

FROM THE DALLAS STARS LOCKER ROOM

Sumner finds success in Dallas

Explorers, immigrants, and adventurers have heeded the call to "Go West, young man" since Indiana writer John Soule allegedly coined the famous phrase in 1851. Adirondack native Steve Sumner followed that siren song, ending up deep in the heart of Texas where the skate blades shine bright thanks to his work as head equipment manager for the Dallas Stars.

THN: How did you land in this line of work?

SS: A friend (Pete Dineen) was playing for my hometown Adirondack Red Wings. Their equipment manager, Tim Paris, got a job in New York so they needed a replacement. I'm very mechanically inclined so Pete asked if I could sharpen skates. I didn't, but offered to learn. A couple weeks later I headed to Detroit where Mark Brennan trained me, and that was it.

THN: What's the story behind the nicknames for you - 'Sudsy' - and your assistant - 'Crittter' - Chris Davidson-Adams?

SS: Most of the guys think it's because I like a few beers now and then, but I got it in 1992 while working with the Fort Worth Fire. A

guy said I looked like one of his old trainers, started calling me Sudsy and it stuck. As for Critter, Bill Guerin just said to him, "You're nickname is Critter, because you scurry around here and you look like a critter."

THN: What precautions are



STEVE SUMNER
EQUIPMENT
MANAGER



you and your staff taking with H1N1 affecting some teams?

SS: We have anti-bacterial dispensers everywhere. If someone starts to get sick we wash his gear and wipe everything down. It's going to affect a lot of guys

regardless of what we do. They're in contact with so much stuff in and out of the room. The water bottles from the bench go in a dishwasher after games, stuff like that. We do the best that we can.

THN: What does Blademaster offer that other systems don't?

SS: I've had several machines during my 20-year career and Blademaster has always been on top, staying with things and upgrading every year. We have two of the granite-countertop models. With a double-head, triple-head sharpener my assistant and I can sharpen together - our days are long enough as it is. There's also the quality of their machines. They do a great job.

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FROM THE TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING LOCKER ROOM

Thill's journey leads to Tampa Bay

There are countless routes you can take to get your name on the Stanley Cup. The one Tampa Bay Lightning equipment manager Ray Thill toiled along took 1,200 miles, close to two decades and thousands of skates. Thill, a Chicago native, has racked up other honors, including the 1998 Turner Cup with the Chicago Wolves and being Team USA's equipment manager at the 2008 World Championship.

THN: We've heard you're a speedster at lacing skates. What's the story there?

RT: (laughs) That must have been Dan Boyle. When he had cut his wrist (September 2007) he needed someone to tie his skates so that's how it all started.

THN: Any characters who were exceptionally demanding?

RT: Not really, but Marty St-Louis is really particular about how he likes his skates done. He needs them sharpened all the time. He's one of those grinder guys that goes into all the corners – his blades get nicked up quite a bit. He's a hard worker on the ice; his skates always get dinged up.

THN: What's one thing you weren't quite expecting about the job?

RT: Travel. Travel is really tough. We did six games in seven nights for our pre-season.

THN: You hadn't done a lot of traveling before that?

RT: We have, but nothing quite like that.



**RAY
THILL**
EQUIPMENT
MANAGER



THN: Have you looked at someone's gear and said, 'You're gonna get killed wearing this' and thrown it out?

RT: We used to have a guy here, Stan Neckar, who skated in the same pair of skates, for like, four years. I told him – it was our last

game at the end of the season – "I'm throwing these things away" and that's what I ended up doing.

THN: Did he believe you at the time?

RT: No, I don't think he did. (laughs)

THN: What would you say is a misconception people have about equipment managers?

RT: People don't realize how long it takes to sharpen skates. They look at it like it's just part of the job, but it takes a couple hours to do everybody's skates pre-game.

RT: What gives Blademaster the edge?

RT: The technology. They get better and better every season. Two of us can get on the machine at the same time to do skates, so it's really convenient.

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FROM THE SOUTH CAROLINA STINGRAYS LOCKER ROOM

Stingray fan joins the team

Charleston born-and-bred John Williams conducted the symphony of circumstance fate threw at him into the sweet strains of an unexpected career. Like most kids from South of the Mason-Dixon Line, his sports life revolved around football and baseball. It took a chance encounter for him to wind up as equipment manager of the 2009 ECHL Kelly Cup champion South Carolina Stingrays.

THN: How did you get interested in hockey?

JW: When the team started up (in 1993) I bought season tickets. I was managing a sporting goods store and the players used to come to get their shoes, workout gear and stuff like that so I got to know them. I actually met the equipment manager, Jeff Camelio who's now with the Nashville Predators.

THN: Have you taken to playing at all?

JW: No. Actually, I've only been on skates twice.

THN: How does a guy who doesn't skate end up working for the Stingrays?

JW: I was helping Jeff on game days when I didn't have to be at my other job. It progressed more and more each year.

THN: Was there a situation

that had you stumped?

JW: Starting out, the players would ask for a bucket of steam, or the stick stretcher, those types of things.

THN: Have you managed to get back at any of them?

JW: There's always little



JOHN WILLIAMS
EQUIPMENT
MANAGER



stuff! You put a cup of water in their helmet so when they grab it they get doused.

THN: No hard feelings?

JW: That's all part of the game; it's how we become friends for life.

THN: Do you watch other sports?

JW: I'm a season ticket

holder for the University of South Carolina football but I don't really get to go anymore.

THN: Have you managed to convert the hockey heads?

JW: The players love tailgating. The college football atmosphere is much different than the pro game because the fans are really into the game. Just to see all that, the guys are impressed and always want to go back.

THN: Any particular things about Blademaster that made things go more smoothly?

JW: Just the consistency. The guys all like their skates a different hollow and I know when I step in front of the Blademaster, I'm not worried about if the guys are going to have trouble with their edge.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ECHL CHAMPION
CAROLINA STINGRAYS
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FROM THE MIAMI UNIVERSITY REDHAWKS LOCKER ROOM

Geshan stays cool at school

Some people search high and low for the proverbial fountain of youth, trying all manner of lotions and potions to stay young. Andy Geshan, Equipment Manager for the Miami University Redhawks discovered a more enjoyable method – staying at school. Geshan has been with the Redhawks – runners-up in the 2009 NCAA Frozen Four championship – since his student days at the Oxford, Ohio campus.

THN: How long have you had this job?

AG: Since 1995. I was a student manager from 1986 to 1988.

THN: Did you play?

AG: No. When I grew up in the Cincinnati area youth hockey wasn't really in existence. I played some hockey (as a student) but I'm not that great a skater.

THN: What made you decide to be a student manager?

AG: My father worked downtown and would get tickets from a friend who had a contact with the Cincinnati Stingers of the old WHA. He'd call my Mom and say 'Stick the kids on the bus. I'll feed 'em here and we'll go down to a hockey game.' That's where I caught the hockey bug, so as a student the rink is

where I wanted to be. They had hired their first full-time equipment manager, Dave Randolph (currently with Milwaukee Admirals) who wanted student help; it was all a matter of right place, right time.



**ANDY
GESHAN**
EQUIPMENT
MANAGER

THN: What is Blademaster's biggest advantage?

AG: It's the more well-known product. Wherever you go that's what you see. If you're visiting somewhere and need something, chances are someone at that location has what you need to get you through.

THN: What's been your favourite experience?

AG: Last year's Frozen Four in Washington. Having experienced it as a participant was really a special occasion. A lot of people in my shoes have been at their institutions for as long as I've been, or maybe longer and never had that chance.

THN: What keeps you in university athletics?

AG: I like the entire atmosphere. There's so many dynamics – educational, entertainment, athletic. It's neat to work with young people. In our small town the university touches all aspects. I have two kids in elementary school; not a day goes by that there aren't university students in their school helping. I think it just helps keep me young.

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FROM THE WINDSOR SPITFIRES LOCKER ROOM

Tyson a chip off the Tatomir block

Tyson Tatomir had interests outside of hockey but the siren song of skate sharpening machines and industrial washers whooshing with loads of hockey gear lured him back. The 24-year-old equipment manager for the 2009 Memorial Cup champion Windsor Spitfires is no stranger to managing hockey equipment. Tatomir grew up helping his father Wally, a pioneer in the field who has four patents to his name. Prior to joining the Spitfires, Tatomir spent four years as an assistant to his father, equipment manager for the Carolina Hurricanes.

THN: You studied wood-working in college. How did you end up an equipment manager?

TT: Well, I took woodwork-ing because I enjoy it, but halfway through my brother Shane asked me to sharpen skates for his hockey team at St. Clair College. Because of my dad, I knew that's what I wanted to do.

THN: Your father Wally was equipment manager for the Windsor Spitfires 1988 Memorial Cup win. How much of an influence on your career was your dad?

TT: He was a huge influence. I never got to play at the high-est level but always wanted to do something in hockey.

THN: What level did you reach?

TT: Travel – the highest level I played at was A.

THN: You started with the Spitfires right before the OHL championship run.

How tough was it to get into the swing of things?



**TYSON
TATOMIR**
EQUIPMENT
MANAGER

TT: That took a while, about three or four days but once I got into the groove it was easy to stay with it.

THN: There are some superstitious hockey play-ers out there. Have you come across any with unusual pre-game ritu-

als, like having a left skate sharpened first?

TT: (laughs) No. I don't really pay attention to their routines and rituals and stay focused on mine, dealing with the equipment.

THN: What's the best part of the job?

TT: Everything. Being part of a great group, getting to sit on the bench. The best thing is the fans – they drive you to be there, especially the game day atmosphere.

THN: You've been around the business a long time. What sets Blademaster apart?

TT: It's the best machine out there, from the holders to the wheels. I've been using it since I was 12 so I'm accustomed to it.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINDSOR SPITFIRES
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