

FROM THE ATLANTA THRASHERS LOCKER ROOM

Twice is nice for Thrashers' Stewart

Bobby Stewart's NHL career is a tale of two cities . . . and two franchises. The Thrashers equipment manager first broke into the league in 1973 with the Atlanta Flames and moved with the team when it relocated to Calgary in 1980. After spending 19 happy years in Alberta, and winning a Stanley Cup with the Flames in 1989, Stewart returned to Atlanta to work for the expansion Thrashers. We caught up with the 56-year-old Montreal native:

THN: How has Atlanta as an NHL market changed since your first stint in the city?

Stewart: First of all, the city is much bigger. There were maybe a million people here in the 1970s; now there's four. And it's a much more mature hockey market than back then. There's so much more hockey on TV and we have a lot of transplanted northerners.

THN: Atlanta is hosting this year's NHL All-Star Game – have you worked All-Star Games in the past?

Stewart: Yes, twice. I worked the 1985 game when Calgary was the host city, and again in the 1994 game, hosted by the Rangers, as part of the visiting team.

THN: How has working the All-Star Game changed?

Stewart: The game itself is essentially the same, but now

with all the surrounding events – the skills competition, the Young Stars game, etc. – it's much more a whole weekend affair. We get lots of help from the league. Calgary's Gus Thorson will be working



Bobby Stewart
Equipment Manager



the game for the Western Conference team.

THN: What are your memories from the Stanley Cup win in 1989?

Stewart: It was such a thrill and it was especially sweet because I'd been in the league

for quite a while and hadn't won one yet. When we captured the Cup at the Montreal Forum, the fans were so gracious to us, applauding us, and that's something that I remember fondly.

THN: What's the biggest change you've seen in your career?

Stewart: Equipment has been the biggest change, for sure. The players have so much choice these days in terms of different manufacturers and models. But there's so much maintenance required too. Joe Guilmet, our other equipment person, not only takes care of repair, but will customize equipment for, say, an injured player. He's a fantastic help.

THN: Do you use the Blademaster Ultimate skate-sharpening machine?

Stewart: Yes, I do, it's a great machine.

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