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FROM THE GUELPH STORM LOCKER ROOM

Hammond to hit 1,000 games

Russ Hammond – everyone knows him as Rusty – has been taking care of the equipment needs for the Guelph Storm of the Ontario Hockey League since 1994. The 60-year-old equipment manager is set to work his 1,000th game for Guelph early in this year's playoff run. We chatted with the Storm veteran about his career and life in major junior:

THN: What are your favorite memories over the last 14 years?

RH: There are many. I've worked on the national team, both for the World Cup Under-18 team and the World Junior Championship in Helsinki in 2003. I worked the Canada-Russia series for the OHL. And then I've done some prospects games, and numerous all-star games. I've been very lucky, it's like a dream for an equipment manager to do the things I've done.

THN: Who are some of the Storm alumni that stick out in your mind?

RH: I go back as far as Todd Bertuzzi. There's also Brian Willsie, Dustin Brown and Dan Cloutier, who are all with the L.A. Kings now. And Craig Anderson in Florida. We've had a lot of NHL players coming out of the Storm.

THN: You must have seen a big change in equipment?

RH: Yes. There has been a tremendous evolution of the hockey stick, for example, over my time with the Storm, from wood stick to aluminum and then composite. One thing I'm seeing this year is kids coming to me asking for a wood blade to use on their composite shaft. That's a new thing. I got four guys on the team doing it, and I see other kids in the

OHL doing it too.

THN: What's the most important part of being an equipment manager?

RH: You definitely have to have a love for the game. You have to have passion for it. You couldn't be in it if you didn't.

THN: Have you ever thought of slowing down?

RH: You can't slow down in this business. But I get great help. There's my assistant, Doug

Robertson, and, of course, we have our stick boys, who are invaluable. Without the help of these people, an equipment manager just couldn't function. As for retirement... I'd like to win a Memorial Cup, and you know what, my assistant is ready to step in. If we won, what I would do is just let him take over. But I'd like to win that Cup. The Storm has

been to four Memorial Cup tournaments, but we haven't won one.

THN: How do you rate the Storm's prospects over the next couple of years?

RH: I think we'll have a phenomenal team over the next couple years. I honestly believe that we'll be back in contention for a Memorial Cup during that span, that's how strongly I believe in this team.



Russ Hammond
Equipment
Manager

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