

**THE NEW
ICE AGE**
TWO NHL TEAMS IN T.O.?

REBECCA ECKLER KICKS OFF THE HOLIDAYS WITH MADE-TO-MEASURE BOOTS
QUANTUM OF SOLE-LACE

**COUNTER
ATTACK**
GREASY SPOON GUIDE

CHEF JASON BANGERTER TUCKS INTO TORONTO'S TOP FRENCH ONION SOUP
SOUPER BOWL CHAMPS

BAYVIEW

DECEMBER 2008



THE LEGEND

PAUL COFFEY

We go toe-to-toe with Gretzky's former teammate on life after hockey, his entrepreneurial spirit and why Bayview is tops when it comes to raising a family

Toe-to-toe with Gretzky's former teammate on life after hockey, his entrepreneurial spirit & why Bayview is tops for raising a family

BY ANDREW CHIN

SITTING IN PAUL Coffey's Bayview home, it's clear that the NHL legend is living the Canadian dream.

With their demanding schedules, many professional athletes miss out on seeing their children grow up. Coffey, now retired from professional hockey, lives with his wife Stephanie, and their three children, Savannah, 13; Blake, 10; and Christian, five, together in their Hogg's Hollow home, and Coffey wouldn't have it any other way.

"When I retired, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I just knew what I didn't want to do," Coffey says. "I didn't want to travel. I wanted to be around my kids, and I wanted to watch them grow up. I wanted to be there for them as much as I could."

Coffey admits that there were some talks with his wife about retiring "somewhere warmer," but the couple ultimately decided to settle in their native Toronto. It was an easy decision, he says.

"We both agreed — why not come home and be with our families and friends," says Coffey. "It's nice to have our kids grow up around friends that we know and their kids. Also our parents are around."

The decision to return to Toronto may have been easy, but finding the right neighbourhood proved to be much harder. Although his wife grew up in Forest Hill, Coffey found the area too busy. They spent some time in Rosedale, but with a cottage in Muskoka and parents in Malton, Coffey knew that he wanted to be closer to a highway. They found the solution in the cozy Hogg's Hollow neighbourhood near Yonge and York Mills. But it wasn't exactly love at first sight.

"It was the end of the day and we had been to ten houses. I was tired, but luckily this one came up. It was an empty lot that the person across the street owned,

and he said he would sell it to me. It worked out perfectly."

It turned out to be a fortuitous move. That same neighbour would later introduce Coffey to his post-hockey career: the car business.

Today, Coffey is the owner of Paul Coffey's Bolton Toyota and a Nissan dealership in Kitchener. He is just as engaged talking about his new career as he is his last.

"I had a few buddies in the car business, and they seemed to enjoy it," he explains.

While he admits that he isn't a "big car guy," Coffey finds the business fascinating. Rather than being an absentee owner who lends only his name to the business, he is actively involved in his dealership. He drives a Toyota and is genuine in his praise of the company.

"I've never owned a Ferrari or a Porsche, and I think that flashy, expensive cars are a waste of money, to tell you the truth," he says. "Not Toyotas, though: they always hold their value. There's not a better vehicle."

Coffey opened the Bolton dealership, his first, in 2004. While he proudly declares that they "have a good team up there now," Coffey says that it took some time and tweaking to get the business running smoothly.

Coffey was able to apply some of the principles of his past career to his new one.

"The challenge is keeping your team motivated and working as a team," he says. "I try to run it the same way I was involved on a hockey team. No matter what you do, big or small, it's all important. You have to get your people to really care."

If there is something that Coffey is experienced in, it is being part of a winning formula. Drafted sixth overall by the Edmonton Oilers in 1980, Coffey teamed up with young guns

Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier and Jari Kurri to form the core of one of the most formidable hockey teams of all time.

During his seven-year tenure with the Oilers, he won three Stanley Cups, broke Bobby Orr's mark for most goals by a defenceman in a season (48 during the 1985-'86 campaign) and set the record for most points by a defenceman during the playoffs (37 points in 18 games).

"I was 20 years old, when I joined the team, and I didn't realize at the time how special it was," the 14-time all-star says. "One thing we did know was that we all enjoyed each other's company. We all worked hard and wanted to be the best. We weren't willing to sacrifice anything other than being the best. And if we weren't the best, it wasn't going to be due to a lack of teamwork or effort."

In 1987, Coffey was traded to a Pittsburgh Penguins that featured a budding superstar in Mario Lemieux. Coffey provided a steady hand to the young team. In 1991, the team won the Stanley Cup, Coffey's fourth. He then went on to play integral roles on Stanley Cup finalists Detroit in 1995 and Philadelphia in 1997. He currently sits fifth all-time in career playoff points with 196.

In 2001, Coffey bowed out of the game at age 40.

"It was tough," he says of retirement. "There's nothing in life that will give you the emotional ups and downs that sports give you. But I was done, and when you're done, you're done. You have to get there mentally because, if you don't, you'll never let it go."

Coffey was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2004, had his Oilers jersey retired in 2005 and was inducted into the Penguins Hall of Fame in 2007.

Coffey continues to stay involved in the game but does so

on his own terms. He plays in charity games and lends his coaching expertise to his son's Junior Marlies team. He also catches NHL games, when he can, and although he diplomatically says he "cheers for the sport" and has a soft spot for the Oilers, he reveals that deep down he's a Leafs fan.

With the team showcasing a feisty attitude under new coach Ron Wilson, there are many positive things that Coffey points to with this new Leafs team.

But like most fans of today's Leafs lineup, he's caught in a conundrum: whether to sacrifice short-term success in order to build a long-term championship contender.

"If they don't lose, they won't get these good young picks," he says. "If you're a real, real Leafs fan, you hope for the next five years they get a top-five pick every year so they can get some real good young studs. But how do you tell your players not to win?"

Despite having a career that most hockey players only dream of, Coffey speaks about his career with pride but with a sense of detachment.

"I try not to live in the past," he says. "I guess the thing I'm most proud of is that I had the chance to win championships. At the end of the day, that's what you're measured on."

Signs from both the family and professional fronts indicate that Coffey has transitioned gracefully into life after hockey. And if you look closely, there are subtle signs that Coffey still maintains the competitive edge that made him a star. Evidence? When the Leafs beat the Oilers recently, Coffey couldn't resist calling up his contacts at the Oilers franchise — just to rub it in.

PAUL COFFEY

