

OIL COUNTRY

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 40

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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.

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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."

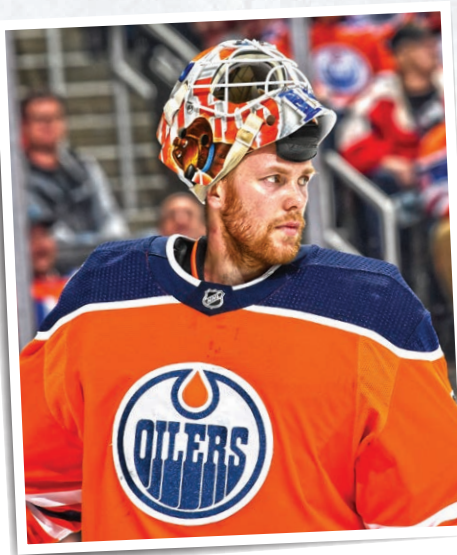
"I knew he was a big guy that would take up a lot of the net, but then once he got here you realize how big he actually is. He's very competitive and a good teammate as well."

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 a 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. 🔴

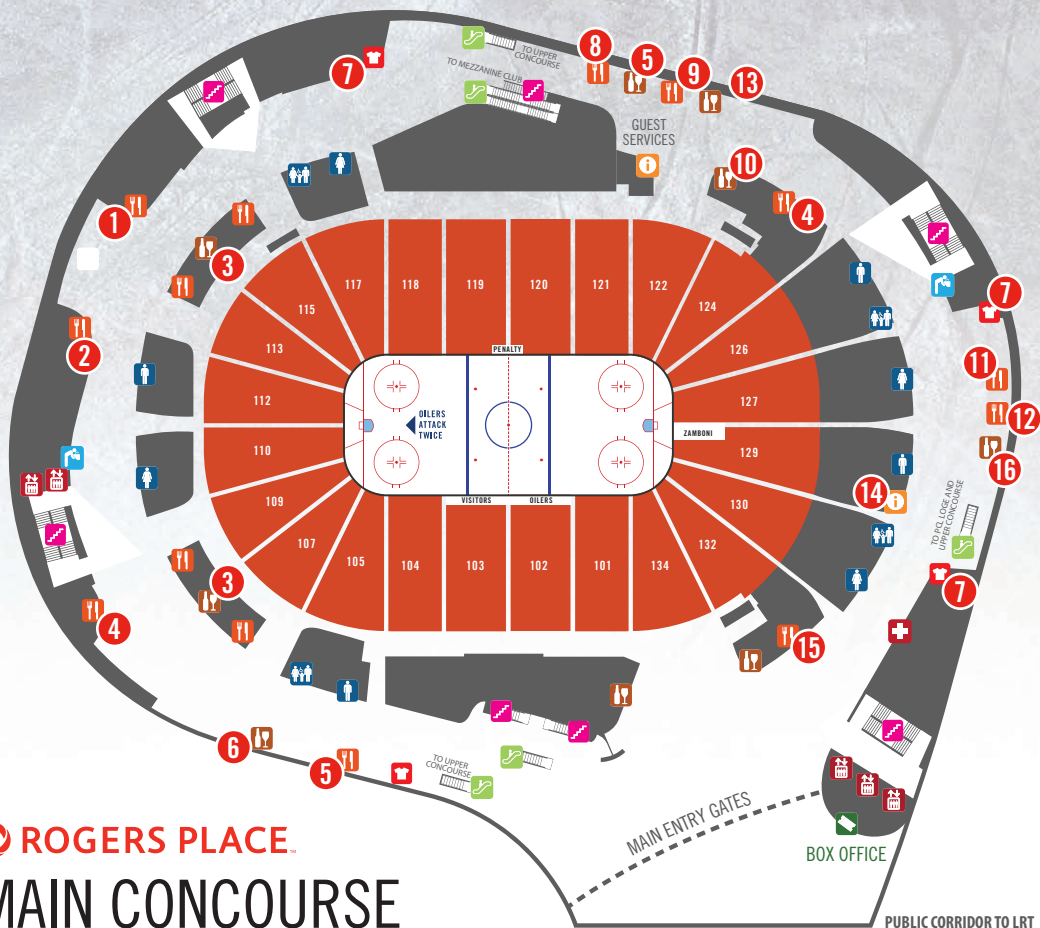


1st N.H.L. Goal



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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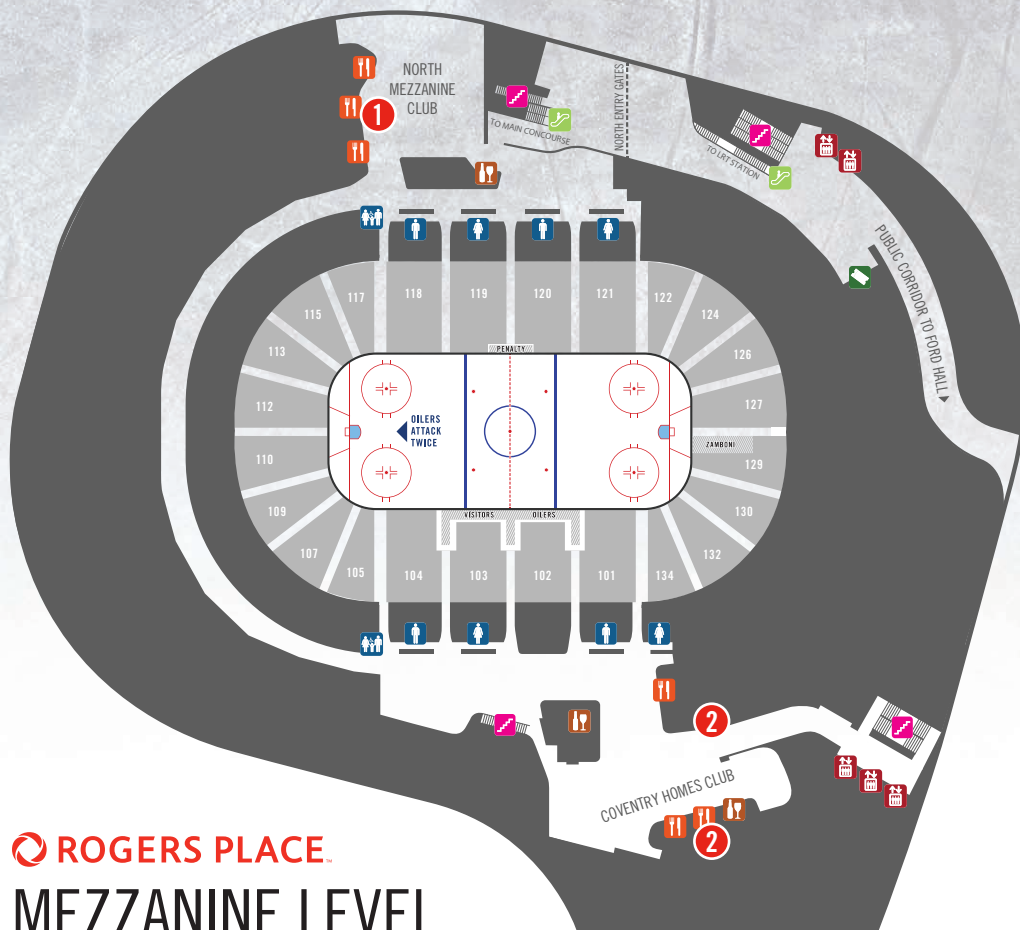
14 GUEST SERVICES

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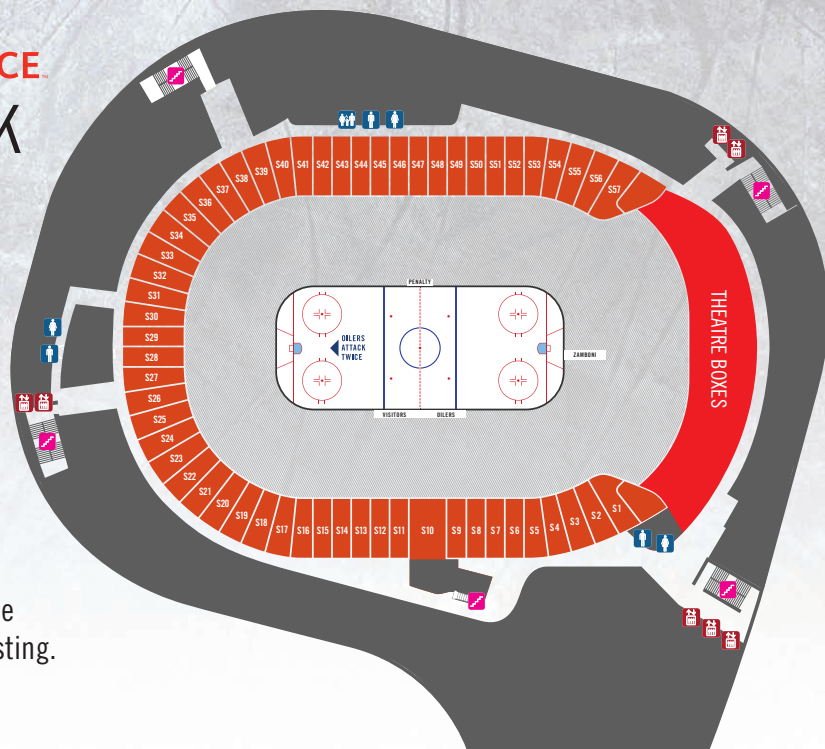
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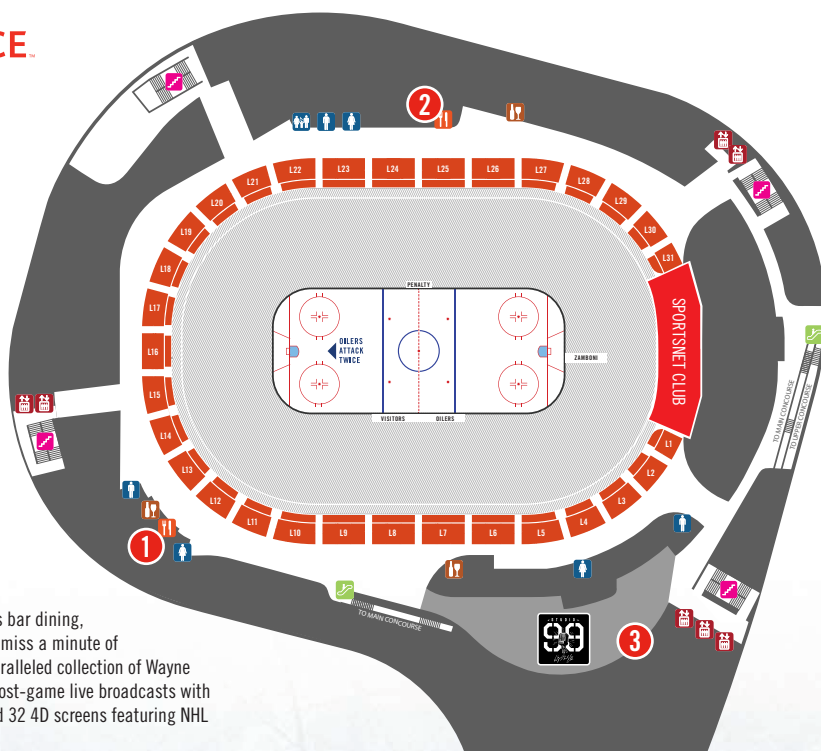
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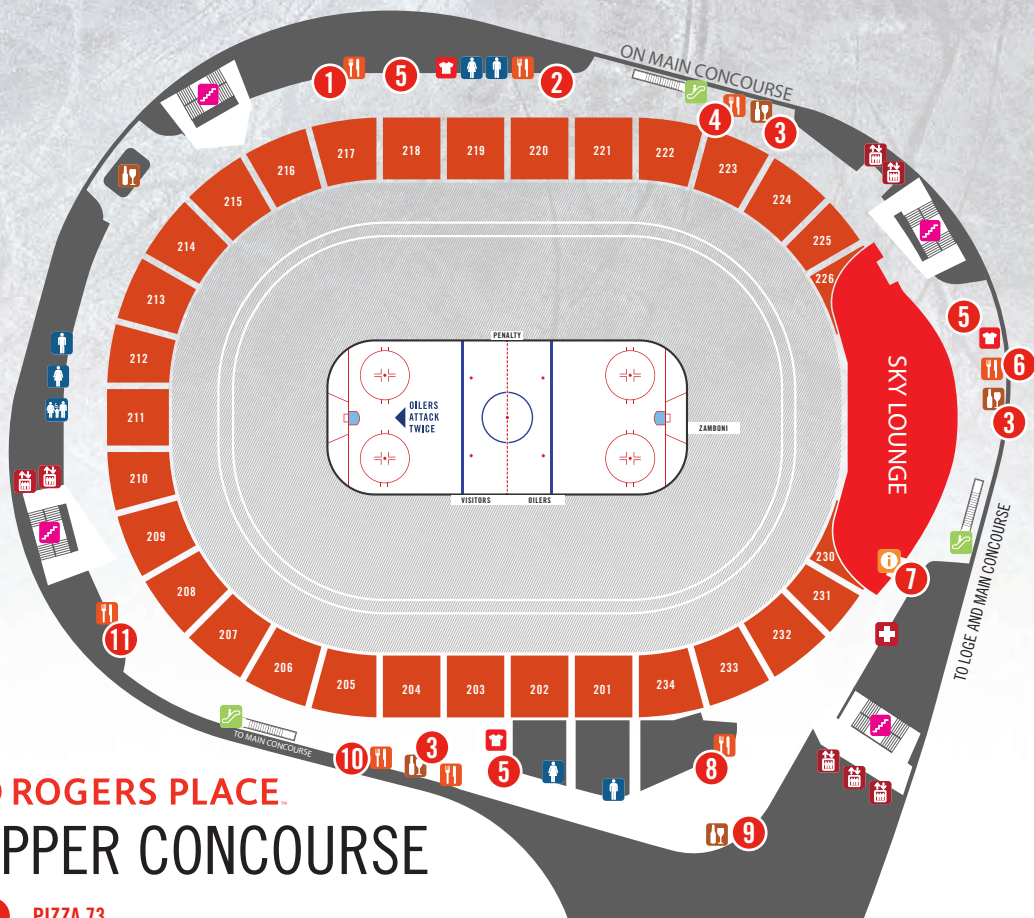
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Sam Gagner @89SGagner · Feb 16
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Jeremy Thompson
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Replying to @89SGagner @EdmontonOilers

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

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edmontonoilers Yesssss!

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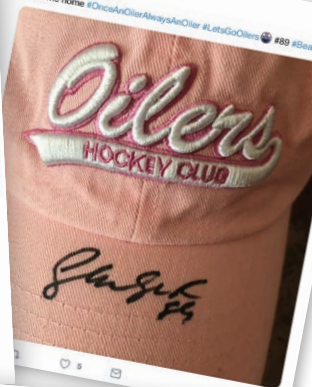
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7 Likes

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

Welcome home #OnceAnOilerAlwaysAnOiler #LetsGoOilers #89 #Edmontonoilers



Jordi
@jordi_yag

Replying to @89SGagner

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



Feb 2019

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! 😊



7 17 233

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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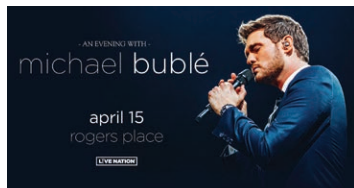
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With special guests Volbeat



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LIFE CHANGES TOUR
Friday, May 10
@ 7:30PM
With special guest Dustin Lynch



STARS ON ICE
Sunday, May 12
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ENERGIZE OIL COUNTRY WINNERS CROWNED

Energize Oil Country presented by Cenovus and powered by Jumpstart has students in Oil Country getting active for 60 minutes a day over a 10-week period for a chance to win a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for their entire classroom to watch the Oilers in action at Rogers Place.

Thanks to the support of Cenovus and Jumpstart, Energize Oil Country has grown exponentially since its inception five years ago. This year, more than 12,000 students in grades one to nine from over 535 classrooms are active in Energize Oil Country.

For Cenovus Energy, it makes sense to support a program that motivates youth and encourages healthy lifestyles. "At Cenovus, we're striving to ensure communities where we live and work are stronger and better off as a result of us being there," says Leanne Courchesne, Cenovus Energy Group Lead, Community Investment. "We believe it's important to invest in youth and support initiatives that help increase literacy rates, encourage healthy lifestyles, and provide skills and experiences that motivate and inspire youth."

Cenovus and the Oilers have been partnering to create better communities since 2008 and launched Energize Oil Country to help improve the health and well-being of young people across the province. "We're excited to support a program that promotes a variety of health and wellness learning objectives, including a focus on physical activity," says Courchesne. "We believe Energize Oil Country is incredible because of the large impact it has on youth across the province, helping them to establish healthy habits at an early age."

Energize Oil Country wouldn't be possible without the support of Jumpstart. "All kids, wherever they live, deserve a chance to play!" says Brad Ellard, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities Regional Manager, Alberta and Northwest Territories. "With the help of the Energize Oil Country program, kids in rural communities across Northern Alberta can develop important life skills like confidence, leadership and sportsmanship by engaging in quality physical activity and play

throughout the school year. Being part of Energize Oil Country helps Jumpstart reinforce how fun sport and play can be."

The program is simple for students and teachers. After signing their classroom up for Energize Oil Country, teachers receive a welcome kit with program materials to help keep students accountable. To kick off the program, students take the pledge – by signing their pledge certificates and classroom poster – to complete 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Sean Bulger, teacher of this year's grand prize winning classroom, signed his class up after hearing about the program and has noticed a difference in his students. "I have definitely noticed an increase in physical activity since starting the program with my kids," says Bulger. "I think it's a wonderful opportunity for students to have access to programs like this as it's a great way to encourage them to get active even if they're usually not involved in sports outside of school."

Throughout the program, classrooms are presented with challenges which keep students moving and thinking about a healthy lifestyle. The challenges also give classrooms more chances to win prizes. This year's prizes include kits from Ever Active Schools and Jumpstart, a nutrition event with Oilers trainers Chad Drummond and Joel Schneider, a Skype session with Energize Oil Country ambassador Darnell Nurse and the grand prize trip to Rogers Place to watch the Oilers in action at tonight's game. For Bulger's Grade 5 class from Lois E. Hole Elementary School in St. Albert, the experience is a great reward to cap off the program.

The unique prizes are incentives for students to stay active during the program with the goal of having these memorable experiences inspire them to take their pledge beyond the 10-week program.

For more information on Energize Oil Country presented by Cenovus and powered by Jumpstart, visit EdmontonOilers.com/EnergizeOilCountry. ♦

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GAME PREVIEW

EDMONTON OILERS vs ANAHEIM DUCKS

SATURDAY | MARCH 30 | 2019 | ROGERS PLACE



THE OILERS CONCLUDE THEIR FIVE-GAME HOMESTAND TONIGHT WITH ANOTHER PACIFIC DIVISION RIVALRY MATCHUP AGAINST THE ANAHEIM DUCKS. This is the fourth and final meeting of the season between the Oilers and Ducks, with Edmonton winning two of the first three games. The teams opened their season series in Orange County on Nov. 23 with the home team squeaking out a 2-1 OT victory. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins scored the lone Oilers goal and Rickard Rakell tallied the sudden-death winner for Anaheim. The Oilers have won both games since, posting a dominant 4-0 shutout on Jan. 6 also in Anaheim followed by a slim 2-1 decision on Feb. 23 at Rogers Place. Connor McDavid, Jesse Puljujarvi, Kyle Brodziak and Leon Draisaitl scored in the first victory, while Josh Currie scored his first NHL goal and Sam Gagner had the winner in their most recent meeting. Carter Rowney tallied the lone goal for the Ducks that night. With this season's 2-1-0 record thus far, the Oilers have a 48-52-2-6 all-time record vs. Anaheim.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

CONNOR MCDAVID scored once and added three assists for a four-point night on Tuesday against the Los Angeles Kings, vaulting him up to 112 points on the season to set a new career high for the fourth-year phenom. The 22-year-old hit 100 points on the nose as a sophomore in 2016-17, followed that up with 108 points last season and will establish his new personal best this year with five games to go including tonight. McDavid had 39 goals heading into Thursday's game against the Dallas Stars, needing three more to set a new career high in that category as well. His shooting percentage has increased in each of his three full seasons, starting at 12% in 16-17, going up to 15% last year and now 17.6%.

JAKOB SILFVERBERG has been Anaheim's top goal scorer this season, leading the team with 23 tallies prior to last night's game against the Calgary Flames. The 28-year-old needed just one more goal to surpass his career high from two years ago. He's also maintaining the best shooting percentage of his seven-year NHL career at 14.8% prior to Friday's matchup. Silfverberg was selected 39th overall by the Ottawa Senators at the 2009 NHL Draft and played three seasons in Sweden before making the jump to North America in 2012-13. He only suited up for one season with the Sens organization before he was dealt to the Ducks on July 5, 2013 as part of a package in exchange for fellow winger Bobby Ryan.



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
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
45	JOSEPH GAMBARDILLA	C	L	5' 10"	196	DEC 1, 1993	STATEN ISLAND, NY, USA
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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 Video Coach..... Jeremy Coupal
 Skating Coach..... David Pelletier



FORWARDS

#	NAME	POS	SHOOTS	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
10	COREY PERRY (A)	RW	R	6' 3"	206	MAY 16, 1985	PETERBOROUGH, ON, CAN
11	DANIEL SPRONG	RW	R	6' 0"	180	MAR 17, 1997	AMSTERDAM, NLD
14	ADAM HENRIQUE	C	L	6' 0"	197	FEB 6, 1990	BRANTFORD, ON, CAN
15	RYAN GETZLAF (C)	C	R	6' 4"	225	MAY 10, 1985	REGINA, SK, CAN
17	RYAN KESLER (A)	C	R	6' 2"	206	AUG 31, 1984	LIVONIA, MI, USA
24	CARTER ROWNEY	C	R	6' 2"	206	MAY 10, 1989	GRAND PRAIRIE, AB, CAN
25	ONDREJ KASE	RW	R	5' 11"	186	NOV 8, 1995	KADAN, CZE
29	DEVIN SHORE	C	L	6' 1"	205	JUL 19, 1994	AJAX, ON, CAN
33	JAKOB SILFVERBERG	RW	R	6' 1"	204	OCT 13, 1990	GÄVLE, SWE
34	SAM STEEL	C	L	5' 11"	186	FEB 3, 1998	ARDROSSAN, AB, CAN
37	NICK RITCHIE	LW	L	6' 2"	234	DEC 5, 1995	ORANGEVILLE, ON, CAN
38	DEREK GRANT	C	L	6' 3"	215	APR 20, 1990	ABBOTSFORD, BC, CAN
49	MAX JONES	LW	L	6' 3"	220	FEB 17, 1998	ROCHESTER, MI, USA
61	TROY TERRY	RW	R	6' 1"	178	SEP 10, 1997	DENVER, CO, USA
64	KIEFER SHERWOOD	RW	R	6' 0"	194	MAR 31, 1995	COLUMBUS, OH, USA
67	RICKARD RAKELL	LW	R	6' 1"	202	MAY 5, 1993	SUNDBYBERG, SWE

DEFENCE

#	NAME	SHOOTS	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
2	BRENDAN GUHLE	L	6' 2"	196	JUL 29, 1997	EDMONTON, AB, CAN
4	CAM FOWLER	L	6' 2"	206	DEC 5, 1991	WINDSOR, ON, CAN
5	KORBINIAN HOLZER	R	6' 3"	218	FEB 16, 1988	MUNICH, DEU
32	JACOB LARSSON	L	6' 2"	197	APR 29, 1997	LJUNGBY, SWE
42	JOSH MANSON	R	6' 3"	216	OCT 7, 1991	HINSDALE, IL, USA
43	JAYCOB MEGNA	L	6' 6"	221	DEC 10, 1992	PLANTATION, FL, USA
45	ANDY WELINSKI	R	6' 1"	201	APR 27, 1993	DULUTH, MN, USA
47	HAMPUS LINDHOLM	L	6' 3"	211	JAN 20, 1994	HELSINGBORG, SWE

GOALTENDERS

#	NAME	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	DATE OF BIRTH	BIRTH PLACE
1	CHAD JOHNSON	6' 3"	197	JUN 10, 1986	SASKATOON, SK, CAN
30	RYAN MILLER	6' 2"	168	JUL 17, 1980	EAST LANSING, MI, USA
36	JOHN GIBSON	6' 2"	206	JUL 14, 1993	PITTSBURGH, PA, USA

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 Goaltending Coach..... Sudarshan Maharaj
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 Skating Consultant Larry Barron



STATISTICS | OILERS

STATS AS OF MAR. 28, 2019

PLAYER	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	PPP	SHG	SHP	GWG	OTG	S	S%	FO%
CONNOR MCDAVID	72	39	73	112	8	20	9	33	1	2	9	3	222	17.6	47.04
LEON DRAISAITL	76	46	53	99	7	52	16	29	2	2	5	3	210	21.9	50.9
RYAN NUGENT-HOPKINS	76	28	36	64	-12	26	8	25	1	3	3	0	198	14.1	45.7
DARNELL NURSE	76	8	31	39	-4	81	1	9	0	1	1	1	179	4.5	0
ALEX CHIASSON	67	21	15	36	0	32	7	14	1	2	0	0	114	18.4	33.33
OSCAR KLEFBOM	55	5	21	26	-7	16	1	10	0	0	2	1	152	3.3	0
ZACK KASSIAN	73	15	10	25	-1	98	0	0	1	1	3	0	103	14.6	0
ADAM LARSSON	76	3	17	20	-23	40	0	0	0	1	0	0	106	2.8	0
MILAN LUCIC	74	5	13	18	-8	89	2	4	0	0	0	0	69	7.2	54.76
JUJHAR KHAIRA	59	3	15	18	-11	43	0	0	1	2	0	0	64	4.7	43.2
KRIS RUSSELL	66	3	13	16	8	23	0	0	0	1	0	0	58	5.2	0
MATT BENNING	64	5	10	15	13	33	0	1	0	1	0	0	85	5.9	0
TY RATTIE	46	4	7	11	-1	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	80	5	33.33
TOBIAS RIEDER	62	0	11	11	-7	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	83	0	22.73
KYLE BRODZIAK	68	6	3	9	-11	33	0	0	1	1	2	0	72	8.3	51.78
JESSE PULJUJARVI	46	4	5	9	-14	16	0	1	0	0	0	0	53	7.5	50
SAM GAGNER	19	4	4	8	-3	10	0	0	0	0	1	0	36	11.1	47.46
JOSH CURRIE	17	2	3	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	11.8	40
COLBY CAVE	27	2	1	3	-4	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	38	5.3	52.36
KEVIN GRAVEL	35	0	3	3	-3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	0	0
ANDREJ SEKERA	18	0	3	3	5	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	21	0	0
JOSEPH GAMBARDILLA	10	0	3	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	100
ALEXANDER PETROVIC	9	0	1	1	-7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
BRAD MALONE	13	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	44.9

GOALTENDER	GP	GS	W	L	T	OT	SA	GA	GAA	S	SV%	SO	MIN
MIKKO KOSKINEN	50	46	24	18	0	5	1,418	131	2.90	1,287	.908	4	2,713
ANTHONY STOLARZ	4	1	0	1	0	0	101	11	4.26	90	.891	0	156

DUCKS | STATISTICS



STATS AS OF MAR. 28, 2019

PLAYER	GP	G	A	P	+/-	PIM	PPG	PPP	SHG	SHP	GWG	OTG	S	S%	FO%
RYAN GETZLAF	65	13	34	47	-20	48	1	11	0	0	2	1	130	10	54.18
ADAM HENRIQUE	78	18	23	41	-5	24	8	13	0	1	3	0	117	15.4	53.1
JAKOB SILFVERBERG	69	23	15	38	-14	28	3	11	2	2	4	1	155	14.8	37.5
RICKARD RAKELL	65	15	23	38	-17	27	6	13	0	0	1	1	181	8.3	35.42
NICK RITCHIE	58	9	22	31	6	62	2	9	0	0	2	0	92	9.8	33.33
HAMPUS LINDHOLM	72	6	20	26	-13	42	1	6	0	1	0	0	118	5.1	0
CAM FOWLER	55	5	16	21	-11	18	1	6	0	0	2	1	84	6	0
ONDREJ KASE	30	11	9	20	0	2	1	4	0	0	2	0	94	11.7	33.33
DANIEL SPRONG	44	13	5	18	-7	8	2	4	0	0	2	1	101	12.9	25
CARTER ROWNEY	58	6	11	17	-2	12	0	0	1	1	0	0	46	13	49.56
JOSH MANSON	74	3	13	16	-8	62	0	0	0	1	0	0	96	3.1	0
TROY TERRY	31	4	9	13	8	2	2	6	0	0	0	0	25	16	20
KIEFER SHERWOOD	48	6	6	12	3	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	54	11.1	50
DEVIN SHORE	30	4	6	10	-14	4	2	3	1	1	1	0	32	12.5	36.96
COREY PERRY	27	5	4	9	-15	23	2	4	0	0	1	0	52	9.6	0
RYAN KESLER	60	5	3	8	-19	44	1	3	0	0	1	0	86	5.8	55.69
SAM STEEL	18	4	4	8	1	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	26	15.4	50
DEREK GRANT	27	2	5	7	-10	8	0	0	0	1	1	0	44	4.5	51.51
JACOB LARSSON	45	0	5	5	-6	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0
JAYCOB MEGNA	25	1	3	4	-1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	3.4	0
ANDY WELINSKI	23	0	3	3	-5	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	0	0
MAX JONES	26	1	1	2	-1	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	45	2.2	33.33
KORBINIAN HOLZER	18	0	2	2	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
BRENDAN GUHLE	5	0	1	1	-3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0

GOALTENDER	GP	GS	W	L	T	OT	SA	GA	GAA	S	SV%	SO	MIN
RYAN MILLER	18	15	7	6	0	2	515	44	2.67	471	.915	1	989
JOHN GIBSON	56	55	24	22	0	8	1,761	150	2.89	1,611	.915	2	3,114
CHAD JOHNSON	9	4	0	5	0	0	156	20	3.75	136	.872	0	320

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3 P. KANE, CHI	102
4 L. DRAISAITL, EDM	99
5 B. MARCHAND, BOS	97

GOALS

1 A. OVECHKIN, WSH	49
2 L. DRAISAITL, EDM	46
3 J. TAVARES, TOR	45
4 P. KANE, CHI	41
5 S. STAMKOS, TBL	41

ASSISTS

1 N. KUCHEROV, TBL	83
2 C. MCDAVID, EDM	73
3 B. WHEELER, WPG	68
4 M. MARNER, TOR	65
5 B. BURNS, SJS	64

PENALTY MINUTES

1 E. KANE, SJS	151
2 T. WILSON, WSH	119
3 D. ROUSSEL, VAN	118
4 I. COLE, COL	113
5 Z. KASSIAN, EDM	98

ROOKIE POINTS

1 E. PETTERSSON, VAN	64
2 A. JOHNSON, TOR	42
3 R. DAHLIN, BUF	41
4 B. TKACHUK, OTT	39
5 A. CIRELLI, TBL	37

GOALS AGAINST AVG.

1 J. BINNINGTON, STL	1.81
2 B. BISHOP, DAL	2.05
3 R. LEHNER, NYI	2.17
4 J. CAMPBELL, LAK	2.32
5 T. GREISS, NYI	2.32

SAVE %

1 B. BISHOP, DAL	.933
2 J. BINNINGTON, STL	.930
3 R. LEHNER, NYI	.928
4 A. VASILEVSKIY, TBL	.927
5 T. GREISS, NYI	.926

GOALTENDER WINS

1 A. VASILEVSKIY, TBL	37
2 M. FLEURY, VGK	35
3 F. ANDERSEN, TOR	35
4 M. JONES, SJS	34
5 C. PRICE, MTL	33

2018-19 WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 X-WINNIPEG	76	45	27	4	94	43	256	223	+33	25-10-4	20-17-0	2-1	6-4-0	L1
2 X-NASHVILLE	77	43	28	6	92	39	224	202	+22	23-13-2	20-15-4	4-2	6-3-1	W1
3 ST. LOUIS	76	41	27	8	90	40	226	206	+20	21-15-2	20-12-6	1-2	6-2-2	W4
PACIFIC	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 X-CALGARY	77	47	23	7	101	47	269	215	+54	25-9-5	22-14-2	0-4	6-4-0	L2
2 X-SAN JOSE	76	43	24	9	95	43	268	240	+28	23-9-5	20-15-4	0-3	4-5-1	L1
3 VEGAS	77	42	29	6	90	39	238	213	+25	23-10-5	19-19-1	3-2	6-3-1	L2
WILD CARD	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 DALLAS	77	40	31	6	86	40	195	189	+6	22-14-3	18-17-3	0-1	5-4-1	W2
2 COLORADO	77	35	29	13	83	34	244	232	+12	18-14-6	17-15-7	1-1	6-3-1	W1
3 ARIZONA	77	37	33	7	81	33	200	212	-12	19-15-4	18-18-3	4-2	4-4-2	W1
4 MINNESOTA	77	35	33	9	79	34	203	224	-21	15-17-7	20-16-2	1-4	3-6-1	L2
5 CHICAGO	76	33	33	10	76	31	248	272	-24	17-14-7	16-19-3	2-1	6-3-1	L1
6 EDMONTON	76	34	34	8	76	31	221	253	-32	18-17-3	16-17-5	3-2	5-4-1	W1
7 VANCOUVER	77	32	35	10	74	28	211	242	-31	17-16-5	15-19-5	4-5	4-5-1	L3
8 ANAHEIM	78	32	36	10	74	29	185	241	-56	17-14-8	15-22-2	3-3	6-3-1	W1
9 LOS ANGELES	76	28	40	8	64	25	185	243	-58	15-20-3	13-20-5	3-3	4-6-0	L1

2018-19 EASTERN CONFERENCE

METROPOLITAN	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 WASHINGTON	77	45	24	8	98	41	264	235	+29	23-10-6	22-14-2	4-1	6-3-1	W2
2 PITTSBURGH	77	42	24	11	95	40	261	228	+33	21-13-4	21-11-8	2-3	6-2-1	W3
3 NY ISLANDERS	77	44	26	7	95	40	212	188	+24	23-12-4	21-14-3	4-5	5-5-0	L1
ATLANTIC	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 P-TAMPA BAY	77	59	14	4	122	53	306	206	+100	32-6-2	27-8-2	6-1	8-2-0	W1
2 X-BOSTON	77	47	21	9	103	45	243	197	+46	29-7-3	18-14-6	2-3	6-4-0	W1
3 TORONTO	77	45	25	7	97	45	275	233	+42	23-14-2	22-11-5	0-1	4-4-2	OT1
WILD CARD	GP	W	L	OT	PTS	ROW	GF	GA	DIFF	HOME	AWAY	S/O	L10	STRK
1 CAROLINA	76	42	27	7	91	40	226	210	+16	22-12-4	20-15-3	2-2	6-4-0	L1
2 MONTRÉAL	77	41	28	8	90	39	233	220	+13	23-12-4	18-16-4	2-0	5-4-1	W1
3 COLUMBUS	76	42	30	4	88	41	232	218	+14	21-16-2	21-14-2	1-1	5-4-1	W2
4 PHILADELPHIA	77	37	32	8	82	34	234	256	-22	19-16-4	18-16-4	3-1	5-5-0	W1
5 FLORIDA	77	33	32	12	78	30	249	268	-19	19-13-6	14-19-6	3-6	5-5-0	L3
6 BUFFALO	76	31	36	9	71	26	207	251	-44	20-13-4	11-23-5	5-3	1-8-1	L4
7 NY RANGERS	76	29	34	13	71	23	211	256	-45	17-13-8	12-21-5	6-4	2-6-2	L2
8 NEW JERSEY	77	29	39	9	67	26	211	260	-49	19-14-6	10-25-3	3-4	4-6-0	W2
9 DETROIT	76	28	38	10	66	25	206	258	-52	14-18-5	14-20-5	3-5	5-5-0	W2
10 OTTAWA	76	27	43	6	60	27	226	278	-52	17-16-4	10-27-2	0-1	4-5-1	W2



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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.

continued on page 45



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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.

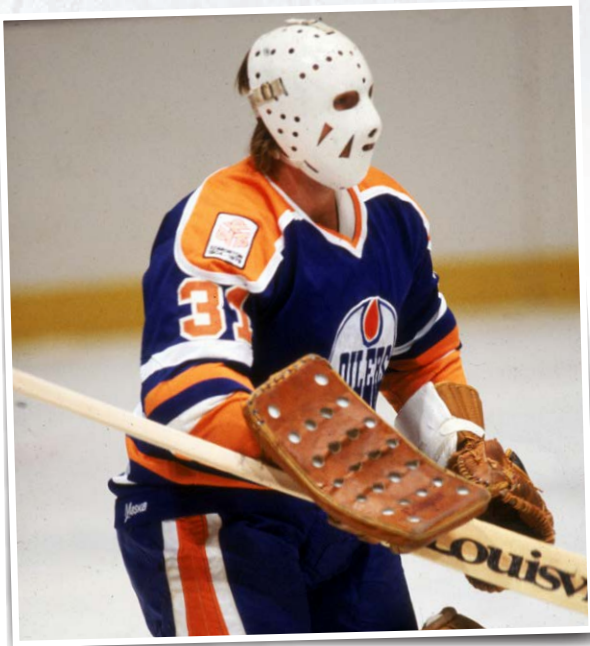
Mio: We got to Minneapolis and the pilot came back. We all got off the plane to stretch our legs and refuel.

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?"

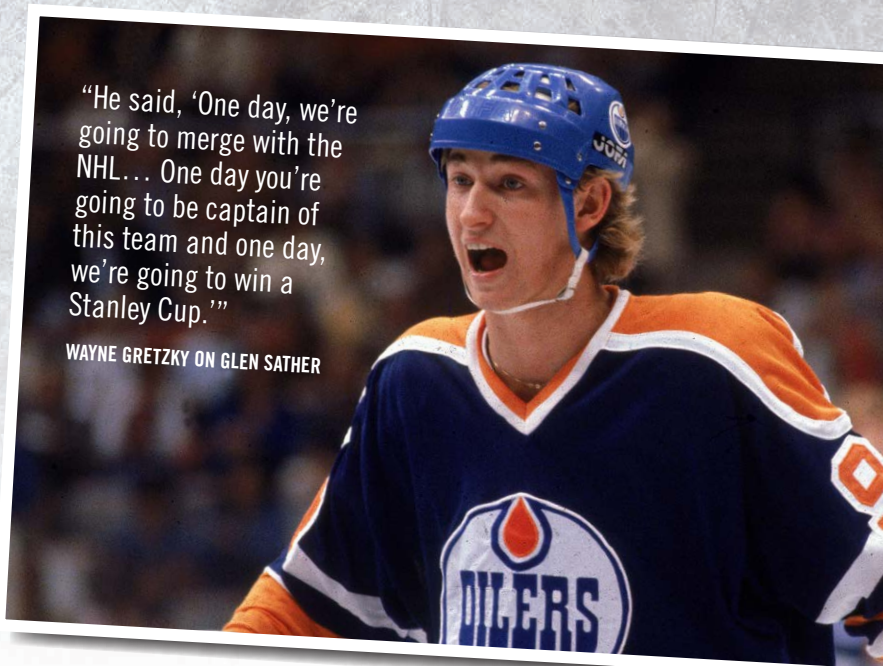
I said, "Here. I'm not leaving until you take care of this."

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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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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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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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 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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