract and slowly began to make his way up the ranks.



Nearly six years later and after playing 391 games in Gwinnett (ECHL), Norfolk (ECHL) and Bakersfield (AHL/ECHL), the Charlottetown product earned his first NHL call-up on Feb. 18.

"It's hard to put into words. I've worked so hard for this," said a humbled Currie on his first day with the club. "As a kid, what I dreamed about doing is playing in the NHL. It's hard to put into words and I'm super excited to be here... It really is a dream come true."

In his first NHL game, Currie saw only eight shifts and 5:25 of ice time. Yet, he continued to be one of the last players to leave the ice during practices as he meticulously worked on his craft.

Gradually, the 5-foot-10 winger earned an increased responsibility, including power-play time, as he eventually rewarded Head Coach Ken Hitchcock by scoring his first NHL goal on Feb. 23.

"When you're a smart and competitive player, you find your level and you can usually find your spot in the NHL," said Hitchcock following this past Sunday's practice in Buffalo. "He's been a smart, competitive player for a long time and he's been given a chance here... He's in the game, he's playing and he's helping us."

Heading into Thursday's game vs. Vancouver, Currie had helped the Oilers earn three straight victories and points in seven of the team's previous eight games (5-1-2).

In last Thursday's win over the Senators, the forward picked up the puck and showed his offensive awareness, feeding a streaking Colby Cave behind the Ottawa defence. Cave buried his first goal with the Oilers on the play.

It was Currie's second assist of the night and marked his first multi-point game in the NHL.

"He works hard and he goes to the hard areas," said Alex Chiasson following the Oilers win against the Senators. "You can't teach that in this league. Either you play on the perimeter or you play inside. He plays inside and we need guys like that... Hats off to him. He's come in and he's done his job. He's contributing to the success of the team and he brings an energy level we need."

In Columbus last Saturday, Currie deflected a Leon Draisaitl pass to beat Sergei Bobrovsky, giving Edmonton an important insurance marker at the time. His goal helped the Oilers earn a second straight win and bring a playoff position within reach by game's end.

Now, with two goals and two assists in his first eight NHL games, Currie continues to keep an even keel by focusing on the present and "the things only (he) can control".

"I'm just trying to take it one day at a time here," said Currie at KeyBank Center following Sunday's practice. "Obviously, it's nice to score and chip in. I'm just trying to go to the dirty areas and the puck seems to find me there... I'm going to keep doing that and I'm going to continue playing my game."



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GAME PREVIEW

EDMONTON OILERS vs TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

SATURDAY | MARCH 9 | 2019 | ROGERS PLACE



IT'LL BE AN ALL-CANADIAN MATCHUP FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT GAME AT ROGERS PLACE as the Oilers welcome the Toronto Maple Leafs for their only meeting in Edmonton this season. The cross-country foes played the first leg of their home-and-home season series on Feb. 27 at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, with the home team prevailing in a 6-2 decision. Despite the final score, it was actually the visiting Oilers who struck first as Leon Draisaitl tallied a power-play goal for his 39th of the season midway through the opening frame. The teams were tied 1-1 through 20 minutes after Patrick Marleau made good on the equalizer later in the frame. The second period was the difference-maker for the Leafs, as they rattled off goals from Mitch Marner, Andreas Johnsson, William Nylander and Johnson again to go up 5-1. John Tavares and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins exchanged goals in the third period, leading to the 6-2 final. The Oilers are 43-46-8-4 in their 101 all-time matchups vs. Toronto.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

DARNELL NURSE is steadily putting together a superb season for the Oilers from the back end. Heading into Thursday's game against Vancouver, the 24-year-old had five points in his previous four appearances, bringing him up to 34 points on the season, which far surpasses his previous career high of 26 established last year. Nurse's offensive contributions have surged since he took over anchoring Edmonton's top power-play unit, with nine of his 34 points coming on the man advantage. He recorded just one power-play point in his career heading into this season. Thanks to 16 points in 27 games since the calendar flipped to 2019, the Hamilton native has shot up into the top 30 point producers among NHL blueliners.

MORGAN RIELLY is another blueliner who's having a career year, ranking third in team scoring and second among NHL defencemen with 64 points in 67 games. The fifth-overall selection from the 2012 NHL Draft averaged between 27 and 36 points during his first four seasons in the league, but he exploded for 52 points in 2017-18 before taking his production to an even higher level this year. Rielly also had a negative plus-minus rating in his first five seasons but is a balmy +31 this year. The 24-year-old ranks first in the NHL in goals from the back end with 17, but impressively only one of those tallies has come on the power play. Rielly brings a three-game point streak into tonight's matchup with the Oilers.



ROSTER | OILERS

FORWARDS

#	NAME	POS	SHOOTS	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
8	TY RATTIE	RW	R	6' 0"	183	FEB 5, 1993	CALGARY, AB, CAN
12	COLBY CAVE	C	L	6' 1"	200	DEC 26, 1994	BATTLEFORD, SK, CAN
16	JUJHAR KHAIRA	LW	L	6' 4"	212	AUG 13, 1994	SURREY, BC, CAN
22	TOBIAS RIEDER	RW	L	5' 11"	186	JAN 10, 1993	LANDSHUT, DEU
24	BRAD MALONE	C	L	6' 2"	217	MAY 20, 1989	MIRAMICHI, NB, CAN
27	MILAN LUCIC (A)	LW	L	6' 3"	231	JUN 7, 1988	VANCOUVER, BC, CAN
28	KYLE BRODZIAK	C	R	6' 2"	205	MAY 25, 1984	ST. PAUL, AB, CAN
29	LEON DRAISAITL	C	L	6' 2"	208	OCT 27, 1995	COLOGNE, DEU
39	ALEX CHIASSON	RW	R	6' 4"	208	OCT 1, 1990	MONTREAL, QC, CAN
43	JOSH CURRIE	RW	R	5' 10"	172	OCT 29, 1992	CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI, CAN
44	ZACK KASSIAN	RW	R	6' 3"	211	JAN 24, 1991	WINDSOR, ON, CAN
89	SAM GAGNER	C	R	5' 11"	200	AUG 10, 1989	LONDON, ON, CAN
93	RYAN NUGENT-HOPKINS (A)	C	L	6' 0"	184	APR 12, 1993	BURNABY, BC, CAN
97	CONNOR MCDAVID (C)	C	L	6' 1"	193	JAN 13, 1997	RICHMOND HILL, ON, CAN
98	JESSE PULJUJARVI	RW	R	6' 4"	201	MAY 7, 1998	ALVKARLEBY, SWE

DEFENCE

#	NAME	SHOOTS	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
2	ANDREJ SEKERA	L	6' 0"	200	JUN 8, 1986	BOJNICE, SVK
4	KRIS RUSSELL	L	5' 10"	170	MAY 2, 1987	CAROLINE, AB, CAN
5	KEVIN GRAVEL	L	6' 4"	211	MAR 6, 1992	KINGSFORD, MI, USA
6	ADAM LARSSON (A)	R	6' 3"	208	NOV 12, 1992	SKELLEFTEÅ, SWE
15	ALEXANDER PETROVIC	R	6' 4"	216	MAR 3, 1992	EDMONTON, AB, CAN
25	DARNELL NURSE	L	6' 4"	221	FEB 4, 1995	HAMILTON, ON, CAN
77	OSCAR KLEFBOM	L	6' 3"	216	JUL 20, 1993	KARLSTAD, SWE
83	MATT BENNING	R	6' 1"	203	MAY 25, 1994	EDMONTON, AB, CAN

GOALTENDERS

#	NAME	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
19	MIKKO KOSKINEN	6' 7"	202	JUL 18, 1988	VANTAA, FIN
32	ANTHONY STOLARZ	6' 6"	210	JAN 20, 1994	EDISON, NJ, USA

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 Skating Coach..... David Pelletier

MAPLE LEAFS | ROSTER



FORWARDS

#	NAME	POS	SHOOTS	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
11	ZACH HYMAN	LW	R	6' 1"	209	JUN 9, 1992	TORONTO, ON, CAN
12	PATRICK MARLEAU (A)	C	L	6' 2"	218	SEP 15, 1979	ANEROID, SK, CAN
16	MITCHELL MARNER	RW	R	6' 0"	175	MAY 5, 1997	MARKHAM, ON, CAN
18	ANDREAS JOHNSON	LW	L	5' 10"	181	NOV 21, 1994	GÄVLE, SWE
19	NIC PETAN	C	L	5' 9"	179	MAR 22, 1995	DELTA, BC, CAN
24	KASPERI KAPANEN	RW	R	6' 1"	192	JUL 23, 1996	KUOPIO, FIN
28	CONNOR BROWN	RW	R	6' 0"	183	JAN 14, 1994	TORONTO, ON, CAN
29	WILLIAM NYLANDER	RW	R	6' 0"	191	MAY 1, 1996	CALGARY, AB, CAN
33	FREDERIK GAUTHIER	C	L	6' 5"	235	APR 26, 1995	LAVAL, QC, CAN
34	AUSTON MATTHEWS	C	L	6' 3"	223	SEP 17, 1997	SAN RAMON, CA, USA
43	NAZEM KADRI	C	L	6' 0"	192	OCT 6, 1990	LONDON, ON, CAN
63	TYLER ENNIS	LW	L	5' 9"	161	OCT 6, 1989	EDMONTON, AB, CAN
91	JOHN TAVARES (A)	C	L	6' 1"	209	SEP 20, 1990	MISSISSAUGA, ON, CAN

DEFENCE

#	NAME	SHOOTS	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
2	RON HAINSEY	L	6' 3"	205	MAR 24, 1981	BOLTON, CT, USA
3	JUSTIN HOLL	R	6' 4"	205	JAN 30, 1992	TONKA BAY, MN, USA
8	JAKE MUZZIN	L	6' 3"	213	FEB 21, 1989	WOODSTOCK, ON, CAN
22	NIKITA ZAITSEV	R	6' 2"	193	OCT 29, 1991	MOSCOW, RUS
23	TRAVIS DERMOTT	L	6' 0"	204	DEC 22, 1996	NEWMARKET, ON, CAN
44	MORGAN RIELLY (A)	L	6' 1"	221	MAR 9, 1994	VANCOUVER, BC, CAN
51	JAKE GARDINER	L	6' 2"	203	JUL 4, 1990	MINNETONKA, MN, USA
52	MARTIN MARINCIN	L	6' 5"	213	FEB 18, 1992	KOSICE, SVK
92	IGOR OZHIGANOV	R	6' 2"	210	OCT 13, 1992	KRASNOGORSK, RUS

GOALTENDERS

#	NAME	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
31	FREDERIK ANDERSEN	6' 4"	230	OCT 2, 1989	HERNING, DNK
40	GARRET SPARKS	6' 3"	201	JUN 28, 1993	ELMHURST, IL, USA

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 Director, Player DevelopmentStéphane Robidas
 Assistant Director, Player DevelopmentHayley Wickenheiser



STATISTICS | OILERS

STATS AS OF MAR. 7, 2019

PLAYER	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	PPP	SHG	SHP	GWG	OTG	S	S%	FO%
CONNOR MCDAVID	62	33	59	92	2	18	8	29	0	1	8	2	195	16.9	47.14
LEON DRAISAITL	66	41	42	83	4	42	16	27	2	2	4	2	180	22.8	50.31
RYAN NUGENT-HOPKINS	66	20	36	56	-12	20	5	22	1	3	1	0	175	11.4	45.98
DARNELL NURSE	66	8	26	34	-9	75	1	9	0	1	1	1	164	4.9	0
ALEX CHIASSON	57	18	11	29	1	26	6	12	1	1	0	0	94	19.1	41.18
ZACK KASSIAN	63	11	8	19	-6	82	0	0	1	1	2	0	89	12.4	0
OSCAR KLEFBOM	45	4	14	18	-2	12	1	7	0	0	2	1	127	3.1	0
MILAN LUCIC	66	5	12	17	-7	65	2	4	0	0	0	0	63	7.9	52.63
ADAM LARSSON	66	3	14	17	-16	38	0	0	0	1	0	0	94	3.2	0
JUJHAR KHAIRA	53	3	13	16	-8	38	0	0	1	2	0	0	53	5.7	40.87
KRIS RUSSELL	56	2	12	14	4	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	4.2	0
TY RATTIE	44	4	7	11	-1	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	79	5.1	33.33
MATT BENNING	54	2	9	11	11	31	0	1	0	1	0	0	71	2.8	0
TOBIAS RIEDER	52	0	11	11	-4	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	74	0	20
JESSE PULJUJARVI	46	4	5	9	-14	16	0	1	0	0	0	0	53	7.5	50
KYLE BRODZIAK	60	5	3	8	-13	14	0	0	1	1	2	0	64	7.8	52.55
SAM GAGNER	9	3	1	4	-2	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	18	16.7	48.39
JOSH CURRIE	8	2	2	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	25	0
KEVIN GRAVEL	35	0	3	3	-3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	0	0
COLBY CAVE	17	1	1	2	-1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	23	4.3	52.1
ALEXANDER PETROVIC	9	0	1	1	-7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
ANDREJ SEKERA	8	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0
BRAD MALONE	12	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	44.9

GOALTENDER	GP	GS	W	L	T	OT	SA	GA	GAA	S	SV%	SO	MIN
MIKKO KOSKINEN	41	37	19	15	0	4	1,156	103	2.77	1,053	.911	4	2,232
ANTHONY STOLARZ	1	0	0	0	0	0	20	2	3.43	18	.900	0	36

MAPLE LEAFS | STATISTICS



STATS AS OF MAR. 7, 2019

PLAYER	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	PPP	SHG	SHP	GWG	OTG	S	S%	F0%
MITCHELL MARNER	67	24	58	82	25	22	3	18	1	3	4	0	191	12.6	50
JOHN TAVARES	67	37	36	73	20	30	7	15	0	0	6	1	233	15.9	54.42
MORGAN RIELLY	67	17	47	64	31	10	1	17	0	0	5	2	174	9.8	0
AUSTON MATTHEWS	53	30	30	60	-1	10	11	16	0	0	4	2	178	16.9	51.93
KASPERI KAPANEN	67	19	23	42	14	23	1	3	2	2	3	1	147	12.9	62.5
ANDREAS JOHNSON	60	19	17	36	20	24	3	6	0	0	3	0	102	18.6	36.84
NAZEM KADRI	59	15	20	35	1	31	4	11	0	0	5	0	151	9.9	53.37
PATRICK MARLEAU	67	14	20	34	-5	20	3	9	0	0	3	0	129	10.9	52.22
ZACH HYMAN	57	16	15	31	17	55	0	0	1	1	4	0	113	14.2	46.77
JAKE GARDINER	60	2	27	29	17	24	0	5	0	0	0	0	75	2.7	0
CONNOR BROWN	67	5	18	23	12	14	0	1	0	3	0	0	72	6.9	39.53
RON HAINSEY	67	5	15	20	37	15	0	0	1	1	0	0	60	8.3	100
TYLER ENNIS	41	12	5	17	-1	2	2	5	0	0	1	0	70	17.1	100
TRAVIS DERMOTT	60	4	13	17	-1	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	92	4.3	0
WILLIAM NYLANDER	39	5	11	16	-2	14	1	4	0	0	0	0	81	6.2	53.66
FREDERIK GAUTHIER	57	3	9	12	9	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	7.5	54.75
JAKE MUZZIN	18	1	9	10	6	10	1	2	0	1	0	0	28	3.6	0
NIKITA ZAITSEV	67	3	6	9	6	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	5.4	0
IGOR OZHIGANOV	45	3	4	7	3	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	8.8	0
MARTIN MARINCIN	14	0	4	4	-1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	0
NIC PETAN	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	50	71.43
JUSTIN HOLL	4	0	0	0	-5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

GOALTENDER	GP	GS	W	L	T	OT	SA	GA	GAA	S	SV%	SO	MIN
FREDERIK ANDERSEN	49	49	32	13	0	4	1,630	125	2.57	1,505	.923	1	2,918
GARRET SPARKS	14	13	7	5	0	1	419	41	3.09	378	.902	1	796

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1 N. KUCHEROV, TBL	108
2 P. KANE, CHI	94
3 C. MCDAVID, EDM	92
4 S. CROSBY, PIT	86
5 M. RANTANEN, COL	85

GOALS

1 A. OVECHKIN, WSH	45
2 L. DRAISAITL, EDM	41
3 P. KANE, CHI	40
4 B. POINT, TBL	37
5 J. TAVARES, TOR	37

ASSISTS

1 N. KUCHEROV, TBL	77
2 B. WHEELER, WPG	63
3 C. MCDAVID, EDM	59
4 B. BURNS, SJS	59
5 M. MARNER, TOR	58

PENALTY MINUTES

1 E. KANE, SJS	149
2 D. ROUSSEL, VAN	118
3 I. COLE, COL	111
4 T. WILSON, WSH	99
5 W. SIMMONDS, PHI	90

ROOKIE POINTS

1 E. PETERSSON, VAN	56
2 R. DAHLIN, BUF	37
3 A. JOHNSON, TOR	36
4 C. WHITE, OTT	35
5 B. TKACHUK, OTT	33

GOALS AGAINST AVG.

1 J. BINNINGTON, STL	1.80
2 R. LEHNER, NYI	2.19
3 B. BISHOP, DAL	2.19
4 T. GREISS, NYI	2.23
5 J. CAMPBELL, LAK	2.24

SAVE %

1 A. VASILEVSKIY, TBL	.931
2 J. BINNINGTON, STL	.929
3 B. BISHOP, DAL	.928
4 T. GREISS, NYI	.928
5 R. LEHNER, NYI	.927

GOALTENDER WINS

1 M. FLEURY, VGK	33
2 F. ANDERSEN, TOR	32
3 A. VASILEVSKIY, TBL	31
4 M. JONES, SJS	31
5 C. PRICE, MTL	28

2018-19 WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 NASHVILLE	69	39	25	5	83	35	207	184	+23	22-12-1	17-13-4	4-1	6-4-0	W2
2 WINNIPEG	66	39	23	4	82	37	224	198	+26	22-8-4	17-15-0	2-1	4-5-1	L1
3 ST. LOUIS	66	35	25	6	76	34	192	185	+7	17-14-2	18-11-4	1-1	6-3-1	W1
PACIFIC	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 CALGARY	67	41	19	7	89	41	235	194	+41	20-7-5	21-12-2	0-4	7-3-0	L3
2 SAN JOSE	66	39	19	8	86	39	238	206	+32	21-5-5	18-14-3	0-3	6-3-1	W2
3 VEGAS	68	37	26	5	79	34	203	188	+15	21-10-4	16-16-1	3-2	6-3-1	W5
WILD CARD	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 DALLAS	66	34	27	5	73	34	167	170	-3	20-10-2	14-17-3	0-0	5-5-0	W3
2 MINNESOTA	67	32	27	8	72	31	186	196	-10	14-13-6	18-14-2	1-4	5-2-3	OT2
3 COLORADO	67	29	26	12	70	28	220	211	+9	14-12-6	15-14-6	1-1	6-3-1	W1
4 ARIZONA	66	32	29	5	69	28	177	186	-9	15-15-3	17-14-2	4-1	7-3-0	L1
5 EDMONTON	66	29	30	7	65	26	187	216	-29	14-15-2	15-15-5	3-2	5-3-2	W3
6 VANCOUVER	67	28	30	9	65	25	183	208	-25	15-12-4	13-18-5	3-4	3-5-2	W1
7 CHICAGO	66	27	30	9	63	26	220	250	-30	14-13-6	13-17-3	1-1	4-6-0	L2
8 ANAHEIM	68	26	33	9	61	23	151	209	-58	13-12-8	13-21-1	3-2	4-6-0	L1
9 LOS ANGELES	66	24	34	8	56	22	159	210	-51	13-16-3	11-18-5	2-3	1-6-3	L1

2018-19 EASTERN CONFERENCE

METROPOLITAN	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 WASHINGTON	67	39	21	7	85	35	231	211	+20	19-9-5	20-12-2	4-1	8-2-0	W5
2 NY ISLANDERS	66	38	21	7	83	34	192	161	+31	20-10-4	18-11-3	4-5	5-4-1	W1
3 CAROLINA	66	36	23	7	79	35	199	180	+19	18-10-4	18-13-3	1-2	8-1-1	OT1
ATLANTIC	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 TAMPA BAY	67	51	12	4	106	45	263	176	+87	28-5-2	23-7-2	6-1	9-1-0	W2
2 BOSTON	66	40	17	9	89	38	198	164	+34	25-7-3	15-10-6	2-3	9-0-1	W4
3 TORONTO	67	41	21	5	87	41	241	191	+50	21-12-1	20-9-4	0-0	5-3-2	OT1
WILD CARD	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 PITTSBURGH	66	35	22	9	79	34	229	204	+25	18-12-2	17-10-7	1-2	6-2-2	W2
2 MONTRÉAL	67	36	24	7	79	34	204	194	+10	19-11-4	17-13-3	2-0	5-5-0	W1
3 COLUMBUS	66	37	26	3	77	36	205	198	+7	17-16-2	20-10-1	1-1	5-5-0	W1
4 PHILADELPHIA	67	32	27	8	72	30	204	224	-20	17-13-4	15-14-4	2-1	6-3-1	L1
5 BUFFALO	66	30	28	8	68	26	190	211	-21	19-10-4	11-18-4	4-2	2-7-1	L2
6 FLORIDA	66	28	26	12	68	25	209	227	-18	16-12-6	12-14-6	3-6	4-2-4	OT1
7 NY RANGERS	66	27	28	11	65	21	190	219	-29	16-11-8	11-17-3	6-3	3-4-3	L1
8 NEW JERSEY	67	25	33	9	59	24	189	225	-36	17-12-6	8-21-3	1-4	4-5-1	OT1
9 DETROIT	66	23	33	10	56	21	182	227	-45	12-17-5	11-16-5	2-5	2-5-3	OT1
10 OTTAWA	67	23	38	6	52	23	199	251	-52	14-15-4	9-23-2	0-1	2-7-1	OT1



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AIR FORCE GREAT ONE

BY PAUL GAZZOLA

Indianapolis Racers owner and Oilers part-owner Nelson Skalbania signed unproven 17-year-old forward Wayne Gretzky to a personal service contract in the summer of 1978, making Gretzky an Indianapolis Racer for the upcoming '78-79 World Hockey Association season.

Less than 10 games into Gretzky's career with the Racers, the team was on the verge of folding, causing Skalbania to sell the teenager and other Indianapolis Racers skaters. For Skalbania, Gretzky's destination was going to be either the WHA's Winnipeg Jets or the Edmonton Oilers.

Here's the story, as told by WHA franchise owners, Oilers alumni, Edmonton media and archived articles about the deal and flight that brought the National Hockey League's greatest player to the Edmonton Oilers.

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INDIANAPOLIS, 1978

Wayne Gretzky (Forward, Edmonton Oilers): Nelson had signed me in June of '78, I guess it was. He really didn't know a lot about hockey but that was OK. He was a businessman.

Jim Matheson (Sports Reporter, Edmonton Journal): Skalbania had phoned me in June and said to me he was going to sign Gretzky. That was when owners actually talked to the media.

Gretzky: He was really heavily involved in trying to grow the game and make the WHA as good as you could. So, he signed this 17-year-old-kid.

Matheson: Rod Phillips was over, we were having dinner and Skalbania phoned me and asked, "Do you know anything about Gretzky?"

And I said, "I've read stuff, I've never seen him play."

He said, "Oh, I'm going to sign him."

Gretzky: Part of the problem was that I was really somewhat of an unknown. At that point in time, Indianapolis wasn't, by any means, a great hockey city. Although, it was a good sports city. He thought this 17-year-old kid could sort of turn that around and make an impact in the community.

Matheson: I remember watching Gretzky play in Indianapolis and they had him with a couple sluggers to look after him. So, he really didn't do a whole lot.

Gretzky scored three goals and six points in eight career games with the Racers.

Eddie Mio (Goaltender, Edmonton Oilers): Remember, no one knew what Wayne was going to be in the pros. He was a hell of a junior player but he left at 17.

Gretzky: After about the fifth game, he (Skalbania) came and met with me, and said he was going to trade me. It wasn't the right situation or the right scenario.

Nelson Skalbania (Former owner, Indianapolis Racers): At that time, Indianapolis was struggling badly. I think we had 2,000 season-ticket (holders). After announcing Gretzky, relatively unknown at the time in Indianapolis, the season tickets roared from 2,000 to 2,100. So, I knew I was in trouble.

Michael Gobuty (Former Part-Owner, WHA's Winnipeg Jets): I'm at home. I get a phone call. (Skalbania) says, "Michael, I'm folding. It'll be my last game in Indianapolis. Why don't you take Wayne?"

Matheson: The whole (WHA) league was that way. Anything went in that league. The owners got along well enough to say, 'I think this player on our team would be more beneficial in your market. Nobody's going to watch this guy, so, let's get him somewhere else.'

That's how Gretzky ended up in Edmonton.

Skalbania: I called up Michael Gobuty and said, "I'm going to fold the team. If you want Gretzky, I promised him to you first. You can have Gretzky."

I was always going (to offer Gretzky to) Winnipeg because they had the first right. It was a verbal handshake.

Gretzky: Nelson was really upfront with me and couldn't have been nicer about it. In a lot of ways, he felt bad but he thought it was the right thing for me, the right thing for the team and for him.

Gobuty: We did crazy things (in the WHA). If we needed a trade, we'd say, "I need your guy, you need my guy," and the trade was done. No money, nothing. Just friendship. We knew nothing about hockey, but we had camaraderie like you would not believe.

Gretzky: There was about a four- or five-day period and we played a game in Winnipeg while I was with Indy. After the game, Bobby Hull grabbed me and took me to dinner. He was really trying hard with Gobuty to get me to go to Winnipeg. He told Nelson to move me to Winnipeg. He wanted me to play with him and felt very confident that I could step in and be a centreman at 17.

Obviously, when Bobby Hull tells you something, your eyes light up. I was intrigued about playing with Bobby Hull.

Gobuty: Bobby said that if the opportunity arose that we should take Wayne Gretzky. He was very important to the team. Bobby made the Winnipeg Jets and Bobby made the WHA. There's no Bobby Hull, there's no WHA.

My GM at the time was one of the top two or three in the business, Rudy Pilous. He'd won Stanley Cups and everything.

"No, Gretzky's too skinny," he said. "He's too light. They'll kill him."

Gretzky: The reality was the owner (Gobuty) and their captain (Hull) wanted me to go there but their general manager (Pilous) wasn't certain that I could play in professional leagues, so he convinced them to stay out of it. Consequently, Winnipeg was sort of taken off the table.

Skalbania: I flew to Winnipeg, landed at the airport, and Gobuty brings his GM (who) says, "Are you crazy paying that kid those kinds of dollars?"

Gobuty: Nelson was a backgammon expert. And my wife was a backgammon expert. I was just an average player. And he says, "Let's play backgammon for Wayne."

"Are you crazy?" I said. "No, no, I can't do that. It's impossible."

Nelson slept at my house, and the next day he said, "What are you going to do (about acquiring Gretzky)?"

"Nelson, my partners say no," I said. "Rudy Pilous says no."

Biggest mistake. Huge mistake. Because, as you know, Wayne was the best. And I didn't do it.

Mio: It could have been completely different had he gone to Winnipeg. We ended up losing the Avco Final, believe it or not, to Winnipeg. So, that's a bit of history, too.

Ironic Wayne doesn't go to Winnipeg but Winnipeg beats Edmonton for the Avco Cup - and the last Avco. Now, that would have been nice to put on Wayne's resume. Winning the last Avco Cup and then doing what he did in Edmonton, for the NHL, and for the game of hockey.

Gretzky: Nelson said to me, "Where would you like to go, Winnipeg or Edmonton?"

It was Gus Badali (Gretzky's agent at the time) who actually told me to go to Edmonton because Edmonton had a better chance of getting into the NHL in his mind because they had a newer arena, a bigger arena than Winnipeg had, and he thought that Edmonton had a better opportunity than anybody at some point in time to get into the National Hockey League.

So, I told him "Edmonton" and I guess the rest is pretty much history.

Matheson: When he (Gretzky) came to Edmonton, nobody was that surprised because Skalbania owned two teams. That seemed to be the natural spot for him to go. He was the part-owner here (in Edmonton) with Pocklington and the full owner in Indianapolis.

Pocklington (Former Owner, Edmonton Oilers): The whole thing took about five minutes on the phone to finish off. I paid \$325,000 to get the players and another \$500,000 as part of a prior arrangement with Nelson that he'd get paid off should Oilers ever make it into the NHL.

Gretzky: I've heard a thousand stories (about the deal). I've never really asked one of them (Skalbania or Pocklington) what transpired or what happened. I heard everything from backgammon games, to paintings, to apartment buildings, to whatever.

NOVEMBER 2, 1978

After an Indianapolis Racers practice concluded, Gretzky, Mio and Peter Driscoll had been told they were being sold. The three were directed to pack their suitcases and head straight to the airport, although it was still a mystery as to where they would be going - Edmonton or Winnipeg.

The players were to board a private Learjet and head to Minneapolis, figuring they would know their final destination by the time they got there. There were issues, however, as not only did they not have a clue where they would end up, but someone also had to pay for the expensive private flight.

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Mio: I remember probably everything about that day.

First of all, we started off at practice and after practice, we were told to go home and pack some clothes, make sure we got our equipment and that we were being sold. We didn't know quite where we were going. It was between Winnipeg and Edmonton but be at the airport by 2:00 O'clock.

So, when we got to the airport with all our stuff, they still had not known where we were going and we waited around and waited around. Finally, there was a decision made to fly as far as Minneapolis, and they should know by then.

We loaded the plane up, it was pretty much filled up because it was a small Learjet. Private. They wanted us there as quick as we could.

Gretzky: It was like a Learjet 35 or 25. I'm not sure exactly. I just remember I was really excited about the opportunity about going to Edmonton.

Mio: As soon as we took off, the pilot opened the door and kind of asked who was paying for the flight. Everybody looked around. Wayne's making the most between me and Peter but we know he doesn't have any bank account, credit card or whatever. Somebody is in control of his money.

Mio and Gretzky had formed a friendship in Indianapolis, with Gretzky describing Mio as an older brother. The former Oilers keeper was later Gretzky's best man at his wedding.

Gretzky: Eddie sort of looked out for me like a big brother. I was 17 years old and not only away from home but in a new country.

Mio: The decision had to be made, so I asked the pilot if he took credit card. The pilot said, "Yes" and he had one of those old swipers on the plane. He swiped it. Gave it back to me for me to sign and my jaw dropped open looking at the price.

Gretzky: All I remember was the pilot saying, "Who's paying for this?"

And Eddie said, "I got a credit card but it's got a \$500 limit."

The pilot said, "OK, I'll take it."

Mio: Peter Driscoll was sitting beside me and kind of said, "Well, what's the matter?"

I said, "Well, do you think they'll check the card?"

Peter said, "I don't know, why?"

I said, "Well, it's a \$500 Canadian limit from Toronto Dominion." And the flight was over, I can't really recall but anywhere from \$8,000 to \$10,000 dollars. And that's not even knowing where we were going.

Gretzky: Fortunately, guys like Eddie, Peter and a few other guys on the team treated me extremely well and took care of me.

Mio: Long story short, not only were we panicking about where we were going, I was wondering if they were going to put the purchase through and it would have been declined right away because we said to him, "We don't know who's going to pay for it, we don't know where we were going."

He said, "If somebody doesn't pay for it, we're going to turn around and land back in Indianapolis."

That's when I made the decision and forced the credit card on him. Thankfully, he didn't check it.

Gretzky: We had to make a stop in Minnesota. At that point in time, we still weren't sure if we were going to Winnipeg or Edmonton.

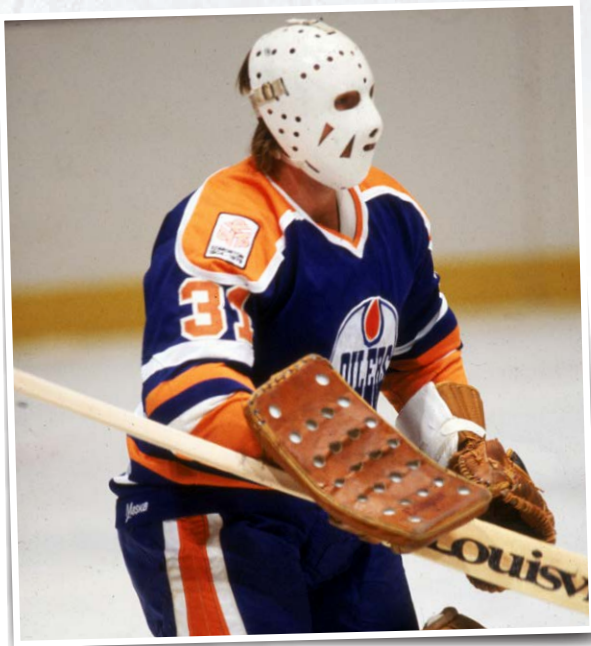
Mio: We got to Minneapolis and the pilot came back. We all got off the plane to stretch our legs and refuel.

The pilot came back and said, "Edmonton it is, you guys. That's where you're going."

Once the plane took off, there were two moods in the cabin.

Gretzky was excited for the new opportunity on a new team, and potentially, new league.

Mio and Driscoll, two veterans who became part of the community in Indianapolis over two seasons, were upset they had to leave.



Gretzky: Peter and Eddie had a different sort of mindset at that point in time because they really cemented themselves in Indianapolis. They loved it there and were living together and enjoyed playing in Indy.

Mio: That was absolutely true. Because, remember, Peter and I were there for two years. We had a house that Wayne came and visited all the time because he was close to us.

You know how you build friendships and you're a big part of the team? We had been there for two years. We didn't know Indianapolis was going to fold.

Gretzky: I think they were really shell shocked when the deal transpired. I was really excited about getting the opportunity to go to Edmonton.

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HISTORY IS IN YOUR HANDS



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Mio: We were stunned. Wayne had only been there since August because he had to go to high school. Peter and I had already been spending summers there. We were part of the community, played softball and baseball games. We had a pretty good grasp on Indianapolis and the place.

Gretzky: So, the plane had two different mindsets: I was really excited and those guys didn't really get excited until they got to Edmonton because they were so disappointed in Leaving Indy, which is natural.

Mio: We got to Edmonton but it's not over yet because when we flew in, we got to the airport and the airport was dark. We were late. I think it was now around 10:00 o'clock Edmonton time. Maybe even later.

Finally, the plane pulled up to where the customs guy comes on and he said, "Hey, you're at the wrong airport. They're all waiting for you at the city airport."

So, we get back on the plane, we take off and we go to the city airport. Well, again the pilot looks back and says, "I'm going to need that credit card again."

I said, "For what! We're right here (laughing)!"

Eventually, Gretzky, Mio and Driscoll arrived with reporters waiting for them.

Matheson: I just remember waiting, waiting and waiting. It was a long night. As a newspaper guy, I was just worried about deadlines. Like, let's get this show on the road.

Mio: As soon as we landed in the city, (Oilers Public Relations Director) John Short, I think, came racing up. The pilot opened the door and John said, "Come on guys, they've all been waiting for you. You got to get in and get welcomed to Edmonton."

Matheson: I just remember us waiting at the downtown airport with a crush of people. It wasn't like we were waiting for Gordie Howe to come in. It was a 17-year-old kid and the buzz around the kid was that he was a Hall of Famer. As it turned out, he was the greatest player to ever live.

Mio: Wayne got out, Peter got out, they started walking and I waited.

He (Short) said, "What do you want, what are you doing?"

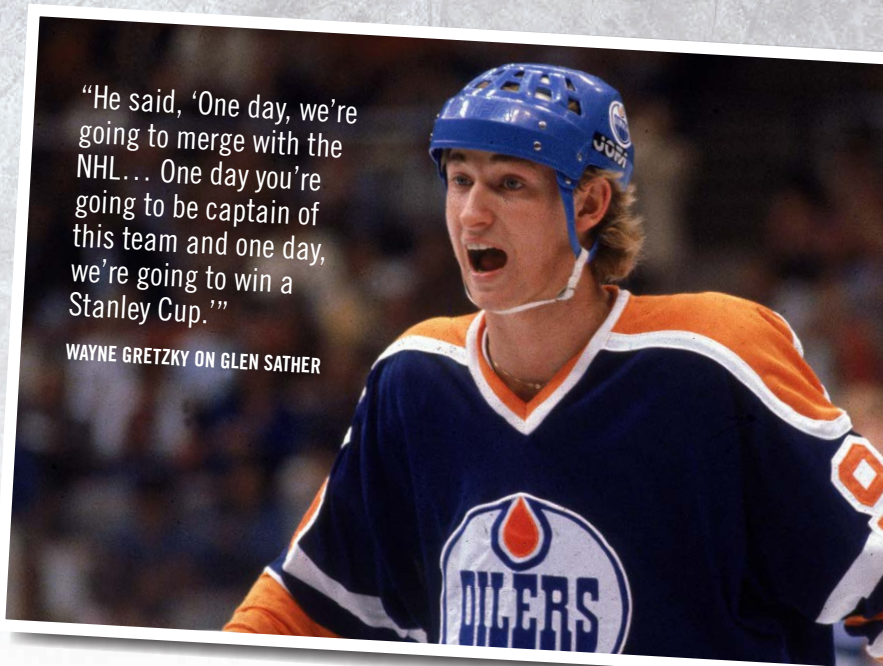
I said, "Here. I'm not leaving until you take care of this."

I gave him my receipt and he said, "No problem, here."

He gave the pilot their credit card and sure enough, ripped my copy up, which probably was the worst thing that we did because it would have been not knowing what Wayne was going to do in Edmonton. It would have been a nice keepsake to mount it up,

"He said, 'One day, we're going to merge with the NHL... One day you're going to be captain of this team and one day, we're going to win a Stanley Cup.'"

WAYNE GRETZKY ON GLEN SATHER



give it to Wayne, put it in his place, his dad's place or trophy room.

Matheson: Then Gretzky finally arrived and he looked exactly like he did four or five months earlier: Long hair and skinny - not looking like he would set the world on fire but of course, he did.

Mio: So, we had the press conference and off Wayne goes with a billet family, while Peter and I went to a motel that was close to Northlands.

I remember saying to Peter, "Boy, I thought we were in the big leagues being sold to Edmonton. Look at the place they got us put up in (laughing)."

Gretzky went on to play nine seasons with the Orange & Blue in the National Hockey League, compiling 1669 points in 696 games, while also winning the Stanley Cup four times with the franchise. The Oilers Legend holds or shares 61 NHL records, including most goals, most points and most assists.

Gretzky: My dad always said to me, "Life happens for a reason."

It was meant to be that I was to go to Edmonton. It was meant to be that I started in Indy and had Peter, Eddie, and we ended up all together in Edmonton.

Mio: When something like that happens, it's hard to forget.

Gretzky: from Day 1 when I met Glen (Sather), the first meeting I had with him, he told me that - and I'll never forget this.

He said, "One day, we're going to merge with the NHL. We're going to be in the NHL, I think by next year. One day you're going to be captain of this team and one day, we're going to win a Stanley Cup."

I remember thinking, "Wow, we got a lot to do in the next few years (laughing)."

But it all did come true. 

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HUNTER SPOTLIGHT

Our lovable lynx Hunter was no longer the new guy at NHL All-Star Weekend as he and the other mascots welcomed the infamous Gritty to their motley crew that gathered in San Jose at the end of January! Once again, Hunter was a force to be reckoned with in the Mascot Showdown and tried mightily to convert some local Sharks supporters into Oilers fans.

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BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

BY JAMIE UMBACH

Zeyad Almahamed was laced up in a pair of hockey skates with a stick in hand for the first time during an Introduction To Hockey session at the Downtown Community Arena adjacent to Rogers Place on February 7.

The 13-year-old took part in the session, which was designed to introduce youth to the sport of hockey, alongside 30 more participants from the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.

"We were playing, practicing, and doing some tricks," Zeyad said of his first hockey experience after arriving in Canada in 2016. "At the end, we played a game versus each other. It felt so nice and so exciting."

Fast forward to February 19, Hockey Is For Everyone Night at Rogers Place, and Zeyad was having his name called by the public announcer and lining up on the blueline alongside future heroes Leon Draisaitl, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, and Oscar Klefbom.

"I felt scared, shy, and excited at the same time," he admitted. "I want to play all my life now."

Zeyad was a part of a diverse group of six participants called to the ice for the national anthems ahead of that night's Oilers and Arizona Coyotes matchup, as part of Hockey Is For Everyone Night, a league-wide initiative that uses the game of hockey and the League's global influence to foster more inclusive communities and drive social change.

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Among those included in the ceremony were centre Spencer Tomic from the Edmonton Adaptive Sports Association Storm sledge hockey team, 23-year-old Briann Baldock from the Edmonton SeeHawks and the Alberta Sports and Recreation Association for the Blind, and other individuals representative of the diversity that makes up the hockey community.

A further 450 tickets to the game were also donated to a number of groups to give people who might not otherwise be able to attend a game, the opportunity to do so, some for even the very first time.





As they've also done in years past, Oilers players took to the ice for warmup with Pride Tape woven around their stick blades to show support for the LGBTQ community. The colourful tape created in Edmonton symbolizes inclusiveness in sport, with the sticks being auctioned off in the Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation online charity auction in support of the You Can Play Project, helping fight off homophobia in sport.

"If you can play, you can play," Kristopher Wells, creator of pride tape with Jeff McLean, said. "Your sexual orientation or your gender identity doesn't need to be your biggest barrier in life - it can be your greatest asset to achieve your hopes and dreams.

"Seeing a player step on the ice with their stick covered in pride tape sends that message of inclusion and hope to that young teenager out there who's maybe wondering if hockey can be their future."

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- DARREN PARRIS, WIDE MOUTH MASON

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HOCKEY IS FOR EVERYONE™

Supported by all 31 NHL teams, Hockey Is For Everyone extends far beyond the individual game night and is a year-round campaign set on opening doors for all players, coaches, athletes and fans who are passionate about hockey regardless of their race, religion, skin colour, gender, ability, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

The Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation continued its commitment to embracing inclusivity as they hosted Inner City High School students for an annual luncheon at Rogers Place in February, and sponsored three sledge hockey teams from the Edmonton Adaptive Sports Association to attend and compete at the NHL Sled Classic in Chicago.

Oilers forward Juhar Khaira, once again serving as the team's ambassador for Hockey Is For Everyone this season, had the opportunity to visit with India's national women's hockey team this past November at the Scotiabank Saddledome in Calgary to help inspire the next generation of women's hockey.

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“This is a dream of every player – to become NHL players. They got an opportunity to see how they do the exercises and the drills they’re doing... so it’s a big opportunity for the girls and we are very happy.”

ABDUL HAKIM, INDIA’S NATIONAL WOMEN’S TEAM HEAD COACH

“This is a dream of every player – to become NHL players,” India’s national women’s team head coach Abdul Hakim said. “They got an opportunity to see how they do the exercises and the drills they’re doing... so it’s a big opportunity for the girls and we are very happy.”

The team was visiting Calgary to participate in the Wickenheiser Female World Hockey Festival, dubbed WickFest for short, hosted by Canadian hockey legend Hayley Wickenheiser. The challenge of playing hockey in India begins with access to a proper ice surface.

“In India we had one international-standard ice hockey rink, but it was totally shut down because of the expenses,” Hakim

said. “Here they get the opportunity to play on international-standard ice, so it’s amazing.”

Challenging the status quo is a continuous battle in the fight to prove that hockey really is for everyone.

“Breaking barriers, as we are doing, it’s really important for us to [play] at such a level,” forward Diskit Chhonzom Agmo said. “We never give up, no matter what the hurdles and barriers are, we always look forward to what’s in our hands.”

Hockey Is For Everyone is just a small piece of the larger puzzle of making the sport more accessible and inclusive for all communities, helping break down one barrier at a time. 🍅



OFF THE ICE

It's a three-peat! For the third consecutive season, the Hockey Helps Kids team captained by Ryan Nugent-Hopkins was successful in their bid to win the Charity Cup Challenge. RNH's team at Sister Annata Brockman School earned the largest share of the more than 72,000 total votes submitted and received \$25,000 to donate to their charity, Autism Edmonton.

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OIL KINGS PREPPING FOR PLAYOFFS AFTER REBOUND SEASON

BY ALYSCIA WARNER

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR CAN MAKE.

After a last-place finish in the WHL standings in 2017-18, the Edmonton Oil Kings have rebounded in 2018-19 with a complete 180-degree-type performance, exciting fans while they soared up the WHL standings.

The team has a return to the playoffs set square in its sights, not only managing to win many more games, but doing so while reaching a number of personal and team milestones along the way.

A total of eight Oil Kings registered arguably one of the most coveted milestones – at least ones that come early in a player's career – their first career WHL goal.

Of course that achievement doesn't hold quite the same weight for a goaltender, the positional equivalent being the shutout, which was achieved for the first time in his career this season by Dylan Myskiw.

Both Oil Kings guardians of the goal have shown they're up to the task of being considered among the League's best, as Myskiw and Todd Scott were named WHL Goaltender of the Week at different points this season.

Of course, true team success doesn't happen without teamwork, and no one exemplifies that better than Oil Kings captain Trey Fix-Wolansky.

The Columbus Blue Jackets prospect has been among the best in the League in terms of point production all season long, but his numbers have also been good enough to rank him among the greatest in Oil Kings modern franchise history. Approaching the final month of the regular season, Fix-Wolansky was just two

points back of tying the mark for most assists in a single season, set in 2012-13 by Dylan Wruck (63).

Known as a set-up man as opposed to a shoot-first kind of guy, the Edmonton native has also registered his share of snipes over the course of his three WHL seasons, moving his way into fifth in all-time regular season goals in modern franchise history, and continuing to climb.

But the offence hasn't just come from the leadership group, as the Oil Kings have seen scoring come from all four forward lines and the blueline as well.

Conner McDonald has treated Oil Kings faithful to a torrid scoring pace fit for the record books, as he tied Cody Corbett's mark from 2013-14 for most goals scored by a defenceman in a single regular season in February (17).

Those 17 goals (and counting) in 2018-19 have also contributed to his ever-growing career total which, as the calendar turned to March, saw him just four goals back (34) of the record for most goals scored by an Oil Kings defenceman in modern franchise history (38), set by Aaron Irving.

Finally, over-agers Quinn Benjafield and Vince Loschiavo each reached the 300 regular season games mark earlier in the campaign, but as memorable as the first 300 undoubtedly were, they – along with fellow over-ager Andrew Fyten and the rest of the team – hope their remaining games give them the greatest milestone memories of all as they strive for a lengthy playoff run. ♦



2018-19 SEASON SCHEDULE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 CGY 7:00 pm	18 VAN 8:00 pm	19	20 WPG 7:00 pm	21	22
23 WPG 6:00 pm	24	25 VAN 7:30 pm	26	27 ARI 7:00 pm	28	29 CGY 1:00 pm
30						

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6 NJ 11:00 am COTRECHOURS
7	8	9	10	11 SNOL 5:00 pm	12	13 SNW NYR 11:00 am
14	15	16 SNOL WPG 6:00 pm	17	18 SNL BOS 7:00 pm	19	20 HNIC NSH 8:00 pm
21	22	23 SNT PIT 7:00 pm	24	25 SNT WSH 7:00 pm	26	27 SNW NSH 1:00 pm
28 SNT CHI 4:00 pm	29	30 SNOL MIN 7:00 pm	31			

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 SNW CHI 7:00 pm		3 DET 5:00 pm
4	5 SNW WSH 5:00 pm	6 SNW TBL 5:30 pm	7	8 SNL FLA 5:00 pm	9	10
11 SNT COL 7:30 pm	12	13 SNW MTL 7:00 pm	14	15	16	17 HNIC CGY 8:00 pm
18 SNL VGK 6:00 pm	19	20 SNW SJS 8:30 pm	21	22	23 SNW ANA 2:00 pm	24
25 SNW LAK 8:30 pm	26	27 SNW DAL 7:00 pm	28	29 SNW LAK 7:00 pm	30	

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 HNIC VGK 8:00 pm
2	3 SNW DAL 6:30 pm	4	5 STL 6:00 pm	6	7 SNW MIN 7:00 pm	8
9 SNL CGY 7:00 pm	10	11 SNW COL 7:00 pm	12	13 SNW WPG 6:00 pm	14 SNW PHI 7:00 pm	15
16 SNW VAN 8:00 pm	17	18 SNT STL 7:00 pm	19	20	21	22 HNIC TBL 8:00 pm
23	24 SNW WPG 7:00 pm	25	26	27 SNT VAN 7:00 pm	28	29 SNW SJS 2:00 pm
30						

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2 SNT ARI 7:30 pm	3	4	5 HNIC LAK 8:00 pm
6 ANA 6:00 pm	7	8 SNW SJS 8:30 pm	9	10 SNW FLA 7:00 pm	11	12 HNIC ARI 8:00 pm
13	14 SNW BUF 7:00 pm	15	16 SNW VAN 8:00 pm	17	18	19 HNIC CGY 8:00 pm
20 SNT CAR 7:30 pm	21	22 SNT DET 7:00 pm	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2 SNL PHI 11:00 am
3 SNL MTL 12:00 pm	4	5 SNW CHI 7:00 pm	6	7 SNW MIN 6:00 pm	8	9 HNIC SJS 5:00 pm
10	11	12	13 SNT PIT 6:00 pm	14	15 SNW CAR 5:30 pm	16 HNIC NYI 5:00 pm
17	18	19 SNW ARI 7:00 pm	20	21 SNW NYI 7:00 pm	22	23 HNIC ANA 8:00 pm
24	25 SNW NSH 6:00 pm	26	27 SNT TOR 5:00 pm	28 SNW OTT 5:30 pm		

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2 SNW CBJ 11:00 am
3	4 SNT BUF 5:00 pm	5	6	7 SNW VAN 7:00 pm	8	9 HNIC TOR 5:00 pm
10	11 SNW NYR 7:00 pm	12	13 SNT NJD 7:30 pm	14	15	16 HNIC ARI 8:00 pm
17 SNW VGK 8:00 pm	18	19 SNT STL 6:00 pm	20	21 SNT CBJ 7:00 pm	22	23 SNW OTT 2:00 pm
24	25	26 SNW LAK 7:00 pm	27	28 SNW DAL 7:00 pm	29	30 HNIC ANA 8:00 pm
31						

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 SNT VGK 8:00 pm	2 SNW COL 7:00 pm	3	4 SNW SJS 7:00 pm	5	6 HNIC CGY 8:00 pm
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

ABBREVIATIONS

- ANA - Anaheim
- ARI - Arizona
- BOS - Boston
- BUF - Buffalo
- CAR - Carolina
- CBJ - Columbus
- CGY - Calgary
- CHI - Chicago
- COL - Colorado
- DAL - Dallas
- DET - Detroit
- FLA - Florida
- LAK - Los Angeles
- MIN - Minnesota
- MTL - Montreal
- NJD - New Jersey
- NSH - Nashville
- NYI - NY Islanders
- NYR - NY Rangers
- OTT - Ottawa
- PHI - Philadelphia
- PIT - Pittsburgh
- SJS - San Jose
- STL - St. Louis
- TBL - Tampa Bay
- TOR - Toronto
- VAN - Vancouver
- VGK - Las Vegas
- WPG - Winnipeg
- WSH - Washington

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 SNT Televised on Sportsnet ONE
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 HNIC Televised on Hockey Night in Canada
 HDIC Televised on Hockey Day in Canada
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