

Where Are They Now?

A long-time Ranger and 1978 worlds bronze medallist, Pat Hickey continues to give back to Big Apple hockey

by Jason La Rose



Pat Hickey (second from L) and Wayne Gretzky with members of the Ice Hockey in Harlem program in Central Park in January 1989.

Pat Hickey hasn't played a National Hockey League game since 1985, last represented his country in 1978, and has a successful career in finance with RBC, but hockey is never far from the mind of the Brantford, Ont., native.

A second-round pick in both the NHL Amateur Draft and WHA Amateur Draft in 1973, Hickey spent two years with the WHA's Toronto Toros before joining the New York Rangers for the 1975-76 season.

He played 152 WHA games with Toronto and 644 more in the NHL with the Rangers, Colorado, Toronto, Quebec and St. Louis, finishing his pro career with 253 goals and 528 points.

His lone international appearance came at the 1978 IIHF World Championship in Prague, Czechoslovakia, where he joined Team Canada after the Rangers were eliminated in the first round of the playoffs.

"When I got over to Prague, Bill Watters, who was the general manager, said I was the only guy who was going to play with Marcel Dionne and Jean Pronovost, two 50-goal scorers," Hickey remembered. "And I'm thinking, 'what a great opportunity.'"

Hickey finished fifth in Canadian scoring with five goals and an assist in 10 games, and scored what was, without a doubt, the biggest goal of the tournament for his country, the game-winner in the dying minutes of a 3-2 win over Sweden, on his 25th birthday, that gave Canada the bronze medal.

The bronze was the first medal for the Canadians at a world championship or Olympics since 1968, as Canada had withdrawn from international competition from 1970-76 to protest the ineligibility of professionals.

"We knew if we tied the game that the Swedes would win the bronze, so we needed to win the game," Hickey said. "Marcel did his thing with play-making, beating a guy or two, and hit me with a pass. I broke in,

dropped the shoulder to shoot high and flung it along the ice on Hardy Åström, who was a stand-up goalie, and we hung on to win the bronze."

When his playing career came to an end in 1985, Hickey stepped into the world of finance, taking a position as an account executive on Wall Street, before returning to hockey in 1988, spending four seasons as general manager of the AHL's New Haven Nighthawks, and two as president and GM of the AHL's Hamilton Canucks.

Now 59, Hickey works as an investment advisor and registered institutional representative with RBC Dominion Securities in Hamilton, Ont.

His pet project, however, is Ice Hockey in Harlem, a non-profit organization he helped found in 1987 that works to improve the social and academic well-being of young New Yorkers through hockey.

"I was already working with a number of charities in New York, and I read an article about Donald Trump taking over two rinks in Central Park, and a light went off, and I said 'I'm going to have a hockey program,'" Hickey said of how Ice Hockey in Harlem got started. "Seagram's had an after-school program of 13 different subjects, from acting to volleyball to computer science, so I asked if they wanted a hockey program.

"I wrote CCM and Sher-Wood, and they donated, so what I had was gloves, helmets, skates and sticks, and we had a program."

The program started with 40 participants ranging in age from nine to 12 years old, who agreed to attend weekly classroom sessions and skate one night a week at Lasker Rink at the north end of Central Park. In class, they were taught math, reading, and geography, using hockey cities and statistics as teaching tools.

Now in its 26th year, Ice Hockey in Harlem has helped thousands of boys and girls, many of whom continue to live, work and raise their own families in Harlem. ■