

# Breeding Ground for NHL Hockey Operations

**N**CAA STUDENT-ATHLETES FROM college and universities have provided the recipe for many things throughout the years. They have been the foundation for political leaders, military commanders, corporate developers, inventors, and economic strategists to name a few. Former student-athletes have also been prevalent on the next level in the sports industry. One of the areas that has witnessed firsthand an influential relationship has occurred between former NCAA hockey student-athletes and the National Hockey League operational staffs.

These former college ice hockey players have helped shape the next level of the game throughout the years and facilitated the growth of the NHL to its 30 franchises, as well as its global presence with numerous international players on NHL squads. Ranging from team presidents to directors of amateur scouting, some of these individuals has gone on to draft and mold players that went on to reach the pinnacle of professional hockey.

During the 2009-10 season, only a handful of front offices in the NHL do not experience the impact of the college game in their hockey operations departments. Each of the major NCAA men's Division I Ice Hockey conferences has its share of these former student-athletes guiding an NHL franchise. This influence is often a direct result from the approach of the entire coaching, schooling, and recruiting process on the collegiate level.

Prominent college hockey alumni that currently work in NHL operations departments include David McNab, senior vice president of hockey operations for the Anaheim Ducks. McNab, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin in 1978 with a degree in Communication Arts, was also a goaltender on one of the greatest college hockey teams of all-



**IN THEIR COLLEGE DAYS (from top to bottom):** New Jersey Devils' senior vice president of hockey operations Chris Lamoriello, Atlanta Thrashers' executive vice president Don Waddell and Dallas Stars' general manager Joe Nieuwendyk.

time, the 1977 University of Wisconsin Badgers' NCAA championship team. An original member of the Ducks, McNab is now in his 32nd year in the NHL and 17th with Anaheim.

'North Country' partners Clarkson and St. Lawrence have seen their influ-



ence on the professional game at its highest level. Among those from Canton, N.Y. is Florida Panthers Alternate Governor Bill Torrey. Over the years, the Hall of Famer was responsible for developing new franchises including the Oakland Seals, New York Islanders, and most recently the Panthers.

Another Saints' alum on the Panthers' hockey operations staff is first-year General Manager Randy Sexton. Sexton played for the Saints' varsity hockey team from 1978-1982. From 1983-1985, he served as an assistant coach with St. Lawrence, handling scouting and recruiting responsibilities. He also earned a masters degree in business administration from Clarkson University. Two other 'North Country' alum serve on Sexton's staff with Bill O'Flaherty, former Clarkson player, head coach, and athletic director and Saints' alum Murray Cawker, taking on the role of manager of hockey administration.

The NHL's Eastern Conference has a few more teams that feature an array of former college hockey personnel this season as well. Ray Shero, a former player at St. Lawrence and the current executive vice president and general manager of the Pittsburgh Penguins, is at the vanguard of the NHL's new breed of general managers steeped in family hockey tradition but on the cutting-edge of new technology and modernization in hockey operations, player relations and team management. On Shero's staff