

= Joel Otto =

Joel Stuart Otto (born October 29 , 1961) is an American former professional ice hockey center in the National Hockey League (NHL) for the Calgary Flames and Philadelphia Flyers . An undrafted player , Otto signed with the Flames as a free agent in 1984 and played 11 seasons with the team . He was one of the top defensive centers in the league during his career and one of the NHL 's best at faceoffs ; Otto was a two @-@ time finalist for the Frank J. Selke Trophy . He was known for his confrontations with Mark Messier as part of the Flames ' rivalry with the Edmonton Oilers and was a member of Calgary 's 1989 Stanley Cup championship winning team . He joined the Flyers in 1995 , with whom he played three seasons .

Otto was a frequent member of the United States national team . He played in two World Championships and two Canada Cups , captaining the United States to the final in 1991 . Otto was a member of the team that won the inaugural World Cup of Hockey in 1996 and played in the 1998 Winter Olympics . He currently serves as an assistant coach of the Western Hockey League 's Calgary Hitmen , with whom he won the league championship in 2010 .

= = Playing career = =

= = = College = = =

A native of Elk River , Minnesota , Otto played college hockey for Division II school Bemidji State . He scored 52 points in 31 games in his sophomore season of 1981 ? 82 , improving to 61 points the following season and finally 75 points in 31 games in 1983 ? 84 . He was named to the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association (NCHA) first All @-@ Conference Team and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) West All @-@ American in 1982 , 1983 and 1984 . Otto captained Bemidji State in 1983 ? 84 , leading the team to an undefeated record at 31 ? 0 and a Division II national championship . He was recognized as the NCHA player of the year in 1984 . He was a finalist for the Hobey Baker Award in 1984 , given to the top collegiate player in the United States . Otto scored over 200 points for Bemidji State , was the first player to have his jersey retired by the school , and was inducted into Bemidji State 's Athletics Hall of Fame in 2010 .

= = = Calgary Flames = = =

Otto was never drafted , and upon graduation , sought opportunities from National Hockey League (NHL) clubs . The teams he contacted offered only a try @-@ out , some insisting he pay his own way . Finally , his agent contacted Cliff Fletcher , general manager of the Calgary Flames , who offered him a contract to play for the Moncton Golden Flames , their American Hockey League (AHL) affiliate . Otto agreed , scored 63 points in 56 games for the Golden Flames in the 1984 ? 85 AHL season and appeared in 17 games with Calgary . He made his NHL debut on November 23 , 1984 , against the St. Louis Blues . On March 1 , 1985 , he recorded his first point , an assist , against the Montreal Canadiens . He scored his first goal two nights later against goaltender Darren Eliot of the Los Angeles Kings .

Otto established himself as a top defensive forward for the Flames in 1985 ? 86 . Coach Bob Johnson discovered his niche when he had Otto shut down Marcel Dionne , the top player of the Los Angeles Kings . Afterward , Otto was consistently used against the opposition 's top line where he used his size and faceoff ability to his advantage . He was most famous for shadowing Mark Messier of the Edmonton Oilers when the Battle of Alberta reached its peak in the late 1980s . Otto later remarked that Messier was the reason he was in the NHL , as the Flames needed a big center who could match Messier physically , especially in the faceoff circle .

Johnson also used Otto in front of the opposition net to screen the goaltender . He struggled offensively early in the 1985 ? 86 season , scoring only two goals in the first third of the year , but as he grew in confidence and saw increasing ice time , his offense improved . Otto finished the season

with 25 goals and 59 points . He added 5 goals and 15 points in the playoffs as the Flames reached the Stanley Cup final . The Flames lost the series in five games to the Montreal Canadiens .

Continuing to chip in on offense in the following seasons , Otto scored at least 50 points in each of his first four full seasons . He reached the 20 @-@ goal mark for the second time in 1988 ? 89 , a season he ended on an 11 @-@ game point scoring streak . The Flames entered the 1989 Stanley Cup Playoffs as the top team in the NHL , and a prohibitive favorite against their first round opponent , the Vancouver Canucks . Nonetheless , the Canucks forced the Flames into overtime of the seventh and deciding game of the series . Late in the first overtime period , Otto rushed toward the net as Jim Peplinski carried the puck up the right side boards . Peplinski 's shot deflected off Otto 's skate and past Vancouver goaltender Kirk McLean . Otto was credited with the series @-@ winning goal . He scored a total of 19 points in 22 playoff games as the Flames won their first Stanley Cup championship in franchise history .

Considered one of the league 's best faceoff men and a top two @-@ way forward , Otto was frequently the subject of inquiries by other teams in trade talks , which the Flames refused . He scored his 100th career goal on October 30 , 1990 , against the New Jersey Devils and his 300th point on October 4 , 1991 , against Edmonton . He was the Flames ' nominee for the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy in 1991 ? 92 , a league award given for dedication and perseverance . His role with the Flames changed into the 1990s as the team placed greater emphasis on his defensive play into the 1990s , though he surpassed 50 @-@ points for the fifth time in 1992 ? 93 . Otto was also named a finalist for the Frank J. Selke Trophy as the league 's top defensive forward that season . He was again named a finalist for the Selke Trophy in 1994 ? 95 .

= = = Philadelphia Flyers = = =

Otto hoped to remain in Calgary after his contract expired following the 1995 season , but with the Flames facing financial difficulties as the NHL 's salary structure rapidly changed , the team was unable to agree to a new contract . He was among the most sought after players in free agency , and was pursued by the New York Rangers , who hoped that he could help their team shut down Eric Lindros of the Philadelphia Flyers . Otto considered the offer , and thought if the Rangers thought that highly of their opponent , he would be better off playing with Lindros than against him . Otto signed a three @-@ year contract with the Philadelphia Flyers on July 21 , 1995 .

He scored 41 points in 67 games in 1995 ? 96 , including the 500th of his career , when he notched a goal and an assist in a 5 ? 4 win over the Edmonton Oilers on March 13 , 1997 . Still regarded as one of the league 's top defensive centers in 1996 ? 97 , Otto helped the Flyers reach the 1997 Stanley Cup Finals , which they lost to the Detroit Red Wings . He scored only 7 points in 68 games in 1997 ? 98 after recording 32 the season before , and had lost some of his skating speed . Following the season , Otto announced his retirement .

= = = International = = =

Otto made his debut with the United States national team at the 1985 World Ice Hockey Championships . He appeared in ten games , scoring two goals . His goal against Czechoslovakia helped the US complete its third of three consecutive upset victories , including defeats of Canada and Sweden , that left the United States in second place after the preliminary round . The Americans ultimately finished fourth in the tournament . Otto played in a second World Championship in 1990 , scoring six points in nine games for the fifth @-@ place Americans .

The 1987 Canada Cup was Otto 's first appearance in a best @-@ on @-@ best tournament . He appeared in five games for the fifth @-@ place Americans , and returned as the captain of the American squad that entered the 1991 Canada Cup . Otto scored two goals in a 7 ? 3 victory over Finland in the semi @-@ final to lead the United States into its first championship game in five Canada Cup appearances . The Americans lost the best @-@ of @-@ three final to Canada 2 ? 0 . Otto next appeared in the 1996 World Cup of Hockey , the successor tournament to the Canada Cup , where the Americans again faced Canada in the final . Otto and his teammates defeated

Canada to claim the inaugural World Cup title . His final international appearance came at the 1998 Winter Olympics . At 36 , Otto was the oldest player on the American team and was counted on to contribute to the American team as a checking center . He appeared in four games for the sixth @-@ place Americans .

= = Off the ice = =

Otto and his wife Kary have two children , Ben and Kacey . The family settled in Calgary , but return to Minnesota for various events . Following his retirement as a player , Otto worked for Calgary law firm MacLeod Dixon as a professional player consultant and later for a company that manufactured golf clubs . Otto is active within the community . As a player with the Flames , he was a spokesman for the Calgary Children 's Milk Fund Society , and was named the recipient of the Ralph T. Scurfield Humanitarian Award in 1993 in recognition of his leadership and community involvement . Otto remains active with the Calgary Flames Alumni Association and in 2004 joined the Calgary Hitmen of the Western Hockey League (WHL) as a spokesman for their " Hitmen Kidz " community program .

While he had worked with the University of Calgary Dinos hockey program for a couple seasons following his retirement , Otto left to be closer to his family . He returned to the game in 2006 as an assistant coach for the Hitmen . He helped coach the Hitmen to the Ed Chynoweth Cup as WHL champions in 2009 ? 10 , and returned for his fifth season behind the bench in 2011 ? 12 .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Regular season and playoffs = = =

= = = International = = =

= = Curiosities = =

Canadian punk band Belvedere wrote a song about Joel Otto 's career called " Two minutes for looking so good " .