

FROM THE VANCOUVER CANUCKS LOCKER ROOM

O'Neill keeps Canucks well equipped

Pat O'Neill is a Vancouver Canucks institution. For twenty years, he has helped hundreds of players in blue and green (and a few other team uniform colors over the years) with their skates, sticks, sweaters, and a myriad of other equipment needs. We chatted with Vancouver's equipment manager about his career and life in hockey:

THN: Where did you start out in your career?

PO: I spent eight years as the assistant equipment manager with the Winnipeg Jets, from 1980-1988. When I got a chance to be the head guy in Vancouver, I jumped at the chance.

THN: You must have seen a lot of changes in equipment over the years.

PO: The biggest change was sticks going from wood to graphite. Also, the development of skates over the years – they're so much stronger and stiffer.

THN: Is it true Canucks captain Markus Naslund is still using a wood stick?

PO: Yeah, it is. He's tried every composite one piece there is, but he prefers wood.

THN: Has the fact he uses wood influenced any of the younger teammates to use

wood themselves?

PO: Not at all. They stay with modern-day products.

THN: Does goalie Roberto Luongo have any special needs in terms of equipment?

PO: He's a pretty easy-going



**Pat
O'Neill**
*Equipment
Manager*



guy when it comes to equipment. He does like having new gear, so we make sure to keep extra sets of equipment for him on the shelves. His only quirk is he uses an old type of skate they don't make anymore.

We've been gently suggesting he try newer ones.

THN: Being on the West Coast, how is it to deal with travel?

PO: We charter everywhere now, so it's much better than it used to be. The players are more comfortable and it's easier to move equipment.

THN: How was it like moving equipment when teams used commercial?

PO: Well, you locked your trunks and worried like heck. I was lucky, I never had anything stolen or go missing, but I know that the Oilers used to mark all of Wayne Gretzky's stuff as "spare" so that it didn't disappear en route.

THN: Do you use the Blademaster Ultimate skate sharpener?

PO: We've got one on order. They're top notch. We did just get a new Blademaster portable. It's a very good machine.

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