

“The only ice in the Cayman Islands belongs in your rum and coke”!

That was my answer to a question from a throng of journalists descended upon Roulston Lake during the Cayman Breakaway’s first invitation to the World Pond Hockey Championship in 2005. That year the NHL was on strike and “our pond game” was hoisted into the centre of the global hockey universe. The reporter had inquired if there was any ice to skate on in the tiny Caribbean Island country that Norm Klein, Marty Goschl, Joe Stasiuk and I all call home.

Coincidentally in 2005 the Cayman Islands were trying to recover after being wiped out by catastrophic Hurricane IVAN. Our inaugural Breakaway season was in threat before we even left famous Seven Mile Beach or started the first of many training sessions in Tampa Bay at the Lightning training facility. Indeed, we were faced with many questions and greeted with much curiosity. Making the trek north and departing Fredericton we inquired if we were heading out of town traveling in the correct direction. The responses was yes... and just keep driving because Plaster Rock is so far back in the bush they pump light in there. As can be appreciated with answers like that we started asking our own questions!

Undaunted we arrived into the Village of Plaster Rock that we now cherish as our February “home-away-from-home”. We immediately searched out and discovered Roulston Lake. It was one of the most beautiful sights to behold. The night was calm; the rinks laid out perfect, glimmering ice under light snow each beckoning for the games to begin.

That evening Roulston Lake transported me back to my family farm in north eastern Saskatchewan where as a little boy my father cleared the snow off our dug out so my older sister, younger brother and I could skate on it. No matter my father never had the opportunity to play our game he shoveled that dug out so his kids could skate. My Mom did not play hockey either but she was the first person touring me around on her figure skates.

When you move to the Cayman Islands you pretty much accept your hockey career has ended, (and for me it was 14 long years between games) however the WPHC and the Cayman Breakaway were a re-birth of dreams.

As a boy on the prairie and a being a very long way from Chicago I remember tapeing my Bobby Hull “Hat-Trick” stick while dreaming of meeting # 9,... 42 years later playing in the WPHC I was sitting and visiting with “The Golden Jet” while he was autographing pictures for my 2 young sons. This World Championship has also provided dreams never considered including the Cayman Breakaway sweater being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto and participating on Hockey Night in Canada with Ron MacLean and Kelly Hrudehy.

The biggest dream each year however rests in earning an invitation for the Cayman Breakaway to return to Plaster Rock and to the people who make the WPHC’s the incredibly special place that it is. As we head into our eighth Championship we look forward to the competition, to the camaraderie, to seeking out previous teams and players while looking for new ones from around the world. To this end we know we have done our best at the Tournament when Danny Braun introduces “Big Mike” with his title of Cayman Breakaway “Team Driver and General Minder” keeping us on time and out of trouble!

From the Cayman Islands to the Tobique ...we will haul up the rum ... just make sure you have the ice!

Bill Messer # 14
Captain
Cayman Breakaway