

THE CHOICE OF PROFESSIONALS

BLADEMASTER

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COLORADO AVALANCHE LOCKER ROOM

Miller on a Rocky Mountain high

Minnesota native Mark Miller is a convert to the Colorado way of life. "The area is beautiful, everything is great," says the 41-year-old head equipment manager for the Avalanche, the team he has worked for since 1998. THN caught up with Miller to chat about his career and the Avs:

THN: Where did you start out?

MM: I started at St. Cloud State, where I had gone to school, in 1986 taking care of its hockey teams. My first season, our coach was Herb Brooks, who led the team from Division III to Division I that season, which had been his goal.

After that he left for the North Stars. I was at St. Cloud State for 11 years. After that, I spent a year in the minor pros, first in the CHL and then the ECHL.

THN: Why did you leave the college ranks for the pros?

MM: I wanted to give the pros a shot. I took a huge pay cut to go to the minor pros.

I was a full-time state employee at St. Cloud State, but I wanted to take a chance while I still could. After one year in the minors, I hooked on as an assistant equipment manager with the Colorado Avalanche, so it's really worked out. I'm glad I took the chance.

I don't think there's been a better organization around than the Avs.

THN: What's the biggest difference between the college game and the pros?

MM: I'd say game schedule.

In the college game, the season is shorter and it's very predictable. You play on Friday, Saturday, and that's it, then practice during the week. In the pros, it's a lot more hectic, and the schedule changes.

THN: Who's responsible for skate sharpening in your room?

MM: Our assistant equipment manager, Terry Geer, does skate sharpening for almost the entire team. I still sharpen skates for (Joe) Sakic and (Milan) Hejduk, because they started with me. They're the last two guys left from our Cup run in 2001.

THN: What's the atmosphere in the Avs' room?

MM: There's a real family feeling, everybody gets along well, pretty loose. We have a great bunch of guys, and they're pretty easy going when it comes to the way they want their equipment.

THN: How would you describe Denver hockey fans?

MM: We have great fans, a great following, they're big hockey fans. After winning the Cup that first season in 1996, and staying contenders every year, the Avs have built a really strong following.



Mark Miller

Equipment Manager



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