



William Scott "Scotty" Bowman, the most successful coach in NHL history, poses with the five replica Stanley Cups he won with the Montreal Canadiens. The demanding bench boss left the Canadiens after their fourth consecutive Cup in 1979 to take over as coach and general manager of the Buffalo Sabres, where he remained until 1987. He would replace the ailing Bob Johnson as head coach of the defending champion Pittsburgh Penguins in 1991, when he went on to win his sixth Cup. He captured three more championships with the Detroit Red Wings. Bowman's ninth and final Stanley Cup in 2002 saw him break the record long held by his mentor, Toe Blake.

Scott Bowman

HHOF 1991

Bowman home · Buffalo, NY | February 3, 1984 | Paul Bereswill | colour · slide · 35mm

In hockey, the players usually get the glory, and the coaches often get the grief. That's just the way it is, in bad times more than good ones, anyhow. But in the course of hockey history, many coaches have emerged to become household names in their own right, some by their success and longevity, others by their colourful personalities.

Many of them ex-players themselves, hockey coaches are often fascinating characters that pull the strings from behind the bench — usually in their own style. Some are natural-born leaders and motivational experts, others brilliant tacticians. The best tend to combine both.

The photos that follow show some of the game's bench bosses at work. Many, like former police officer Pat Burns, were stern figures. The most successful among them, like nine-time Stanley Cup winner Scotty Bowman, could be impatient and aloof. Others, like Philadelphia Flyers legend Freddie "The Fog" Shero and Roger Nielson, were as quirky and colourful as the sweatsuits they wore while running practices. Some were detested by their players, while others were loved. All of the above shared a passion for the game.

Bowman and his mentor, Hector "Toe" Blake, had long successful runs behind the bench, while American legends Herb Brooks and "Badger" Bob Johnson, who famously declared every day a "great day for hockey" left us too soon, but left lasting legacies nonetheless. Perhaps the most famous hockey coach of all, Don Cherry, who has been telling it like it is from his famous "Coach's Corner" for parts of four decades, only coached in the NHL for six seasons. But he'll always be "Coach" to his generations of followers.

So here they are, under their fedoras or ball caps, in leather, satin or nylon team jackets, in suits of pinstripes and plaid, both single- and double-breasted.

Remembering the game's Colourful Coaches.

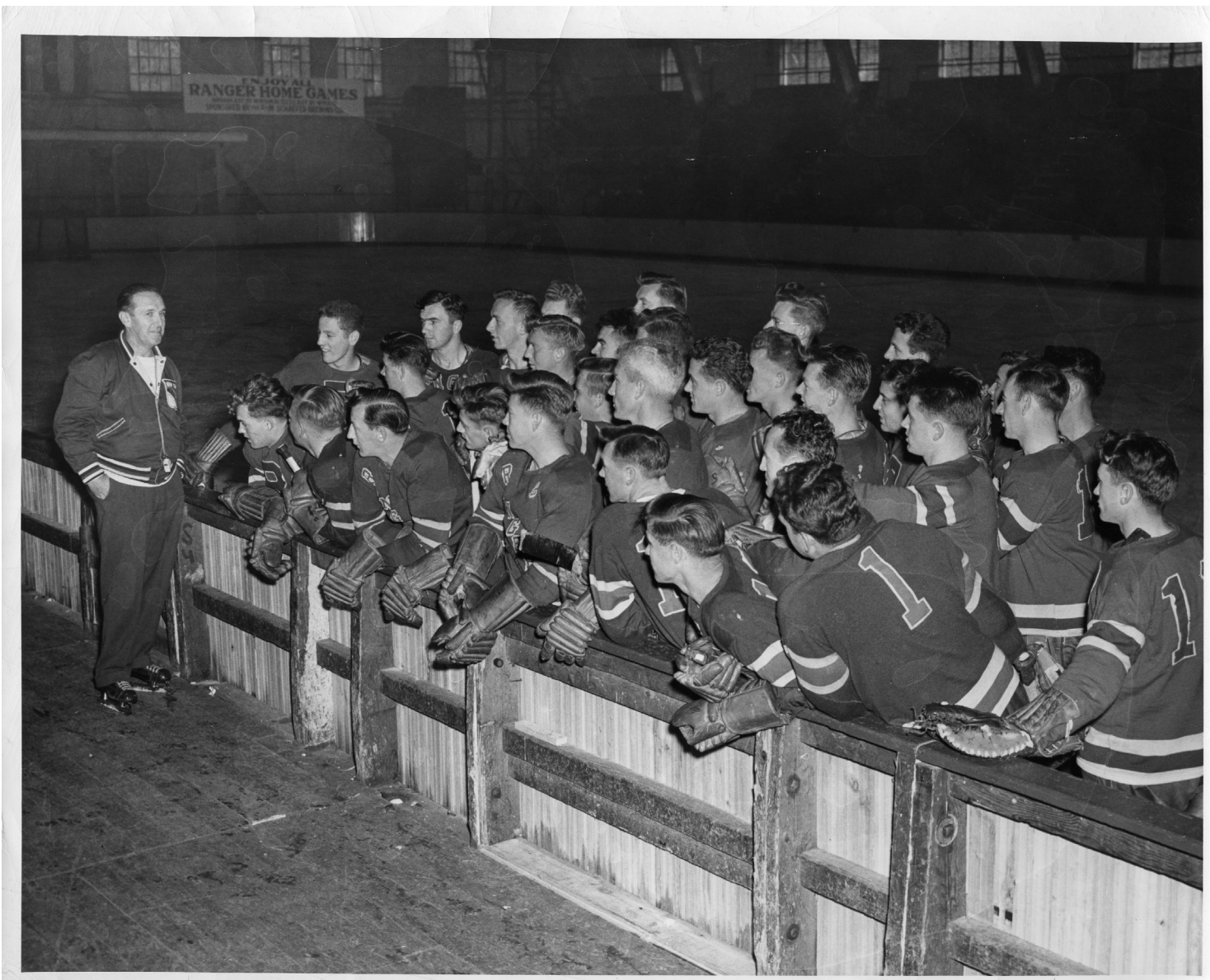


"Win today and we walk together forever," Fred Shero once said. And he knew a thing or two about winning. The enigmatic coach of the Philadelphia Flyers and New York Rangers for 10 seasons in the 1970s won titles in the International, Central and American hockey leagues before making the jump to the NHL in 1971 and winning back-to-back Cups with the Flyers in 1974-75. Nicknamed "Freddy the Fog" for often seeming to be lost in thought, Shero was actually a brilliant strategist and innovator unafraid to try something new, like having players practice in tracksuits.

Fred Shero

HHOF 2013

The Spectrum · Philadelphia, PA | November, 1974 | Frank Prazak | colour · slide · 35mm



The New York Rangers' first and only coach, Lester Patrick stepped away from bench in 1939 to concentrate on his duties as general manager and team president. His replacement was Frank Boucher, the legendary Rangers star of the 1920s and '30s who had been apprenticing with the Rangers' Eastern Hockey League farm team, the New York Rovers. In his first year behind the Rangers bench, he led the team to its third Stanley Cup. Boucher coached the team for 11 full seasons before retiring in 1954. In 1946, he succeeded Patrick as GM, a position he held until 1955.

Frank Boucher

HHOF 1958


Location · City, State | 1940s | Turofsky or Le Studio du Hockey | B/W · acetate · 4" x 5"



Hector "Toe" Blake trades his trademark suit and fedora for a cap and team jacket. Blake won 11 Stanley Cups during his NHL career, 10 of them with the Montreal Canadiens. He won three Cups as a player, the first as a member of the Montreal Maroons in 1935, and then two more, with the Habs. He then won eight more over 13 seasons as the Canadiens' coach. Stern and demanding, he was also a brilliant student of the game, Blake hated to lose as reflected by his record: teams lost only 292 of the combined 1,033 regular season and playoff games he coached.

Hector Blake

HHOF 1966

Location · City, State | Undated  O-Pee-Chee | colour · transparency · 2¹/₄" x 2³/₄"



Of all the colourful coaches in NHL history, and there have been a few, none have matched the bombast and notoriety of Don Cherry. Two-time Stanley Cup finalist with his beloved Bruins, and 1976 coach of the year, “Grapes” has enjoyed an even more successful career playing a coach on T.V. with his “Coach’s Corner” segment garnering much watch status on hockey broadcasts.

Don Cherry

Location · City, State | Year  Photographer | Photo Description



Pacific Coliseum · Vancouver, BC | November 11, 1983 | Paul Bereswill | colour · slide · 35mm

The colourful and quirky leader of eight NHL teams, Roger Nielson, was one of the most unique and beloved coaches in history. Nicknamed "Captain Video" for his pioneering use of game film, he led Vancouver to the 1982 Stanley Cup Finals. After three winning seasons with the New York Rangers, Nielson was fired partway through the fourth, in 1993, then looked on from Florida as the Rangers won the Stanley Cup in 1994. Following two years in Philadelphia, where he was diagnosed with bone cancer in 1999, he signed on as an assistant with Ottawa for the 2001-02 season. Senators' coach, Jacques Martin, stepped aside for the season's final two games, allowing Nielson to take over and reach the 1,000 games milestone. He succumbed to cancer at age 69 in June 2003.

Roger Nielson

HHOF 2002



When Bob Johnson replaced Scotty Bowman behind the bench in Pittsburgh in 1991, the Penguins players found out the true meaning of culture shock. For if Bowman was one of the prickliest coaches in hockey, Johnson was probably its nicest. Nicknamed "Badger Bob" for his long tenure at the University of Wisconsin, and a firm believer that every day was a "great day for hockey," Johnson served as the president of USA Hockey from 1987 to 1990. He would lead Pittsburgh to its first Cup in the 1990-91 season, and led the team to the first Stanley Cup in its history. Johnson was stricken by brain cancer a few months later and died in November 1991.

Bob Johnson

HHOF 1992



Player, coach, general manager, president: Glen "Stats" Sather has done it all at the NHL level, including winning four Stanley Cups with the Edmonton Oilers, in the 1980s, as head coach, and five overall. He was also coach of the Oilers in the WHA prior to the team joining the NHL in 1979.

Glen Sather

HHOF 1997



He is remembered mostly for the role he played in the greatest upset in hockey history, but Herb Brooks spent several seasons in the NHL after that miracle moment in 1980. After coaching in Switzerland, Brooks coached the New York Rangers for parts of four seasons. He then returned to Minnesota, where he led the University of Minnesota Golden Gophers to three NCAA national championships between 1972-79. He led the Minnesota North Stars for a single season, 1987-88., before coaching parts of two more NHL seasons, in New Jersey and for the last 58 games of the 1999-2000 season in Pittsburgh. Brooks died in an auto accident at age 66, in 2003.

Herb Brooks

HHOF 2006



With his roots in working-class Montreal and extensive background in police work, Pat Burns was never going to be anything but a tough, team-first disciplinarian as an NHL coach. Burns was also a winner, taking the Canadiens to the Stanley Cup Finals and winning the Jack Adams Award as coach of the year, in 1988, a feat he replicated in Toronto in 1993 and in Boston in 1998. In 2002-03, he led the Devils to the Stanley Cup. Burns passed away from cancer at the age of 58 in 2010.

Pat Burns

HHOF 2014