



THE REDS LEGACY



Art Lesieur (framed by white box) coached both Brown University and Mount St. Charles in 1939 while also starring for the Reds.

RI High Schools Owe a Debt of Gratitude to RI Reds Players

By Vin Cimini
Heritage Society Vice President

Organized hockey at the collegiate and high school levels has been played in Rhode Island since 1898.

But it was the birth of the Providence Reds in 1926 that saw the popularity of hockey in the Ocean State fully blossom. Many ex-RI Reds coached at all levels of the game all over the continent after their time in

Providence – names like Schmidt, Polano, Flaman, Blake, Reardon, and Bessone, to name just a few.

Fortunately, many of those Reds we cheered for settled in Rhode Island and paid the favors forward by coaching and mentoring their children and ours.

There were those like Harvey Bennett, Sr., Serge Boudreault, Ross Brooks, and Zellio Toppazzini, among others, who coached youth teams and held popular coaching clinics over the years. Some went on to coach high

school and college teams, as well – Serge at Cumberland, Ross at Lincoln, and Topper at Providence College.

What these players all had in common was that each was retired from professional hockey at the time. Remarkably, in the very early years of Reds history, a number of players actually coached our local high schools while actively playing with or managing the Reds.

There were a number of reasons

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Schools Owe a Debt of Gratitude to Reds

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why they would and how they could. The first was to earn another paycheck. Organized pro hockey leagues were still in their infancy and the pay was meager.

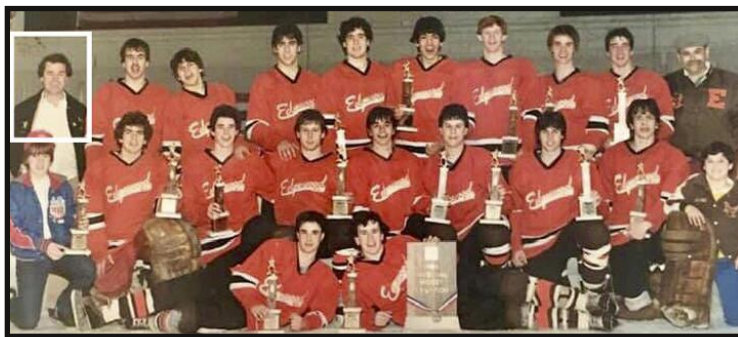
Another reason was passion for the game. In the vernacular of the time, Art Lesieur, the most notable among these multitasking players, was once quoted, "There is a wallop in working with the young fellows and seeing them come along. That's my line."

Perhaps the most significant reason Art and others could manage the logistics of coaching a school team while also playing for the Reds was the RI Auditorium. The Arena, home of the Reds since it opened in 1926, was the only indoor rink in the state. Every RI high school and college team practiced and played their games there. There was no travel. The teams came to the Arena.

One of the big beneficiaries was Brown University. Jimmy Gardner, who coached the Reds in its inaugural 1926-27 campaign, also coached Brown that season. The following two seasons, those duties were taken up by Jean Dubuc, the Reds GM and later the team President.

In 1938, the great Lesieur, winner of five championship Cups with the Reds and one Stanley Cup with the Montreal Canadiens, negotiated a hat trick of duties playing for the Reds and taking over Brown's coaching reigns – while also coaching and launching Mount St. Charles Academy into the history books. (One wonders if he ever took his skates off.)

Indeed, from 1932 to 1940, Lesieur led the legendary schoolboy hockey program to its first five Rhode Island



Serge Boudreault coached his 1984 Edgewood team to the National Midget Championship.

titles, three New England titles, and two National titles. Over that time, he mentored a number of Mounties on their way towards spectacular pro careers, including AHL Hall of Famer Fred Thurier and the Reds' Roger Bedard.

Providence's Classical High School reaped the benefits of Reds' coaching even earlier. In 1926-27, Bernie "Speedy" Brophy, playing for the Reds while under contract with the Montreal Canadiens, guided Classical to a winning season.

The following year, Archie Wilcox, who played here from 1926 thru 1929, replaced Brophy at Classical while teammate Charlie Langlois took the reigns at Moses Brown.

RI's owes its rich high school and collegiate hockey heritage, in great part, to the tradition of paying it forward begun by the early Reds. It continues to this day as fathers, and, more recently, moms, take the knowledge they learned on the ice and pass it on to the next generation.



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by the Rhode Island Reds
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'Civic Center' Hits 50-Year Mark

This season, the AMP, aka the Dunk, aka the Civic Center, celebrates its 50th birthday. The Reds were the undisputed attraction that first year. They ended the 1972-73 regular season with a record of 32 wins, 30 losses, 14 ties and 78 points in the AHL's Eastern Division. Coach Larry Popein's team lost in the first round of the playoffs.

Wayne Wood led the league with a 3.02 goals against average among qualifying netminders and Jerry Butler led the team in goals with 29, while Bill Heindl dished out 43 helpers. Other fan favorites included Mart Gateman, Andre Peloffy, Ron Garwasiuk, Nick Polano and Doug Keeler.

The following year, the Reds, now affiliated with the NY Rangers, did much better, making it all the way to the Calder Cup finals before losing to Hershey. It

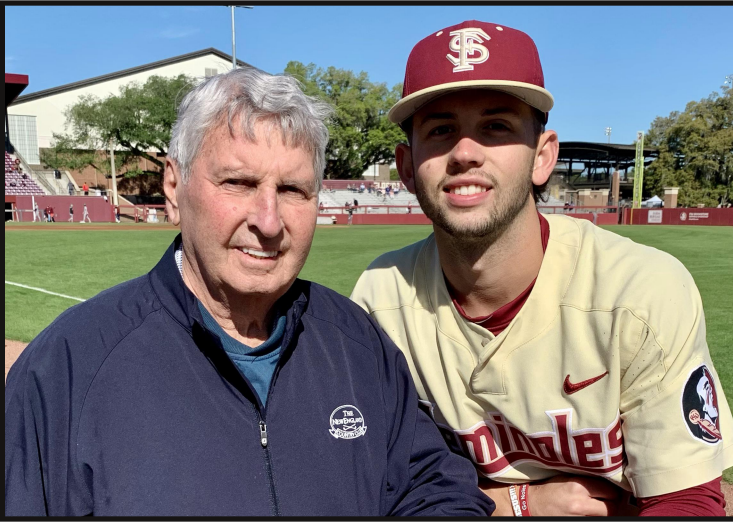


The 1972-73 Reds, with owner George Sage at front row center.

would be their last appearance in the Cup finals. The 1976-77 season would be their last before the franchise was sold and moved to Binghamton, NY.

It would be another 18 years before professional hockey returned to Providence and Civic Center ice.

Did You Know?



Ross Brooks and grandson Wyatt Crowell

Talent Must be in the Brooks Family DNA

The acorn doesn't fall from the tree. Ross Brooks' grandson, Wyatt Crowell, is projected a Top 40 pick in the upcoming MLB Draft and features a 97-98 mph heater and an "unhittable" slider. The All-ACC ace is ranked the #1 player and #1 pitcher at Florida State University and starred for the US National Collegiate Team last year.

The Creighton-Topper Connection

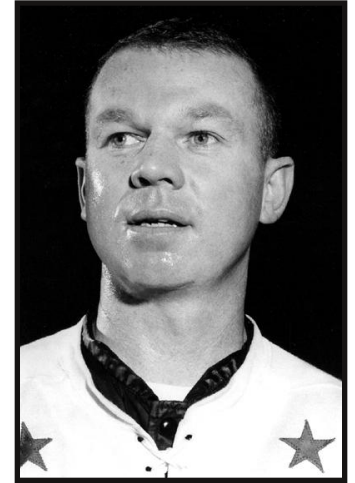
Dave Creighton and Zellio Toppazzini were called up from the Hershey Bears to the Boston Bruins at the same time and made their NHL debuts on February 12, 1949, against the New York Rangers. As if that is not enough coincidence, Zellio and future Reds defenseman and coach Fernie Flaman assisted on Dave's first NHL goal in the first period. Dave reciprocated with the lone helper on Topper's first NHL tally in the second period. The following season, the Bruins paired the duo with Ed Sandford. They were dubbed the "High Line," since all three men were at least six feet tall.



Dave Creighton

Cherry picked up the Penalty Box Tab

Former Boston Bruins head coach Don Cherry played many games at the R.I. Auditorium during his 14-year career with Hershey, Rochester, and Springfield. When the Indians came to Providence, the trainer would collect the players' wallets for safekeeping during the game. Cherry would balk at handing over his cash and instead would stuff his wallet inside his shoe. After one game, Cherry and his teammates went to the Penalty Box pub next to the Auditorium for some refreshments, but the trainer was nowhere to be found. Bad timing for Cherry, since he was the only one there with money. "I had to pick up the entire beer tab," he lamented.



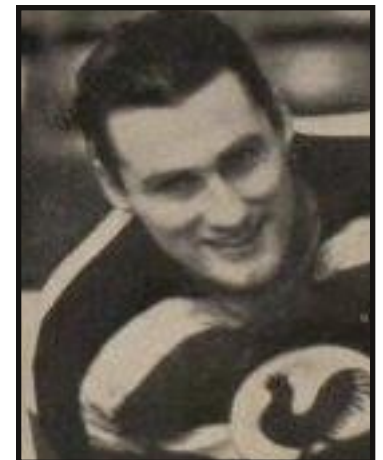
Don Cherry

Providence to Hartford

Don Blackburn and his cousin, Bob Blackburn, played together with the Reds in the 1959-60 season. He returned to Providence twelve years later and won the AHL scoring title with 99 points. He retired as a player in 1976 and became the first ever head coach of the Hartford Whalers, a position he held for the team's first four years.

The Story Behind the Mulligan Trophy

The Andy Mulligan Trophy was the International Hockey League's (IHL) "Executive of the Year" Award and was named after former Reds defenseman Andy Mulligan. Mulligan played with our Reds from 1932 through 1935 before becoming one of the IHL's most successful coaches and front office executives. He was named Commissioner of the circuit in 1962 and served in that position through 1969.



Andy Mulligan

Remembering Brian Perry

The Reds Heritage Society family was saddened to learn of the passing of former Reds standout and favorite, Brian Perry, on Jan. 16, 2023.

Brian was one of the few players from Great Britain to have played in the NHL. He was born in Aldershot, England, where his Canadian father was stationed in the army during World War II. Brian's family relocated to Kirkland Lake, Ontario when he

was just a young boy.

In 1966, the Reds gave Brian an 8-game look. He scored 3 goals and 4 points, enough to encourage the Reds to promote him to the team full-time the following season. His play continued to improve, scoring 23



Brian Perry

goals and 53 points in his first full AHL season, and jumped to 31 goals and 69 points the following season.

The Oakland Seals landed Brian in an intra-league draft in the summer of 1968. After one and a half seasons with the Seals, Brian returned to the Reds in 1970 and then again two seasons later only to move back to the WHA with the NY Raiders in 1972-73. He retired from the game in 1975.

Thanks for the memories, Brian. RIP.

We're Counting on You to 'Be a Good Sport'

By Andre Mayer
Heritage Society President

As you all know, our Heritage Society has suspended our annual \$25 membership requirement in favor of counting on your generosity to help us preserve the Reds' remarkable 51-year history.

We do this through:

1. Maintaining, insuring and refreshing the history showcased in our Kiosk displays at the AMP (Amica Mutual Pavilion),
2. Developing a new and more comprehensive website featuring new discoveries and more audio and video history,

3. Chronicling the highlights of past reunions, and

4. Continuing to produce and disseminate these quarterly Newsletters, now distributed free of charge to entertain and inform you while also educating a new generation about the impact the Reds have had on RI hockey history. To that end, we also encourage you to forward these Newsletters to anyone who you think would enjoy the content and history.

In lieu of membership collections, we have requested donations to support our all-volunteer efforts. Since our last Newsletter, where we introduced this new policy, we have been gratified by the support of many. These important

donations, mostly ranging between \$25 and \$100, are the lifeblood of our organization.

While, this is a good start, we can make it great. We have hundreds of Newsletter recipients in our database, most who have not yet gone to their checkbooks to lend their support for what we provide them.

If you loved the Reds, enjoy the Newsletters, and appreciate the hard work put forth to keep the memory of the Reds alive, now is the time to please show us your support.

As George Patrick Duffy used to say, "You can keep the sports parade moving by being a good sport."

Please be that good sport.

Please Accept my 2023 Contribution to Support the Work & Mission of the RI Reds Heritage Society

\$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$ _____

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