

HURRICANE WARNING

Ron Francis honored by friends, fans and Canes

No other player defined a franchise like Ron Francis. In six seasons, Ron Francis defined character, class, and excellence for a franchise so that the building blocks were created to build a hockey fan base in the Triangle.

On Saturday, January 28th, fans and friends got one chance to put the former captain in an uncomfortable place: the spotlight. It's a place he deserved to be for much of his career, but the accolades often avoided him and it would seem Francis would not have it any other way. He was too busy winning and teaching his teammates how to win.

The Whalers, Penguins, and Hurricanes were the benefactors of all he had to give and he gave them everything. With him, the Hartford Whalers would win their only playoff series. The Penguins won their two Stanley Cups and became an elite club thanks to Francis. Finally, the Carolina Hurricanes had winning records in Francis' first four seasons, making the playoffs three of four years en route to the Stanley Cup Finals in 2002. There is no greater memory in Hurricanes history than Francis' Game 1 game-winner over Dominik Hasek in the Stanley Cup Finals.

Francis was the embodiment of the unselfish player, having won the Selky Trophy as the best defensive forward in 1995. There is no doubt in my mind that the Penguins might have won their third Stanley Cup in 1996 had Ron Francis not suffered a broken left foot as the result of blocking a shot in a Game 5 series clincher against the New York Rangers. This selfless act might have been the play that kept the Rangers from coming back in that game. The Penguins would lose to the Florida Panthers in seven games in the 1996 Eastern Conference Finals.

He made good players great. Just ask Jaromir Jagr and Jeff O'Neill, two NHL players that had career years thanks to the Franchise.

It is definitely strange to see the Hurricanes on the ice without #10, but there is no doubt that Francis exemplified the kind of player the Carolina Hurricanes need to succeed in

the NHL. The #10 hangs in the rafters as a reminder of what he accomplished here and leaves a benchmark for generations of Canes fans to say, "Yeah, that guy is pretty good, but he's no Ron Francis!" Every Hurricanes player can look up and find inspiration. Thanks for the memories, Mr. Francis. We will never forget.

- John Gallagher, CHBC Member and Ron Francis Fan



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Newsletter deadline:

March 1st for the
March 2006 Issue

President's Message / Brian Williamson

What a great January we have had! We are one of only six teams in NHL history to win 13 games in one calendar month. As I write this, we have won five straight and 14 out of 15 games and have only lost once in 2006. The guys are playing very well despite some injuries to our lineup, we're either at or near the top of the league's standings.

In case you have been out of the loop we have also added Doug Weight.. Mr. Weight was the leading scorer for St. Louis, a versatile center, and will give us three very solid lines going into the playoff hunt. To make room for Doug, the canes had to move Jesse Boulerice and Mike Zigomanis. Both of these guys will be great players for the Blues in the future. With the addition of Doug Weight, the Canes management has shown us the commitment to making a serious run for the playoffs. This looks to be a great post season for the Caniac Nation. For more on this, see page 3!

Ron Francis night was January 28th and watching #10 skate out in full uniform sent chills to everyone in the RBC Center. It was probably the most memorable night to me since the cup run of 02'. I could not help myself from getting a little teary eyed watching the ceremony, and I wasn't the only one. The Canes did it right for Ron that night, seeing 23 number 10 jerseys in warm up was special, and the banner is a sight to see hanging in the ring of honor. The game was just as fun as the pre-game and I don't think the Thrashers will want to deal with the Canes again anytime soon.

We are planning some fun events in the next couple of months: ice skating and a summer picnic are some things in the works. Also in March we have the UNC-TV Telethon on the 25th from 10:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. The next big event is the Build-A-Bear project for UNC Hospitals coming up on February 11th at Crabtree Valley Mall if you have signed up to build a teddy bear please be there by 10:00 to pick up your form to build. This should be a lot of fun just like last years event.

On a personal level I would like to express my appreciation to the board for all their help this year. Thank you all for supporting and helping me. This club is stronger from all your support.

Thank you,

Brian Williamson



In case you missed it, Ron Francis Night was very special!

An embarrassment of riches

So, Carolina Hurricanes Booster, how does it feel to back the number one team in the entire NHL? How does it feel to support the team that makes a trade for the most sought after available player? How does it feel to support the teams that is second in the NHL in goals scored, has run off two nine-game win streaks and leads its division by 18 points?

This, my friends, is uncharted territory for this franchise and I sure hope everybody is enjoying the ride. I have talked in this column in recent months about good starts and hot streaks and productive players, but at this point I think that it's important to stop and smell the roses as the NHL boys near the Olympic Break. I've always chosen the team I support based on factors other than simply whether or not they win. To me, backing a winner is just not as important as whether or not I have a real connection to a team or organization.

As I've mentioned before, I'm an NC State guy, but seeing as how my father and I both graduated from State and that my Grandfather used to take me to games in Reynolds Coliseum when I was but a wee little kid, that's a natural fit. I always liked hockey, but my initial support for the Hurricanes was more a statement of my support for pro sports in my hometown than anything else. No matter your own personal reasons for supporting this franchise, the performance of this team in the 2005-06 season is cause for appreciation. Put simply, it's fun to win, and I sure hope all of you are enjoying this season as much as I am.

Injuries ... what Injuries?

Since the topics for this column are supposed to represent whatever happens to me on my mind at deadline time, sometimes I have to struggle to narrow things down to just a couple of ideas.

Not this month. As I write this, the Hurricanes are in New Jersey getting ready for a game with the Devils, and I'm not at all sure who the Canes will dress or whether or not they'll even have 20 healthy bodies. Now, almost every time that situation presents itself a team is struggling on the ice, but the contrary Hurricanes have won 14 of their last 15 games and just seem to keep getting better no matter who is healthy on a given night.

So far this season, only Eric Staal, Justin Williams, Erik Cole and Kevyn Adams have played in all 52 games, and both Staal and Cole have played with injuries at times. Josef Vasicek went down early in the season with a knee injury, and since then it's been Katie bar the door to trainer Pete Friesen's office for the Hurricanes. Ray Whitney missed time

with a groin problem (twice), Nic Wallin has returned from wrist surgery, Glen Wesley has had knee and neck injuries, Cory Stillman has missed time with a "upper body injury," Mike Commodore has struggled with a leg injury, Bret Hedican had a shoulder problem, Aaron Ward had surgery for a hernia, and Oleg Tverdovsky has been out with a concussion and more recently an arm injury of some kind. Even some of the guys who replaced injured Hurricanes on the active roster have been injured, as Andrew Ladd injured a knee and Andrew Hutchinson just recently went on the injured list for wrist surgery.

All these injuries and yet the winning has gone on like there's no tomorrow, and maybe that's the key. Oddly enough, Carolina is not the only Eastern Conference leader who is banged up and still winning. The Philadelphia Flyers have suffered nearly as many injuries as the Canes and they're currently leading their Division as well. Clearly there's more to this winning thing than just having your best players on the ice.

Doug Weight thoughts

Clearly no one who writes in this newsletter can just let this one slide by without a comment or two. Carolina obtained center Doug Weight from the St Louis Blues on January 30th, and made themselves the talk of the league in the process. Since Weight was the most significant player thought to be available before the NHL trade deadline, there was going to be a lot of discussion when he was finally moved from the Blues to a contender. The fact that the contender in question was Carolina, coupled with the fact that many hockey pundits had picked the Canes to be out of the playoffs this season made for a seemingly irresistible story.

Weight is a terrific playmaking center who would have made any team in the NHL better, but I caution that there are no automatics in this game. Big name, big game players get traded to Cup contenders at or near the deadline every year, and winning the sweepstakes for the best available player doesn't necessarily translate into winning come time for the playoffs to start for real.

This move is a great statement for the Hurricanes front office to send to the rest of the hockey world that establishes that they're serious in their ambitions to win the biggest possible prize. That said, the prize must be won on the ice, against quality opposition, and by virtue of hard work and more than a little good fortune. Here's to enjoying the ride.

Q&A with Barry Meisel of the NHL Game-Worn program

Editor's Note: Until the last few years, getting an actual jersey worn in a game by an NHL player has been an opportunity limited to only the very few – and very lucky. Today, thanks to the partnership between the league and the MeiGray Group, fans can purchase the game-worn jerseys right off the backs of players from 22 of the league's 30 teams in a unique program in which the jerseys are sold – not auctioned – for a set price. While the Carolina Hurricanes aren't one of those teams, NHL Game-Worn is still a tremendous program that has opened up the doors of jersey collecting to every fan. This month, Hurricane Warning Editor Bill Horner III spoke with Barry Meisel of MeiGray, who heads up the program.

First things first: which do you prefer...jersey or sweater?

I prefer jersey, but sweater is so much more vintage!!

MeiGray got its start in 1997 when you and your partner, Bob Gray, reached an agreement

to market the game-worn jerseys of the New York Rangers. What precipitated your own involvement in the hobby and the creation of MeiGray?

I was a sportswriter before I started MeiGray, and my goal was to collect one jersey from every team I covered ... MeiGray was formed because I felt there was too much non-authentic material being sold as game-worn. I felt if the teams were directly involved with a credible source that marketed the jerseys on their behalf, the hobby would improve and the quantity of fakes would diminish.

The NHL Game-Worn program, created in 2002 by a partnership between MeiGray and the NHL, made game-worn jerseys available to fans in an unprecedented fashion. Most of the league's teams took part, and with the program, fans suddenly had instant access to jerseys through a simple purchase, rather than an auction. How did this partnership, and this program, change the hobby?

The NHL-MGG changed the hobby for the better, I believe, because authentic, 100 percent game-worn

jerseys became available to the average hockey fan without that fan having to worry that his jersey would not be legit.

Obviously, one of the hallmarks of your program is the authentication process. Describe how that works.

Every jersey is uniquely tagged, and tracked. Through covert and overt features, security tags are sewn into every jersey before they are worn. This authentication process prevents the marketing of fraudulent jerseys because only jerseys with this unique security tag are worn on the ice by the 22 NHL program teams.

A new wrinkle for MeiGray and the NHL Game-Worn program is the photo-matching service you provide in conjunction with Getty Images. How did that come about, and how have

collectors reacted to it?

Collectors love the Getty photo-matching. This came about because people were asking about photos, and Getty chose to deal

with an outfit like ourselves to reach out to the hockey collectors.

How are prices for jerseys determined? And once prices are set, do they ever change?

The market determines the prices in the sense that there was a market for players before MeiGray, and we set our prices consistent with the market. Do they change? All the time. A player gets hot, his jersey rises. Example: Ovechkin started at \$4,500 and is now at \$6,500 because of his hot rookie start.

What advice do you have for collectors on a limited budget? What advice do you give collectors about displaying and storing jerseys?

Collectors always get the same advice: Collect what you like, and spend what you can, not more. Displaying? Framing, mannequins, hanging racks. Whatever works!! Storing? Keep the moths away!!

Obviously, the jersey of Pittsburgh phenom Sidney Crosby was the most sought-after – it sold for more than (wasn't it \$20,000???) Did



that price surprise you?

No, I fully expected Crosby to hit \$20K.

Meigray's involvement in the game-worn hobby extends far beyond the NHL. You market jerseys from various other hockey leagues and you're also involved with other sports. Is the NHL program the biggest?

Yes, the NHL-MGG Program is the biggest, although we've had success with the AHL and ECHL programs.



Matt Cullen's 2003-2004 Panthers' 3rd jersey is available for \$395 from www.nhlgameworn.com

How do you see your involvement with the NBA, the NFL and Major League Baseball growing?

We hope to one day expand to all sports.

What's in your personal collection? And what's on your own "Holy Grail" list – a jersey you'd like to have?

I collect NY Rangers game-worn jerseys. My grail? A 1971-72 white Walt Tkaczuk NY Rangers, No. 18. He was my favorite player growing up.

More answers from the NHL Game-Worn website

Q: How much will they cost? Prices can range from \$275 to \$12,500, depending upon the player, the club, the events that occurred while the player was wearing the jersey, and how much game use appears on the jersey. Prices are subject to change from set to set throughout the season, based on events that occur during the season.

Q: How many jerseys will teams in the program wear? The program calls for clubs to wear one set of jerseys (one home and one road) in the preseason, two sets of jerseys (two homes, two roads, two alternates where applicable) strictly during the regular season, and one set of jerseys (one home and one road) during the final weeks of the regular season and into the Stanley Cup playoffs for teams that qualify. Players may wear two jerseys per color in a home or road set, as needed. Exceptions may also be made for players who require additional jerseys due to excessive wear and tear.

Q: If I purchase a jersey, how will I know it's real? For the participating clubs, the only authentic NHL game-worn jerseys worn by players will be the ones carrying the security-enhanced tag with the individual serial number. If there is any doubt about any jersey, the jersey can be sent to NHL-MGG. The tag will be examined by an authorized NHL-MGG Authenticator to confirm authenticity.

Q: When can I purchase a jersey? Jerseys will be available for pre-order at a listed price once the player wears it onto the ice in an NHL game. Collectors may order the jersey by placing a 25 percent deposit, and follow the jersey as it is worn by the player during the season. Once the jersey is no longer needed by the player, and after it has been authenticated by NHL-MGG, it will be delivered. Satisfaction is guaranteed, and a full money-back guarantee is offered for any pre-order. Since the NHL-MGG Game-Worn Jersey Authentication Program cannot predict circumstances beyond our control (e.g. the destruction or non-return of a jersey), sales will be considered final only after the delivery and acceptance of any jersey.

Q: Do I have to pre-order a jersey, or can I wait until after it is used? Pre-orders are not required, although supply and demand will determine if a particular jersey is available after its use. Jerseys arrive from the teams approximately 30 days after the preseason, in mid January (first regular season set) and after the season (all other jerseys).

For more information, go to www.nhlgameworn.com

Should NHL players be participating in the Olympics?

John Gallagher: Yes!

The Olympic games are about the best athletes in the world competing for their country. It's the best against the best, country versus country. There is no better way to promote the sport of hockey on the international stage.

"Where can you better promote your sport than at the Olympics?" asked International Ice Hockey Federation President Rene Fasel in an article on Slam Sports last summer. "It's a huge stage. The TV. The media. The fans. And playing in the Olympics for your country is different than playing for your country in any other international competition."

The NHL is a league where diversity is everywhere. The Hurricanes themselves have a mix of North American and European talent. The Olympics showcase the NHL's diversity because you can have players from the same team squaring off against each other as a matter of national pride. Because some of these athletes may already be teammates in the NHL, a genuine respect for each other is already there. The Olympics are all about goodwill and the love of sport.

The Canes have five players representing their respective countries: Frank Kaberle (Czech Republic) and Martin Gerber (Sweden); and Doug Weight, Bret Hedican and Erik Cole for the USA; Matt Cullen was just added to the USA's taxi squad. Eric Staal was named to Team Canada's taxi squad and may represent the Canes if another Canadian player is injured. Their participation opens the door for fans like the Caniacs to cheer for countries other than our own. Again, the goodwill of the games shines through because we have an emotional interest in players from other countries that play for the home NHL club.

The players are paid nothing other than a shot at the Gold Medal and have the opportunity to hear their country's national anthem played for the masses. Similar to the amateur players, NHL players view playing in the Olympic games a tremendous honor. The Canes' own Eric Staal recently said, "Anybody who gets the opportunity to go to the Olympics, you're going to want to be there."

The pride, diversity, and intense level of hockey the NHL professionals bring to the Olympics will further promote the sport of ice hockey more so than the typical NHL All-Star exhibition contest. It's the best of the best and these games with the professionals give the sport the attention it deserves.

Bill Horner: No!

I'm fully aware that the Olympics are supposed to showcase the world's greatest athletes. And there's no question that the greatest hockey players in the world play in the National Hockey League. So why shouldn't NHL players play in the biennial Olympics hockey competition, represent their respective countries and gamely go for gold, just as the fastest and the strongest did for the first time more than 3,000 years ago?

Simple. It's bad for the NHL and it takes away from the true spirit of the Olympics.

Let's start with the latter. I know that we're a zillion miles from Greece and that the "modern Olympics" are a highly commercial endeavor. It's good for television ratings to have the NHL's best playing in the games because it draws NHL fans – fans who won't have games to watch otherwise because of the mandated Olympic break – and better ratings mean more revenues.

But if hockey's the greatest game out there, and if the best amateur and non-NHL players are playing, and national pride is at stake – why not remain true to the original intent of the games and have rosters made up of players who haven't yet graduated to the NHL?

This isn't about "Miracle" and the 1980 team (whose gold medal, I won't need to remind anyone, remains the greatest team athletic achievement in the last 100 years). I'm not naïve – we all know "amateur" Olympians in many other countries are really professionals who are paid to train and compete. But by excluding NHLers, and if necessary all players playing in major professional leagues, the games will still be pure. Besides, we already have the World Cup, dominated by NHLers.

And why is Olympic participation bad for the NHL? Quite simply, it puts a hole in the NHL schedule and creates unwanted conflicts for many of the league's best players. Given a choice between going for gold and going for the Stanley Cup, which do you think they'd choose?

So why put their salary-paying teams at jeopardy? (The risk for injury is one thing, the exhaustion factor is another.) And by taking NHL players out of the mix, you'd also eliminate the awkward choices many players are forced to make about whether to participate.

Ultimately, Olympic ice hockey will probably never be like it was in the days of Herb Brooks. But as someone who'd rather see NHLers not take part...I still believe in miracles.

■ Your Turn

OLN vs. ESPN

Sound off on OLN's coverage and NHL post game shows. Do you prefer the ESPN broadcasts over OLN or do you think OLN has the better coverage?

I miss ESPN and thier coverage. OLN is ok but only having 2 games a week how do they plan to promote the game to a newer audience with only 2 games a week? ESPN does do highlights but no commentary about the games. I hope next year either OLN picks up more games or it goes back to ESPN.

Mike Holmes

The schedule OLN has been broadcasting is reminiscent of this year's, Monday Night Football. ESPN had Barry Melrose, Darren Pang, better character commentators than OLN has at this time. Hopefully OLN will improve just as ESPN did and we should all be thankful that their broadcasting this great game at all.

Dale Ostrander

We prefer ESPN because besides better variety in games, more astute calling, and better commercials, there was always Barry Melrose for comic relief.

Mark and Kathie Kocourek

I like the broadcast on OLN better. It gives very good coverage of the game and the announcers are better. And the intermissions and sportscasters are better. More people watch ESPN so I think more hockey games get watched but I don't like the sportscasters on there. They give the Hurricanes NO respect! So my vote goes to OLN.

Cheryl Mulhern

I like the old ESPN coverage but OLN is learning and making strides. In the end I think OLN will do a better job come next year.

Brian L. Williamson

I have not watched any hockey games on OLN. They have not had any of the Canes games on and only have the one scheduled for Jan. 10th because we are playing Detroit. If we were not playing Detroit they would not even have that one on (Just like ESPN). I will be at that game so I won't watch OLN then either.

Mary Scott

■ CanePoll



How many points will Eric Staal score this season?

- the guesses ranged from a low of 92 points to a high of 114
- the median guess was 98 points
- the average guess was 100.3

Upcoming Events:

Next CHBC Meeting
Friday, February 17th
7:30pm

Cary Ice House
1410 Buck Jones Rd
Raleigh, 27606
(919) 460-2756

No charge to attend CHBC meeting, but paid admission and rental fees apply if you wish to skate after the conclusion of the CHBC Meeting.

UNC Telethon
Saturday, March 25th
10:30am – 3:30pm
Please email to Lisa Wall at
lwall2@verizon.net
(Details inside)

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The Carolina Hurricanes Booster Club
P. O. Box 20776
Raleigh, North Carolina 27619
www.hurricanesboosters.org



ANNUAL UNC TELETHON VOLUNTEER EVENT!

WHEN: Saturday, March 25th

Time: 10:30am – 3:30pm

Location:

The Carolina Hurricanes Booster club is looking for volunteers to help the UNC Public TV Telethon by manning the phones on Saturday, March 25th from 10:30am to 3:30pm. There will be a short introduction to the new computer system to take pledge calls starting promptly at 10:30, so please be prepared to arrive a bit early. The staff at UNC-TV will provide lunch and snack foods. They love us to wear our colored Hurricanes sweaters and T-shirts as white is very unforgiving to the camera eye.

This is one of the most anticipated events in which the Booster club participates. We normally have very large groups of 35 or more. If we have at least 25 people, they will allow us to do two 20 second interviews about our club, our mission and upcoming activities.

Since we'll be pushing for the cup about that time, it would be great exposure for the club and the team. It's a great opportunity to show off our club, our sport, and most importantly, the Carolina Hurricanes!

We have an extremely fun time talking to the folks of North Carolina on the phones and munching on goodies and talking hockey. The time passes very quickly. Please join us on March 25th from 10:30 to 3:30 and help support Public TV in our area. Simply send an email to Lisa Wall at lwall2@verizon.net with the title UNC TV volunteer and we'll add you to the list.

Help us out for this great cause! Remember to wear your red jersey!

Have a great day! GO CANES!

Lisa Wall

Carolina Hurricanes Booster Club UNC TV Volunteer Coordinator

Directions to UNC TV Studios:

From I-40 East (Chapel Hill/Greensboro):

- Take Exit 279B (Durham Freeway/Highway 147 North).
- Take the second exit (Alexander Drive).
- Turn left at the traffic light at the top of the exit ramp.
- Cross over the bridge and take the second right (approximately .5 mile).
- At this point, you should see signs for UNC-TV.**

[Note: If traveling I-40 East, you will see Exit 279A (To Alexander Drive/Durham Freeway South). Please do not take this exit as you will be on the opposite end of Alexander Drive from UNC-TV and increase your travel time.]

From I-40 West (Raleigh/RDU Airport)

1. Take Exit 279B (Durham Freeway/Highway 147 North).
2. Take the second exit (Alexander Drive).
3. Turn left at the traffic light at the top of the exit ramp.
4. Cross over the bridge and take the second right (approximately .5 mile).
5. At this point, you should see signs for UNC-TV.**

