

= Wayne Gretzky =

Wayne Douglas Gretzky CC (/ ˈrɛtʃki / ; born January 26 , 1961) is a Canadian former professional ice hockey player and former head coach . He played 20 seasons in the National Hockey League (NHL) for four teams from 1979 to 1999 . Nicknamed " The Great One " , he has been called " the greatest hockey player ever " by many sportswriters , players , and the NHL itself . He is the leading scorer in NHL history , with more goals and more assists than any other player . He scored more assists than any other player scored total points , and is the only NHL player to total over 200 points in one season ? a feat he accomplished four times . In addition , he tallied over 100 points in 16 professional seasons , 14 of them consecutive . At the time of his retirement in 1999 , he held 61 NHL records : 40 regular @-@ season records , 15 playoff records , and six All @-@ Star records . As of 2014 , he still holds 60 NHL records .

Born and raised in Brantford , Ontario , Gretzky honed his skills at a backyard rink and regularly played minor hockey at a level far above his peers . Despite his unimpressive stature , strength and speed , Gretzky 's intelligence and reading of the game were unrivaled . He was adept at dodging checks from opposing players , and consistently anticipated where the puck was going to be and executed the right move at the right time . Gretzky became known for setting up behind his opponent 's net , an area that was nicknamed " Gretzky 's office " .

In 1978 , Gretzky signed with the Indianapolis Racers of the World Hockey Association (WHA) , where he briefly played before being traded to the Edmonton Oilers . When the WHA folded , the Oilers joined the NHL , where he established many scoring records and led his team to four Stanley Cup championships . His trade to the Los Angeles Kings on August 9 , 1988 , had an immediate impact on the team 's performance , eventually leading them to the 1993 Stanley Cup Finals , and he is credited with popularizing hockey in California . Gretzky played briefly for the St. Louis Blues before finishing his career with the New York Rangers . Gretzky captured nine Hart Trophies as the most valuable player , ten Art Ross Trophies for most points in a season , two Conn Smythe Trophies as playoff MVP , and five Lester B. Pearson Awards (now called the Ted Lindsay Award) for most outstanding player as judged by other players . He won the Lady Byng Trophy for sportsmanship and performance five times , and often spoke out against fighting in hockey .

After his retirement in 1999 , Gretzky was immediately inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame , making him the most recent player to have the waiting period waived . The NHL retired his jersey number 99 league @-@ wide , making him the only player to receive this honour . He was one of six players voted to the International Ice Hockey Federation 's (IIHF) Centennial All @-@ Star Team . Gretzky became executive director for the Canadian national men 's hockey team during the 2002 Winter Olympics , in which the team won a gold medal . In 2000 , he became part owner of the Phoenix Coyotes , and following the 2004 ? 05 NHL lockout he became the team 's head coach . In 2004 , he was inducted into the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame . In September 2009 , following the franchise 's bankruptcy , Gretzky resigned as coach and relinquished his ownership share .

= = Early years = =

Wayne Gretzky was born on January 26 , 1961 in Brantford , the son of Phyllis Leone (Hockin) and Walter Gretzky . The couple had married in 1960 , and lived in an apartment in Brantford , Ontario , where Walter worked for Bell Telephone Canada . The family moved into a house on Varadi Avenue in Brantford seven months after Wayne was born , chosen partly because its yard was flat enough to make an ice rink on every winter . Wayne was joined by a sister , Kim (b . 1963) , and brothers Keith , Glen and Brent . The family would regularly visit Tony and Mary 's farm (Wayne 's grandparents) and watch Hockey Night in Canada together . By age two , Wayne was trying to score goals against Mary using a souvenir stick . The farm was where Wayne skated on ice for the first time , aged two years , 10 months .

Walter taught Wayne , Keith , Brent , Glen and their friends hockey on a rink he made in the back yard of the family home , nicknamed the " Wally Coliseum " . Drills included skating around Javex bleach bottles and tin cans , and flipping pucks over scattered hockey sticks to be able to pick up

the puck again in full flight . Additionally , Walter gave the advice to " skate where the puck 's going , not where it 's been " . Wayne was a classic prodigy whose extraordinary skills made him the target of jealous parents .

The team that Gretzky played on at age six was otherwise composed of ten @-@ year @-@ olds . His first coach , Dick Martin , remarked that he handled the puck better than the ten @-@ year @-@ olds . According to Martin , " Wayne was so good that you could have a boy of your own who was a tremendous hockey player , and he 'd get overlooked because of what the Gretzky kid was doing . " The sweaters for ten @-@ year @-@ olds were far too large for Gretzky , who coped by tucking the sweater into his pants on the right side . Gretzky continued doing this throughout his NHL career .

By the age of ten , Gretzky had scored an astonishing 378 goals and 139 assists in just one season with the Brantford Nadrofsky Steelers . His play now attracted media attention beyond his hometown of Brantford , including a profile by John Iaboni in the Toronto Telegram in October 1971 . By age 13 , he had scored over 1 @,@ 000 goals . His play attracted considerable negative attention from other players ' parents , including those of his teammates , and he was often booed . According to Walter , the " capper " was being booed on " Brantford Day " at Toronto 's Maple Leaf Gardens in February 1975 .

When Gretzky was 14 , his family arranged for him to move to and play hockey in Toronto , partly to further his career , and partly to remove him from the uncomfortable pressure he faced in his hometown . The Gretzkys had to legally challenge the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association to win Wayne the right to play elsewhere , which was disallowed at the time . The Gretzkys won , and Wayne played Junior B hockey with the Toronto Nationals . He earned Rookie of the Year honours in the Metro Junior B Hockey League in 1975 ? 76 , with 60 points in 28 games . The following year , as a 15 @-@ year @-@ old , he had 72 points in 32 games with the same team , then known as the Seneca Nationals .

Despite his offensive statistics , two teams bypassed him in the 1977 OMJHL Midget Draft of 16 @-@ year @-@ olds . The Oshawa Generals picked Tom McCarthy , and the Niagara Falls Flyers picked Steve Peters second overall . With the third pick , the Sault Ste . Marie Greyhounds selected Gretzky , even though Walter Gretzky had told the team that Wayne would not move to Sault Ste . Marie , a northern Ontario city that inflicts a heavy traveling schedule on its junior team . The Gretzkys made an arrangement with a local family they knew and Wayne played a season in the Ontario Hockey League at the age of 16 with the Greyhounds . It was with the Greyhounds that Wayne first wore the number 99 on his jersey . He originally wanted to wear number 9 ? for his hockey hero Gordie Howe ? but it was already being worn by teammate Brian Gualazzi . At coach Muzz MacPherson 's suggestion , Gretzky settled on 99 .

= = World Hockey Association = =

In 1978 , the World Hockey Association (WHA) league was in competition with the established NHL . The NHL did not allow the signing of players under the age of 20 , but the WHA had no rules regarding such signings . Several WHA teams courted Gretzky , notably the Indianapolis Racers and the Birmingham Bulls . Birmingham Bulls owner John F. Bassett wanted to confront the NHL by signing as many young and promising superstars as possible and saw Gretzky as the most promising young prospect . However , it was Racers owner Nelson Skalbania who , on June 12 , 1978 , signed 17 @-@ year @-@ old Gretzky to a seven @-@ year personal services contract worth \$ 1 @.@ 75 million US . Gretzky scored his first professional goal against Dave Dryden of the Edmonton Oilers in his fifth game , and his second goal four seconds later . Skalbania opted to have Gretzky sign a personal @-@ services contract rather than a standard player contract in part because he knew a deal to take some WHA teams into the NHL was in the works . He also knew that the Racers could not hope to be included among those teams , and hoped to keep the Racers alive long enough to collect compensation from the surviving teams when the WHA dissolved , as well as any funds earned from selling the young star .

Gretzky only played eight games for Indianapolis . The Racers were losing \$ 40 @,@ 000 per game . Skalbania told Gretzky he would be moved , offering him a choice between the Edmonton

Oilers and the Winnipeg Jets . On the advice of his agent , Gretzky picked the Oilers , but the move was not that simple . On November 2 , Gretzky , goaltender Eddie Mio and forward Peter Driscoll were put on a private plane , not knowing where they would land and what team they would be joining . While in the air , Skalbania worked on the deal . Skalbania offered to play a game of backgammon with Winnipeg owner Michael Gobuty , the stakes being if Gobuty won , he would get Gretzky and if he lost , he had to give Skalbania a share of the Jets . Gobuty turned down the proposal and the players landed in Edmonton . Mio paid the \$ 4 @, @ 000 bill for the flight with his credit card . Skalbania sold Gretzky , Mio and Driscoll to his former partner , and then @-@ owner of the Edmonton Oilers , Peter Pocklington . Although the announced price was \$ 850 @, @ 000 , Pocklington actually paid \$ 700 @, @ 000 . The money was not enough to keep the Racers alive ; they folded that December .

One of the highlights of Gretzky 's season was his appearance in the 1979 WHA All @-@ Star Game . The format was a three @-@ game series between the WHA All @-@ Stars and Dynamo Moscow played at Edmonton 's Northlands Coliseum . The WHA All @-@ Stars were coached by Jacques Demers , who put Gretzky on a line with his boyhood idol Gordie Howe and Howe 's son , Mark . In game one , the line scored seven points , and the WHA All @-@ Stars won by a score of 4 ? 2 . In game two , Gretzky and Mark Howe each scored a goal and Gordie Howe picked up an assist as the WHA won 4 ? 2 . The line did not score in the final game , but the WHA won by a score of 4 ? 3 .

On Gretzky 's 18th birthday , January 26 , 1979 , Pocklington signed him to a 10 @-@ year personal services contract (the longest in hockey history at the time) worth C \$ 3 million , with options for 10 more years . Gretzky finished third in the league in scoring at 110 points , behind Robbie Ftorek and R  al Cloutier . Gretzky captured the Lou Kaplan Trophy as rookie of the year , and helped the Oilers to first overall in the league . The Oilers reached the Avco World Trophy finals , where they lost to the Winnipeg Jets in six games . It was Gretzky 's only year in the WHA , as the league folded following the season .

= = NHL career = =

= = = Edmonton Oilers (1979 ? 1988) = = =

After the World Hockey Association folded in 1979 , the Edmonton Oilers and three other teams joined the NHL . Under the merger agreement the Oilers , like the other surviving WHA teams , were to be allowed to protect two goaltenders and two skaters from being reclaimed by the established NHL teams .

Gretzky 's success in the WHA carried over into the NHL , despite some critics suggesting he would struggle in what was considered the bigger , tougher , and more talented league .

In his first NHL season , 1979 ? 80 , Gretzky was awarded the Hart Memorial Trophy as the League 's Most Valuable Player (the first of eight in a row) and tied for the scoring lead with Marcel Dionne with 137 points . Although Gretzky played 79 games to Dionne 's 80 , Dionne was awarded the Art Ross Trophy since he scored more goals (53 vs. 51) . The season still stands as the highest point total by a first year player in NHL history . Gretzky became the youngest player to score 50 goals but was not eligible for the Calder Memorial Trophy , given to the top NHL rookie , because of his previous year of WHA experience . The Calder was awarded to Boston Bruins defenceman Ray Bourque .

In his second season , Gretzky won the Art Ross (the first of seven consecutive) with a then @-@ record 164 points , breaking both Bobby Orr 's record for assists in a season (102) and Phil Esposito 's record for points in a season (152) . He won his second straight Hart Trophy . In the first game of the 1981 playoffs versus the Montreal Canadiens , Gretzky had five assists . This was a single game playoff record .

During the 1981 ? 82 season , he surpassed a record that had stood for 35 years : 50 goals in 50 games . Set by Maurice " Rocket " Richard during the 1944 ? 45 NHL season and tied by Mike

Bossy during the 1980 ? 81 NHL season , Gretzky accomplished the feat in only 39 games . His 50th goal of the season came on December 30 , 1981 in the final seconds of a 7 ? 5 win against the Philadelphia Flyers and was his fifth of the game . Later that season , Gretzky broke Esposito 's record for most goals in a season (76) on February 24 , 1982 , scoring three goals to help beat the Buffalo Sabres 6 ? 3 . He ended the 1981 ? 82 season with records of 92 goals , 120 assists , and 212 points in 80 games , becoming the only player in NHL history to break the two hundred @-@ point mark . That year , Gretzky became the first hockey player and first Canadian to be named Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year . He was also named 1982 " Sportsman of the Year " by Sports Illustrated . The Canadian Press also named Gretzky Newsmaker of the Year in 1982 .

The following seasons saw Gretzky break his own assists record three more times (125 in 1982 ? 83 , 135 in 1984 ? 85 , and 163 in 1985 ? 86) ; he also bettered that mark (120 assists) in 1986 ? 87 with 121 and 1990 ? 91 with 122 , and his point record one more time (215 , in 1985 ? 86) . By the time he finished playing in Edmonton , he held or shared 49 NHL records , which in itself was a record .

The Edmonton Oilers finished first overall in their last WHA regular season . The same success was not immediate when they joined the NHL , but within four seasons , the Oilers were competing for the Stanley Cup . The Oilers were a young , strong team featuring , in addition to Gretzky , future Hall of Famers including forwards Mark Messier , Glenn Anderson and Jari Kurri , defenceman Paul Coffey , and goaltender Grant Fuhr . Gretzky was its captain from 1983 ? 88 . In 1983 , they made it to the Stanley Cup Final , only to be swept by the three @-@ time defending champion New York Islanders . The following season , the Oilers met the Islanders in the Final again , this time winning the Stanley Cup , their first of five in seven years .

Gretzky was named an officer of the Order of Canada on June 25 , 1984 , for outstanding contribution to the sport of hockey . Since the Order ceremonies are always held during the hockey season , it took 13 years and 7 months ? and two Governors General ? before he could accept the honour . He was promoted to Companion of the Order of Canada in 2009 " for his continued contributions to the world of hockey , notably as one of the best players of all time , as well as for his social engagement as a philanthropist , volunteer and role model for countless young people " . The Oilers also won the Cup with Gretzky in 1985 , 1987 and 1988 .

When the Oilers joined the NHL , Gretzky continued to play under his personal services contract with Oilers owner Peter Pocklington . This arrangement came under increased scrutiny by the mid @-@ 1980s , especially following reports that Pocklington had used the contract as collateral to help secure a \$ 31 million loan with the Alberta government @-@ owned Alberta Treasury Branches . Amid growing concern around the league that a financial institution might be able to lay claim to Gretzky 's rights in the event the heavily leveraged Pocklington were to declare bankruptcy , as well as growing dissatisfaction on the part of Gretzky and his advisers , in 1987 Gretzky and Pocklington agreed to replace the personal services contract with a standard NHL contract .

== = The Gretzky rule == =

In June 1985 , as part of a package of five rule changes to be implemented for the 1985 ? 86 season , the NHL Board of Governors made a decision to introduce offsetting penalties , where neither team lost a man when coincidental penalties were called . The effect of calling offsetting penalties was felt immediately in the NHL , because during the early 1980s , when the Gretzky @-@ era Oilers entered a four @-@ on @-@ four or three @-@ on @-@ three situation with an opponent , they frequently used the space on the ice to score one or more goals . Gretzky held a press conference one day after being awarded the Hart Memorial Trophy , criticizing the NHL for punishing teams and players who previously benefited . The rule change became known as the Gretzky rule . The rule was changed back for the 1992 ? 93 season .

== = Strategy and effect on NHL play == =

Gretzky had a major influence on the style of play of the Edmonton Oilers and in the NHL as a

whole , helping to inspire a more team @-@ based strategy . Using this approach , the Oilers , led by Gretzky , became the highest scoring team in league history .

" He was , I think , the first Canadian forward to play a true team game " , said hockey writer and former NHL goalie Ken Dryden . The focus of the game prior to Gretzky 's arrival , he said , especially among the Canadian teams , was on the player with the puck ? in getting the puck to a star player who would make the big play . " Gretzky reversed that . He knew he wasn 't big enough , strong enough , or even fast enough to do what he wanted to do if others focused on him . Like a magician , he had to direct attention elsewhere , to his four teammates on the ice with him , to create the momentary distraction in order to move unnoticed into the open ice where size and strength didn 't matter Gretzky made his opponents compete with five players , not one , and he made his teammates full partners to the game . He made them skate to his level and pass and finish up to his level or they would be embarrassed . "

Between 1982 and 1985 , the Edmonton Oilers averaged 423 goals a season , when no previous team had scored 400 , and Gretzky on his own had averaged 207 points , when no player before had scored more than 152 in one year . " In the past , defenders and teams had learned to devise strategies to stop opponents with the puck . Without the puck , that was interference . But now , if players without the puck skated just as hard , but faster , dodged and darted to open ice just as determinedly , but more effectively , as those with the puck , how do you shut them down ? "

In this , Gretzky added his considerable influence as the preeminent NHL star of his day to that of the Soviets , who had also developed a more team @-@ style of play , and had successfully used it against the best NHL teams , beginning in the 1972 Summit Series . " The Soviets and Gretzky changed the NHL game " , says Dryden . " Gretzky , the kid from Brantford with the Belarusian name , was the acceptable face of Soviet hockey . No Canadian kid wanted to play like Makarov or Larionov . They all wanted to play like Gretzky . "

At the same time , Gretzky recognizes the contributions of their coach in the success of the Oilers : " Under the guidance of Glen Sather , our Oiler teams became adept at generating speed , developing finesse , and learning a transition game with strong European influences . "

Gretzky explains his style of play further :

People think that to be a good player you have to pick the puck up , deke around ninety @-@ three guys and take this ungodly slap shot . No . Let the puck do all the moving and you get yourself in the right place . I don 't care if you 're Carl Lewis , you can 't outskate that little black thing . Just move the puck : give it up , get it back , give it up . It 's like Larry Bird . The hardest work he does is getting open . The jumpshot is cake .

That 's all hockey is : open ice . That 's my whole strategy : Find Open Ice . Chicago coach Mike Keenan said it best : " There 's a spot on the ice that 's no @-@ man 's land , and all the good goal scorers find it . " It 's a piece of frozen real estate that 's just in between the defense and the forward .

= = = " The Trade " = = =

Two hours after the Oilers won the Stanley Cup in 1988 , Gretzky learned from his father that the Oilers were planning to deal him to another team . Walter Gretzky had known for months after having been tipped off by Skalbania , but kept the news from Wayne so as not to upset him . According to Walter , Wayne was being " shopped " to Los Angeles , Detroit , and Vancouver , and Pocklington needed money as his other business ventures were not doing well . At first , Wayne did not want to leave Edmonton , but he later received a call while on his honeymoon from Los Angeles Kings owner Bruce McNall asking permission to meet and discuss the deal . Gretzky informed McNall that his prerequisites for a deal to take place were that Marty McSorley and Mike Krushelnyski join him as teammates in Los Angeles . Both McNall and Pocklington quickly agreed . After the details of the trade were finalized by the two owners , one final condition had to be met : Gretzky had to call Pocklington and request a trade . When Pocklington told Oilers general manager and head coach Glen Sather about his plans to trade Gretzky to L.A. , Sather tried to stop the deal , but when he found out that Gretzky had been involved in the negotiations , he changed his attitude

and requested Luc Robitaille in exchange . The Kings refused , instead offering Jimmy Carson .

On August 9 , 1988 , in a move that heralded significant change in the NHL , the Oilers traded Gretzky , along with McSorley and Krushelnyski , to the Kings for Carson , Martin Gelinac , \$ 15 million in cash , and the Kings ' first @-@ round draft picks in 1989 (later traded to the New Jersey Devils ? New Jersey selected Jason Miller) , 1991 (Martin Rucinsky) , and 1993 (Nick Stajduhar) . " The Trade " , as it came to be known , upset Canadians to the extent that New Democratic Party House Leader Nelson Riis demanded that the government block it , and Pocklington was burned in effigy outside the Northlands Coliseum . Gretzky himself was considered a " traitor " by some Canadians for turning his back on his adopted hometown , and his home country ; his motivation was widely rumoured to be the furtherance of his wife 's acting career .

In Gretzky 's first appearance in Edmonton after the trade ? a game that was nationally televised in Canada ? he received a four @-@ minute standing ovation . The arena was sold out , and the attendance of 17 @, @ 503 was the Oilers ' biggest crowd ever to that date . Large cheers erupted for his first shift , his first touch of the puck , his two assists , and for Mark Messier 's body check of Gretzky into the boards . After the game , Gretzky took the opportunity to confirm his patriotism : " I 'm still proud to be a Canadian . I didn 't desert my country . I moved because I was traded and that 's where my job is . But I 'm Canadian to the core . I hope Canadians understand that . " After the 1988 ? 89 season , a life @-@ sized bronze statue of Gretzky was erected outside the Northlands Coliseum , holding the Stanley Cup over his head .

= = = Los Angeles Kings (1988 ? 1996) = = =

The Kings named Gretzky their alternate captain . He made an immediate impact on the ice , scoring on his first shot on goal in the first regular @-@ season game . The Kings got off to their best start ever , winning four straight on their way to qualifying for the playoffs . Despite being underdogs against the defending Stanley Cup Champion Edmonton Oilers in the Smythe Division semifinals , Gretzky led the Kings to a shocking upset of his old squad , spearheading the Kings ' return from a 3 ? 1 series deficit to win the series 4 ? 3 . He was nervous that Edmonton would greet him with boos , but they were eagerly waiting for him . For only the second time in his NHL career , Gretzky finished second in scoring , but narrowly beat out Pittsburgh 's Mario Lemieux (who scored 199 points) for the Hart Trophy as MVP . In 1990 , the Associated Press named him Male Athlete of the Decade .

Gretzky 's first season in Los Angeles saw a marked increase in attendance and fan interest in a city not previously known for following hockey . The Kings now boasted of numerous sellouts . Many credit Gretzky 's arrival with putting non @-@ traditional U.S. hockey markets on " the NHL map " ; not only did California receive two more NHL franchises (the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim and San Jose Sharks) during Gretzky 's tenure in L.A. , but his popularity in Southern California proved to be an impetus in the league establishing teams in other parts of the U.S. Sun Belt .

Gretzky was sidelined for much of the 1992 ? 93 regular season with a back injury , and his 65 @-@ point output ended a record 13 @-@ year streak in which he recorded at least 100 points each season . However , he performed very well in the playoffs , notably when he scored a hat trick in game seven of the Campbell Conference Finals against the Toronto Maple Leafs . This victory propelled the Kings into the Stanley Cup Finals for the first time in franchise history , where they faced the Montreal Canadiens . After winning the first game of the series by a score of 4 ? 1 , the team lost the next three games in overtime , and then fell 4 ? 1 in the deciding fifth game where Gretzky failed to get a shot on net .

The next season , Gretzky broke Gordie Howe 's career goal @-@ scoring record and won the scoring title , but the team began a long slide , and despite numerous player and coaching moves , they failed to qualify for the playoffs again until 1998 . After the financially troubled McNall was forced to sell the Kings in 1994 , Gretzky 's relationship with the Kings ' new owners grew strained . Finally , in early 1996 , Gretzky requested a trade . During the 1994 ? 95 NHL lockout , Gretzky and some friends (including Mark Messier , Marty McSorley , Brett Hull , and Steve Yzerman) formed the Ninety Nine All Stars Tour and played eight exhibition games in various countries .

== St. Louis Blues (1996) ==

On February 27 , 1996 , Gretzky joined the St. Louis Blues in a trade for Patrice Tardif , Roman Vopat , Craig Johnson , and two draft picks (Peter Hogan and Matt Zultek) . He partially orchestrated the trade after reports surfaced that he was unhappy in Los Angeles . At the time of the trade , the Blues and New York Rangers emerged as front @-@ runners , but the Blues met his salary demands . Gretzky was immediately named the team 's captain . He scored 37 points in 31 games for the team in the regular season and the playoffs , and the Blues came within one game of the Conference Finals . However , the chemistry that everyone expected with winger Brett Hull never developed , and coach Mike Keenan publicly criticized him . Gretzky rejected a three @-@ year deal worth \$ 15 million with the Blues , and on July 21 , he signed with the New York Rangers as a free agent , rejoining longtime Oilers teammate Mark Messier for a two @-@ year \$ 8 million (plus incentives) contract .

== New York Rangers (1996 ? 1999) ==

Gretzky ended his professional playing career with the New York Rangers , where he played his final three seasons and helped the team reach the Eastern Conference Finals in 1997 . The Rangers were defeated in the Conference Finals in five games by the Philadelphia Flyers , despite Gretzky leading the Rangers in the playoffs with 10 goals and 10 assists . For the first time in his NHL career , Gretzky was not named captain , although he briefly wore the captain 's ' C ' in 1998 when captain Brian Leetch was injured and out of the lineup . After the 1996 ? 97 season , Mark Messier signed a free agent contract with the Vancouver Canucks , ending the brief reunion of Messier and Gretzky after just one season . The Rangers did not return to the playoffs until 2006 , well after Gretzky retired .

In 1997 , prior to his retirement , The Hockey News named a committee of 50 hockey experts (former NHL players , past and present writers , broadcasters , coaches and hockey executives) to select and rank the 50 greatest players in NHL history . The experts voted Gretzky number one . Gretzky said that he would have voted Bobby Orr or Gordie Howe as the best of all time .

The 1998 ? 99 season was his last as a professional player . He reached one milestone in this last season , breaking the professional total (regular season and playoffs) goal @-@ scoring record of 1 @, @ 071 , which had been held by Gordie Howe . Gretzky was having difficulty scoring this season and finished with only nine goals , contributing to this being the only season in which he failed to average at least a point per game , but his last goal brought his scoring total for his combined NHL / WHA career to 1 @, @ 072 , one more than Howe . As the season wound down , there was media speculation that Gretzky would retire , but he refused to announce his retirement . His last NHL game in Canada was on April 15 , 1999 , a 2 ? 2 tie with the Ottawa Senators and the Rangers ' second @-@ to @-@ last game of the season . Following the contest , in a departure from the usual three stars announcement , Gretzky was awarded all three stars . Upon returning to New York , Gretzky announced he would retire after the Rangers ' last game of the season .

The final game of Gretzky 's career was a 2 ? 1 overtime loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins on April 18 , 1999 , in Madison Square Garden . Although the game involved two American teams , both national anthems were played , with the lyrics slightly adjusted to accommodate Gretzky 's departure . In place of the lyrics " O Canada , we stand on guard for thee " , Bryan Adams ad @-@ libbed , " We 're going to miss you , Wayne Gretzky " . " The Star @-@ Spangled Banner " , as sung by John Amirante , was altered to include the words " in the land of Wayne Gretzky " . Gretzky ended his career with a final point , assisting on the lone New York goal scored by Brian Leetch . At the time of his retirement , Gretzky was the second @-@ to @-@ last WHA player still active in professional hockey . Mark Messier , who attended the game along with other representatives of the Edmonton dynasty , was the last .

Gretzky told journalist Scott Morrison that the final game of his career was his greatest day . He recounted :

My last game in New York was my greatest day in hockey ... Everything you enjoy about the sport of hockey as a kid , driving to practice with mom [Phyllis] and dad [Walter] , driving to the game with mom and dad , looking in the stands and seeing your mom and dad and your friends , that all came together in that last game in New York .

= = International play = =

Gretzky made his first international appearance as a member of the Canadian national junior team at the 1978 World Junior Championships in Montreal , Quebec . He was the youngest player to compete in the tournament at the age of 16 . He went on to lead the tournament in scoring with 17 points to earn All @-@ Star Team and Best Forward honours . His 17 points remain the most scored by a 16 @-@ year @-@ old in the World Junior Championships . Canada finished with the bronze medal .

Gretzky debuted with the Team Canada 's men 's team at the 1981 Canada Cup . He led the tournament in scoring with 12 points en route to a second @-@ place finish to the Soviet Union , losing 8 ? 1 in the final . Seven months later , Gretzky joined Team Canada for the 1982 World Championships in Finland . He notched 14 points in 10 games , including a two @-@ goal , two @-@ assist effort in Canada 's final game against Sweden to earn the bronze . Gretzky did not win his first international competition until the 1984 Canada Cup , when Canada defeated Sweden in a best @-@ of @-@ three finals . He led the tournament in scoring for the second consecutive time and was named to the All @-@ Star Team .

Gretzky 's international career highlight arguably came three years later at the 1987 Canada Cup . Gretzky has called the tournament the best hockey he had played in his life . Playing on a line with Pittsburgh Penguins superstar Mario Lemieux , he recorded a tournament @-@ best 21 points in nine games . After losing the first game of a best @-@ of @-@ three final series against the Soviets , Gretzky propelled Canada with a five @-@ assist performance in the second game , including the game @-@ winning pass to Lemieux in overtime , to extend the tournament . In the deciding game three , Gretzky and Lemieux once again combined for the game @-@ winner . With the score tied 5 ? 5 and 1 : 26 minutes to go in regulation , Lemieux one @-@ timed a pass from Gretzky on a 3 ? 1 with defenceman Larry Murphy . Lemieux scored to win the tournament for Canada ; the play is widely regarded as one of the most memorable plays in Canadian international competition .

The 1991 Canada Cup marked the last time the tournament was played under the " Canada Cup " moniker . Gretzky led the tournament for the fourth and final time with 12 points in seven games . He did not , however , compete in the final against the United States due to a back injury . Canada nevertheless won in two games by scores of 4 ? 1 and 4 ? 2 . Five years later , the tournament was revived and renamed the World Cup in 1996 . It marked the first time Gretzky did not finish as the tournament 's leading scorer with seven points in eight games for fourth overall .

Leading up to the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano , Japan , it was announced that NHL players would be eligible to play for the first time . Gretzky was named to the club on November 29 , 1997 . However , Gretzky , was passed over for the captaincy , along with several other Canadian veterans including Steve Yzerman and Ray Bourque in favour of the younger Eric Lindros . Expectations were high for the Canadian team , but the team lost to the Czech Republic in the semi @-@ finals . The game went to a shootout with a 1 ? 1 tie after overtime , but Gretzky was controversially not selected by coach Marc Crawford as one of the five shooters , all of whom failed to score . Team Canada then lost the bronze medal game 3 ? 2 to Finland to finish without a medal . The Olympics marked Gretzky 's eighth and final international appearance , finishing with four assists in six games . He retired from international play holding the records for most goals (20) , most assists (28) , and most overall points (48) in best @-@ on @-@ best hockey .

= = Skills and influences = =

= = = Style of play = = =

Gretzky 's size and strength were unimpressive ? in fact , far below average for the NHL ? but he is widely considered the smartest player in the history of the game . His reading of the game and his ability to improvise on the fly were unrivaled , and he could consistently anticipate where the puck was going to be and execute the right move at the right time . His coach at the Edmonton Oilers , Glen Sather , said , " He was so much more intelligent . While they were using all this energy trying to rattle his teeth , he was just skating away , circling , analyzing things . "

He was also considered one of the most creative players in hockey . " You never knew what he was going to do " , said hockey Hall of Famer Igor Larionov . " He was improvising all the time . Every time he took the ice , there was some spontaneous decision he would make . That 's what made him such a phenomenal player . " Gretzky 's ability to improvise came into the spotlight at the 1998 Olympics in Japan . Then an older player in the sunset of his career , he had been passed over for the captaincy of the team . But as the series continued , his unique skills made him a team leader .

The Canadians had trouble with the big ice . They had trouble with the European patterns and the lateral play and the endless , inventive cycling . ? Slowly , as game after game went by and the concern continued to rise , Wayne Gretzky began climbing through the lineup . He , almost alone among the Canadians , seemed to take to the larger ice surface as if it offered more opportunity instead of obligation ? . His playing time soared , as he was being sent on not just for power plays but double shifts and even penalty kills . By the final round ? it was Wayne Gretzky who assumed the leadership both on and off the ice .

He passed and shot with prodigious skill . Hall of Fame defenceman Bobby Orr said of Gretzky , " He passes better than anybody I 've ever seen . " In his first two seasons in the NHL , his deft passing skills helped earn him a reputation as an ace playmaker , and so opposing defensemen focused their efforts on foiling his attempts to pass the puck to other scorers . In response , Gretzky started shooting on goal himself ? and with exceptional effectiveness . He had a fast and accurate shot . " Wayne Gretzky was one of the most accurate scorers in NHL history " , said one biography . Statistics support the contention : Whereas Phil Esposito , who had set the previous goal @-@ scoring record , needed 550 shots to score 76 goals , Gretzky netted his 76th after only 287 shots ? about half as many . He scored his all @-@ time record of 92 goals with just 369 shots . Because he was so light compared to other players , goalies were often surprised by how hard Gretzky 's shot was . Goalies called his shots " sneaky fast . " He also had a way of never hitting the puck with the same rhythm twice , making his shots harder to time and block .

= = = Size and strength = = =

When he entered the league in 1979 , critics opined that Gretzky was " too small , too wiry , and too slow to be a force in the NHL " . His weight was 160 pounds (73 kg) , compared to the NHL average of 189 pounds (86 kg) at that time . But that year , Gretzky tied for first place in scoring , and won the Hart trophy for the league 's most valuable player . In his second year in the league , weighing just 165 pounds , he broke the previous single @-@ season scoring record , racking up 164 points . The next year (1981 ? 82) , at 170 pounds ? still " a wisp compared to the average NHL player " ? he set the all @-@ time goal @-@ scoring record , putting 92 pucks in the net . He weighed " about 170 pounds " for the better part of his career . He consistently scored last in strength tests among the Edmonton Oilers , bench pressing only 140 pounds (64 kg) .

= = = Stamina , athleticism = = =

However , he had remarkable physical stamina . Like his hero , Gordie Howe , Gretzky possessed " an exceptional capacity to renew his energy resources quickly . " In 1980 , when an exercise physiologist tested the recuperative abilities of all of the Edmonton Oilers , Gretzky scored so high the tester said that he " thought the machine had broken . " His stamina is also indicated by the fact that Gretzky often scored late in the game . In the year he scored his record 92 goals , 22 of them went in the net during the first period , 30 in the second ? and 40 in the third .

He also had strong general athletic skills . Growing up , he was a competitive runner and also batted .492 for the Junior Intercounty Baseball League 's Brantford CKCP Braves in the summer of 1980 . As a result , he was offered a contract by the Toronto Blue Jays . (History repeated itself in June 2011 , when Gretzky 's 17 @-@ year @-@ old son , Trevor , was drafted by the Chicago Cubs . Trevor signed with the Cubs the next month .) Gretzky also excelled at box lacrosse , which he played during the summer . At age ten , after scoring 196 goals in his hockey league , he scored 158 goals in lacrosse .

According to him , lacrosse was where he learned to protect himself from hard checks : " In those days you could be hit from behind in lacrosse , as well as cross @-@ checked , so you had to learn how to roll body checks for self @-@ protection . " Gretzky adroitly applied this technique as a professional player , avoiding checks with such skill that a rumour circulated that there was an unwritten rule not to hit him .

Defensemen found Gretzky a most elusive target . Fellow Hockey Hall of Famer Denis Potvin compared attempting to hit Gretzky to " wrapping your arms around fog . You saw him but when you reached out to grab him your hands felt nothing , maybe just a chill . " The 205 @-@ pound (93 kg) Potvin , a three @-@ time winner of the Norris Trophy for best defenceman , added that part of the problem in hitting Gretzky hard was that he was " a tough guy to dislike ... what was there to hate about Gretzky ? It was like running Gandhi into a corner . "

He received a good deal of cover from burly Oiler defensemen Dave Semenko and Marty McSorley . The latter followed Gretzky to the LA Kings in 1989 , where he played the same policeman role for several more years . But Gretzky discouraged unfair hits in another way . " If a guy ran him , Wayne would embarrass that guy " , said former Oiler Lee Fogolin . " He 'd score six or seven points on him . I saw him do it night after night . "

Commentators have noted Gretzky 's uncanny ability to judge the position of the other players on the ice ? so much so that many suspected he enjoyed some kind of extrasensory perception . Sports commentators said that he played like he had " eyes in the back of his head . " Gretzky said he sensed other players more than he actually saw them . " I get a feeling about where a teammate is going to be " , he said . " A lot of times , I can turn and pass without even looking . "

Veteran Canadian journalist Peter Gzowski says that Gretzky seemed to be able to , in effect , slow down time . " There is an unhurried grace to everything Gretzky does on the ice . Winding up for the slapshot , he will stop for an almost imperceptible moment at the top of his arc , like a golfer with a rhythmic swing . " " Gretzky uses this room to insert an extra beat into his actions . In front of the net , eyeball to eyeball with the goaltender ? he will ? hold the puck one ? extra instant , upsetting the anticipated rhythm of the game , extending the moment . ? He distorts time , and not only by slowing it down . Sometimes he will release the puck before he appears to be ready , threading the pass through a maze of players precisely to the blade of a teammate 's stick , or finding a chink in a goaltender 's armour and slipping the puck into it ? before the goaltender is ready to react . "

= = = Major coaching influences = = =

However , Gretzky denied that he had any exotic innate abilities . He said that many of his advantages were a result of his father 's brilliant coaching .

Some say I have a " sixth sense " ? Baloney . I 've just learned to guess what 's going to happen next . It 's anticipation . It 's not God @-@ given , it 's Wally @-@ given . He used to stand on the blue line and say to me , " Watch , this is how everybody else does it . " Then he 'd shoot a puck along the boards and into the corner and then go chasing after it . Then he 'd come back and say , " Now , this is how the smart player does it . " He 'd shoot it into the corner again , only this time he cut across to the other side and picked it up over there . Who says anticipation can 't be taught ?

Gretzky learned much about hockey from his father on a backyard rink at his home . Walter Gretzky had been an outstanding Junior B hockey player . He cultivated a love of hockey in his sons and provided them with a backyard rink and drills to enhance their skills . On the backyard rink , nicknamed the " Wally Coliseum " , winter was total hockey immersion with Walter as mentor @-@ teacher as well as teammate . Walter 's drills were his own invention , but were ahead of their time

in Canada . Gretzky would later remark that the Soviet National Team 's practice drills , which impressed Canada in 1972 , had nothing to offer him : " I 'd been doing these drills since I was three . My Dad was very smart . "

In his autobiography , Gretzky describes how at practices his dad would drill him on the fundamentals of smart hockey :

Wayne also salutes his coach at the Edmonton Oilers , Glen (" Slat ") Sather , as an important influence in his development as a hockey player . Gretzky played for 10 years with the Oilers , with Sather as coach . " It 's as if my father raised me until age 17 , then turned me over to Slat and said , ' You take him from here . ' "

= = = Early start = = =

Where Gretzky differed from others in his development was in the extraordinary commitment of time on the ice . " From the age of three to the age of 12 , I could easily be out there for eight to 10 hours a day " , Gretzky has said . In his autobiography , he wrote :

All I wanted to do in the winters was be on the ice . I 'd get up in the morning , skate from 7 : 00 to 8 : 30 , go to school , come home at 3 : 30 , stay on the ice until my mom insisted I come in for dinner , eat in my skates , then go back out until 9 : 00 .

When asked how he managed , at age ten , to score 378 goals in a single season , Gretzky explained ,

See , kids usually don 't start playing hockey until they 're six or seven . Ice isn 't grass . It 's a whole new surface and everybody starts from ground zero . ? By the time I was ten , I had eight years on skates instead of four , and a few seasons ' worth of ice time against ten @-@ year @-@ olds . So I had a long head start on everyone else .

= = = Study of game = = =

Much has been written about Gretzky 's highly developed hockey instincts , but he once explained that what appeared to be instinct was , in large part , the effect of his relentless study and practice of the game , in cooperation with his coaches . As a result , he developed a deep understanding of its shifting patterns and dynamics . Peter Gzowski says that the best of the best athletes in all sports understand the game so well , and in such detail , that they can instantly recognize and capitalize upon emerging patterns of play . Analyzing Gretzky 's hockey skills , he says , " What we take to be creative genius is in fact a reaction to a situation that he has stored in his brain as deeply and firmly as his own phone number . " Gzowski presented this theory to Gretzky , and he fully agreed . " Absolutely " , Gretzky said . " That 's a hundred percent right . It 's all practice . I got it from my Dad . Nine out of ten people think it 's instinct , and it isn 't . Nobody would ever say a doctor had learned his profession by instinct ; yet in my own way I 've put in almost as much time studying hockey as a medical student puts in studying medicine . "

= = Post @-@ retirement = =

Gretzky was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame on November 22 , 1999 , becoming the tenth player to bypass the three @-@ year waiting period . The Hall of Fame then announced that he would be the last player to do so . He was inducted into the IIHF Hall of Fame in 2000 . In addition , Gretzky 's jersey number 99 was retired league @-@ wide at the 2000 NHL All @-@ Star Game . The jersey retirement was similar to Major League Baseball 's retirement of the number 42 worn by Jackie Robinson . In October 1999 , Edmonton honoured Gretzky by renaming one of Edmonton 's busiest freeways , Capilano Drive ? which passes by Rexall Place ? to " Wayne Gretzky Drive " . Also in Edmonton , the local transit authority assigned a rush @-@ hour bus route numbered No. 99 which also runs on Wayne Gretzky Drive for its commute . In 2002 , the Kings held a jersey retirement ceremony and erected a life @-@ sized statue of Gretzky outside the Staples Center ; the ceremony was delayed until then so that Bruce McNall , who had recently finished a prison

sentence , could attend . His hometown of Brantford , Ontario , renamed Park Road North to " Wayne Gretzky Parkway " as well as renaming the North Park Recreation Centre to The Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre . Brantford further inducted Gretzky into its " Walk of Fame " in 2004 . On May 10 , 2010 , he was awarded The Ambassador Award of Excellence by the LA Sports & Entertainment Commission .

= = = Phoenix Coyotes = = =

Almost immediately after retirement , several NHL teams approached him about an ownership role . In May 2000 , he agreed to buy a 10 % stake in the Phoenix Coyotes in a partnership with majority owner Steve Ellman , taking on the roles of alternate governor , managing partner and head of hockey operations . The Coyotes were in the process of being sold and Ellman convinced Gretzky to come on board , averting a potential move to Portland , Oregon . The sale was not completed until the following year , on February 15 , 2001 , after two missed deadlines while securing financing and partners before Ellman and Gretzky could take over . The sale completed with the addition to the partnership of Jerry Moyes . Gretzky convinced his long @-@ time agent Michael Barnett to join the team as its General Manager .

In 2005 , rumors began regarding Gretzky becoming the head coach of the team , but were denied by Gretzky and the Coyotes . He agreed to become head coach on August 8 , 2005 . Gretzky made his coaching debut on October 5 , and won his first game on October 8 against the Minnesota Wild . He took an indefinite leave of absence on December 17 to be with his ill mother . Phyllis Gretzky died of lung cancer on December 19 . Gretzky resumed his head @-@ coaching duties on December 28 . The Coyotes ' record at the end of the 2005 ? 06 season was 38 ? 39 ? 5 , a 16 @-@ win improvement over 2004 ? 05 ; they were 36 ? 36 ? 5 in games Gretzky coached .

In 2006 , Moyes became majority owner of the team . There was uncertainty about Gretzky 's role until it was announced on May 31 , 2006 that he had agreed to a five @-@ year contract to remain head coach . The Coyotes ' performance declined in 2006 ? 07 , as the team ended the season 15th in their conference . During Gretzky 's coaching tenure , the Coyotes did not reach the postseason , and their best finish in the Western Conference standings was 12th .

On May 5 , 2009 , the Coyotes ' holding company , Dewey Ranch Hockey LLC , filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy . An ownership dispute involving Research in Motion 's Jim Balsillie (with the intention of relocating the team) and the NHL itself arose , which eventually ended up in Court . Gretzky did not attend the Coyotes ' training camp , leaving associate head coach Ulf Samuelsson in charge , due to an uncertain contractual status with the club , whose bankruptcy hearings were continuing . Bidders for the club had indicated that Gretzky would no longer be associated with the team after it emerged from bankruptcy , and on September 24 , 2009 , Gretzky stepped down as head coach and head of hockey operations of the Coyotes . Gretzky 's final head coaching record was 143 ? 161 ? 24 .

= = = Winter Olympics = = =

Gretzky was Executive Director of the Canadian men 's hockey team at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City , Utah . On February 18 , he lashed out at the media at a press conference , frustrated with media and fan comments regarding his team 's uninspiring 1 ? 1 ? 1 start . His temper boiled over after Canada 's 3 ? 3 draw versus the Czech Republic , as he launched a tirade against the perceived negative reputation of Team Canada amongst other national squads , and called rumours of dissent in the dressing room the result of " American propaganda " . " They 're loving us not doing well " , he said , referring to American hockey fans . American fans online began calling Gretzky a " crybaby " ; defenders said he was merely borrowing a page from former coach Glen Sather to take the pressure off his players . Gretzky addressed those comments by saying he spoke out to protect the Canadian players , and the tirade was not " staged " . The Canadian team won the gold medal , its first in 50 years .

Gretzky again acted as Executive Director of Canada 's men 's hockey team at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin , Italy , though not with the success of 2002 ; the team was eliminated in the

quarterfinals and failed to win a medal . He was asked to manage Canada 's team at the 2005 Ice Hockey World Championships , but declined due to his mother 's poor health .

Gretzky also served as an ambassador and contributor in Vancouver winning the bidding process to host the 2010 Winter Olympics . He went to Prague , Czech Republic and was part of the presentation team .

Gretzky was the final Olympic torchbearer at the 2010 Winter Olympics . He was one of four who lit the cauldron at BC Place Stadium during the opening ceremony (although one did not due to technical difficulties with one of the cauldron 's " arms " which failed to raise) and then jogged out of the stadium , where he was then driven by police escorts through the streets of downtown Vancouver to light a second , outdoor cauldron near the Vancouver Convention Centre located in the city 's downtown waterfront district . Under IOC rules , the lighting of the Olympic cauldron must be witnessed by those attending the opening ceremony , implying that it must be lit at the location where the ceremony is taking place . Although another IOC rule states that the cauldron should be witnessed outside by the entire residents of the entire host city , this was not possible since the ceremony took place indoors . However , VANOC secretly built a second outdoor cauldron next to the West Building of the Vancouver Convention Centre , and Gretzky was secretly chosen to light this permanent cauldron . Quickly word spread through the downtown Vancouver area that Gretzky was indeed the final torchbearer , and very soon a crush of people came running after the police escort to cheer Gretzky on and hopefully catch a glimpse of him carrying the torch to the outdoor cauldron . For the 2010 Winter Olympics , he was named Special Advisor to the Canada men 's national ice hockey team .

= = = Heritage Classic = = =

Although Gretzky had previously stated he would not participate in any " old @-@ timers exhibition games " , on November 22 , 2003 , he took to the ice one last time to help celebrate the Edmonton Oilers ' 25th anniversary as an NHL team . The Heritage Classic , held at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton , was the first regular season NHL game to be played outdoors . It was preceded by the Mega Stars game , which featured Gretzky and many of his Oiler Dynasty teammates against a group of retired Montreal Canadiens players (whose likes included Claude Lemieux , Guy Lafleur and others) . Despite frigid temperatures , the crowd numbered 57 @,@ 167 , with an additional several million watching the game on television . The Edmonton alumni won the Megastars game 2 ? 0 , while Montreal went on to win the regular season game held later that day , 4 ? 3 .

= = Personal life = =

Gretzky has made several TV appearances , including as a Dance Fever celebrity judge , and an ' unforgettable appearance ' , acting in a dramatic role alongside Victor Newman in The Young and the Restless in 1981 . In 1984 , he travelled to the Soviet Union to film a television program on Russian goaltender Vladislav Tretiak . Gretzky hosted the Saturday Night Live comedy program in 1989 . A fictional crime @-@ fighting version of him served as one of the main characters in the cartoon ProStars in 1991 . Gretzky has made over 60 movie , network television and video appearances as himself , according to IMDB , as of February 2012 . He is a naturalized American citizen .

= = = Family = = =

While serving as a judge on Dance Fever , Gretzky met actress Janet Jones . According to Wayne , Janet does not recall him being on the show . They met regularly after that , but did not become a couple until 1987 when they ran into each other at a Los Angeles Lakers game that Wayne and Alan Thicke were attending . Wayne proposed in January 1988 , and they were married on July 16 , 1988 in a lavish ceremony the Canadian press dubbed " The Royal Wedding " . Broadcast live throughout Canada from Edmonton 's St. Joseph 's Basilica , members of the Fire Department acted as

ceremonial guards . The event reportedly cost Gretzky over US \$ 1 million . Gretzky obtained US citizenship after he was traded to the Kings , but retains his Canadian citizenship .

He and Jones have five children : Paulina , Ty , Trevor , Tristan , and Emma . Paulina and golfer Dustin Johnson announced their engagement on August 18 , 2013 . Ty played hockey at Shattuck @-@ Saint Mary 's , but quit the sport , and now attends Arizona State University . Trevor signed a letter of intent in 2010 to play baseball for San Diego State University , but decided to turn pro after he was drafted by the Chicago Cubs in the 2011 MLB draft ; his \$ 375 @,@ 000 signing bonus was negotiated by then @-@ Cubs GM Jim Hendry and Wayne himself . He was traded to the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim on March 20 , 2014 for Matt Scioscia , son of Angels ' manager Mike Scioscia . In June , he was named by manager Dave Stapleton to the roster of the Orem Owlz .

Wayne Gretzky 's uncle , Al Gretzky , ran as a Conservative candidate in London West in the 2006 federal election and for the libertarian Freedom Party of Ontario in the 2013 provincial by @-@ election for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario . He was unsuccessful both times .

= = = Business ventures = = =

Gretzky has owned or partnered in the ownership of two sports teams before becoming a partner in the Phoenix Coyotes . In 1985 , Gretzky bought the Hull Olympiques of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League for \$ 175 @,@ 000 CA . During his ownership , the team 's colours were changed to silver and black , presaging the change in team jersey colours when he played for the Los Angeles Kings . For the first season that Gretzky played in Los Angeles , the Kings had their training camp at the Olympiques ' arena . Gretzky eventually sold the team in 1992 for \$ 550 @,@ 000 CA .

In 1991 , Gretzky purchased the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League with Bruce McNall and John Candy . The club won the Grey Cup championship in the first year of the partnership but struggled in the two following seasons , and the partnership sold the team before the 1994 season . Only McNall 's name was engraved on the Grey Cup as team owner , but in November 2007 , the CFL corrected the oversight , adding Gretzky 's and Candy 's names . In 1992 , Gretzky and McNall partnered in an investment to buy a rare Honus Wagner T206 cigarette card for \$ 451 @,@ 000 US , later selling the card . It most recently sold for \$ 2 @.@ 8 million US . Gretzky was a board member and executive officer of the Hespeler Hockey Company .

As of May 2008 , Gretzky 's current business ventures include the " Wayne Gretzky 's " restaurant in Toronto near the Rogers Centre in downtown Toronto , opened in partnership with Tom Bitove in 1993 . Gretzky is also a partner in First Team Sports , a maker of sports equipment and Worldwide Roller Hockey , Inc . , an operator of roller hockey rinks . Gretzky 's appeal as a product endorser far surpassed that of other hockey players of his era . By 1995 , he was among the five highest @-@ paid athlete endorsers in North America , with deals from The Coca @-@ Cola Company , Domino 's Pizza , Sharp Corporation , and Upper Deck Company among others . He has endorsed and launched a wide variety of products , from pillow cases to insurance . The video game brand EA Sports included Gretzky in its 2010 title NHL Slapshot , and he had previously been an endorser for the 989 Sports games Gretzky NHL 2005 and Gretzky NHL 2006 . Gretzky also made an appearance on the music video for Nickelback 's " Rockstar " . Forbes estimates that Gretzky made US \$ 93 @.@ 8 million from 1990 ? 98 .

= = = Political activity = = =

During the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign , Gretzky endorsed the Conservative Party and Prime Minister Stephen Harper , and was featured at a campaign rally praising Harper by calling him " wonderful to the country . " As a non @-@ resident , Gretzky came under some criticism for this endorsement . In 2014 , Gretzky praised Harper at a United for Ukraine Gala event in Toronto calling him " one of the greatest prime ministers ever " . Earlier in 2015 , Gretzky endorsed Patrick Brown during his successful campaign for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario . While Gretzky is a dual Canadian @-@ American citizen , he is currently unable to vote in Canadian elections as he has not lived in the country since 1988 .

In 2003 , Gretzky praised President of the United States George W. Bush and his 2003 invasion of Iraq saying : " The president of the United States is a great leader , I happen to think he 's a wonderful man and if he believes what he 's doing in Iraq is right , I back him 100 per cent . "

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Playing career = = =

Figures in boldface italics are NHL records .