

= Scott Stevens =

Ronald Scott Stevens (born April 1 , 1964) is a retired professional ice hockey defenceman , and current assistant coach of the Minnesota Wild . Stevens played 22 seasons in the National Hockey League (NHL) for the Washington Capitals , St. Louis Blues , and the New Jersey Devils . Although offensively capable , Stevens was largely known for his defensive play and his heavy body checking on opponents .

Stevens started his career with the Capitals , where he helped the team make the playoffs for the first time . After spending a season with the Blues , he was acquired by the Devils through arbitration . Personifying the team 's defence @-@ first mentality , he captained the Devils to four Stanley Cup Finals appearances in nine years , winning three of them . In 2000 , he won the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player of the Stanley Cup playoffs . Despite his team success with the Devils , he never won the Norris Trophy as the league 's best defenceman . His career came to an end after a slapshot hit his head and caused post @-@ concussion syndrome . He was later inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2007 , his first year of eligibility . Stevens retired with the most games played by an NHL defenceman (1635 games) , later to be passed by Chris Chelios . Stevens was also the youngest player in league history to reach 1 @,@ 500 games played , playing in his 1,500th game at age 37 years , 346 days . He did not have a negative plus / minus in any of his 22 NHL seasons , and had the most penalty minutes of any player enshrined in the Hall of Fame until Chris Chelios was inducted in 2013 .

= = Early life = =

Stevens was born in Kitchener to Larry and Mary Stevens , the middle child of three brothers . Larry owned a paper products company , and was also a semi @-@ professional Canadian football player . All three Stevens brothers played hockey as children ; older brother Geoff would later go on to be a scout for the New Jersey Devils , while Mike , the youngest , enjoyed a brief NHL career with several teams . Growing up near Toronto , he was a fan of the Maple Leafs , and idolized Leafs defenceman Börje Salming . Stevens attended Eastwood Collegiate Institute , where he played middle linebacker . One of his teammates was Markus Koch , who would go on to win a Super Bowl with the Washington Redskins . Hockey was Stevens ' true passion , however . He and his brothers often played hockey in the house , ruining the furniture repeatedly . He eventually earned a spot on the Kitchener Junior B team , and passed on the opportunity to tour Czechoslovakia with the Kitchener midget team in order to play there . His play impressed scouts , and he was taken ninth overall by his hometown Kitchener Rangers in the 1981 Ontario Hockey League draft .

The 1981 ? 82 Kitchener Rangers were a team that featured several future NHL players . The defensive corps included Dave Shaw and Al MacInnis , Wendell Young was the team 's starting goaltender , and the top scoring line on the team was Jeff Larmer , Brian Bellows , and Grant Martin . Stevens and Shaw were an integral part of the Rangers ' defence , playing in every game of the season en route to the team 's Memorial Cup victory . In addition , both played in the OHL All @-@ Star Game . Rangers coach Joe Crozier commented on him , saying " He 's come a long way this year ... He 's strong , tough , handles the puck well and has tremendous hockey sense . " Stevens led all rookie defencemen in scoring , and he was named the second best defensive defenceman and second best body @-@ checker in a poll of OHL coaches .

= = Washington Capitals = =

Stevens was taken fifth overall in the 1982 NHL Entry Draft by the Washington Capitals . Due to injuries to other players during training camp , Stevens made the team at 18 years old , and never played a game in the minor leagues . He made an immediate impact , scoring on his first shot in his first NHL game . He scored 25 points in his debut season , and made the All @-@ Rookie Team . In addition , he led all rookie defencemen in penalty minutes . He finished third in the voting for the Calder Memorial Trophy , which is awarded to the league 's Rookie of the Year . He was also

named the Capitals ' Rookie of the Year . Stevens ' debut with the Capitals coincided with the team 's first playoff appearance , although they were eliminated in the first round by the New York Islanders .

The following year , he would nearly double his point total from the previous year , finishing with 13 goals and 32 assists for 45 points . Only teammate Larry Murphy had more points among defencemen . His 201 penalty minutes would lead the team ; he would ultimately lead the Capitals in the category five times during his tenure with the team , and eventually set the team record for most career penalty minutes by a defenceman . However , Stevens ' personal success did not translate to the Capitals , who were eliminated in the second round of the playoffs by the Islanders . During this period , Stevens learned from veterans Rod Langway and defensive linemate Brian Engblom on the finer points of playing defence . Head coach Bryan Murray also helped calm the fiery young Stevens , who would learn to fight less and play harder . Stevens spoke fondly of his time with the Capitals years later , saying :

We had a great bunch of guys and we worked hard . We were great defensively . We might have been at times a little challenged scoring and we might have been a bit challenged in the goal at times ... But there are no regrets .

The 1984 ? 85 season would be a breakout year for Stevens . He set a team record for defencemen by scoring 16 power play goals , and tied a team record for goals by a defenceman with 21 . His performance was good enough to land him a spot in the All @-@ Star Game . Stevens would lead all Capitals defencemen in scoring for the first time , finishing the year with 21 goals and 44 assists , and earned the team 's Fan Favorite Award . His offensive abilities and size made Murray consider moving him to winger . The Capitals finished second in the Patrick Division , but were out of the playoffs early again , this time courtesy of the Islanders . Before the next season , the Capitals acquired Dwight Schofield in the waiver draft . Schofield was known for his abilities as an enforcer , and his goal was to keep other teams ' hitters away from Stevens and Langway , who were deemed too valuable to lose to penalties . The plan worked , as Stevens finished with 165 penalty minutes , the lowest in his career to that point . He added 15 goals and 38 assists that season as well . The Capitals continued their playoff woes , however ; after defeating the Islanders in the first round , they lost to the New York Rangers in the division finals .

The 1986 ? 87 season saw Stevens return to his old ways , as he spent a career @-@ high 283 minutes in the penalty box . The total set a Capitals record (since broken) for penalty minutes in a season . Despite missing three games with a broken right index finger , an injury he suffered against the Islanders , Stevens would finish the year third on the team in scoring with 61 points ; his 51 assists were also good enough for second on the Capitals . The Caps were once again eliminated by the Islanders in the first round of the playoffs .

During the 1987 ? 88 season , Stevens set Capitals records for most assists and most points by a defenceman in a game , with five assists against the Los Angeles Kings on December 6 , 1987 . Later that season , he would score at least one assist in eight consecutive games , setting another team record for defencemen . He finished the year second on the team in scoring with 12 goals and 60 assists for 72 points , tops among all Capitals blueliners . He ended up finishing second behind Boston Bruins defenceman Ray Bourque in the voting for the Norris Trophy . In addition , he was named as a NHL First Team All @-@ Star . Stevens would suffer a shoulder injury in the first round of the playoffs against the Flyers , a series the Capitals would win . He returned in time for the Capitals ' divisional finals against his future team , the New Jersey Devils . Despite tying a team record by posting four assists in Game 6 of the series , the Capitals fell four games to three .

The Capitals won the Patrick Division in the 1988 ? 89 season , and Stevens ' 68 points (including a team @-@ leading 61 assists) led Caps defencemen . He had 225 penalty minutes ; this was the last time Stevens would have over 200 minutes in his career . He was named to his second All @-@ Star game , and added an assist as the Wales Conference lost to the Campbell Conference 9 @-@ 5 . The Caps could not translate their regular season success into the playoffs , however , as they lost in the first round to the Flyers . The 1989 ? 90 season saw mixed success for Stevens . Personally he struggled , as he was beset with injuries , including a broken foot that caused him to miss nearly two months . In addition , he was suspended for three games for gouging Chicago

Blackhawks player Dave Manson in the eye during a fight . Stevens said he never hit Manson 's eye , but that the eye hit Stevens ' helmet during the fight . Missing a third of the season led to Stevens ' lowest point total since his rookie year ; he finished with just 11 goals and 29 assists for 40 points , although it was still second among Capitals defencemen . Despite his lowered stats , the Capitals made their furthest inroads in the playoffs ever . After defeating the Devils in the first round and the Rangers in the second round , the Capitals were in the conference finals for the first time in team history . Unfortunately , they were swept by the Bruins .

Over eight seasons with the Capitals , Stevens finished with 98 goals and 429 points in 601 games . He also set team records (all since broken) for penalty minutes (1 @, @ 630) , games played by a defenceman (601) , points by a defenceman (429) , goals by a defenceman (98) , assists by a defenceman (331) , playoff games played (67) , playoff points (53) , playoff assists (44) and playoff goals by a defenceman (9) .

= = St. Louis Blues = =

After eight seasons in Washington , Stevens felt it was time to move on . The St. Louis Blues courted him and offered a four @-@ year deal worth \$ 5 @. @ 145 million . Since he was a restricted free agent , Washington had the option to match the offer sheet ; they declined , however , and received two first round picks plus \$ 100 @, @ 000 in cash , turning into five first @-@ round picks if the Capitals did not have a top @-@ 7 draft pick in the 1991 or 1992 entry drafts , as compensation (two of these picks would become Sergei Gonchar and Brendan Witt) .

Stevens ' signing had far @-@ reaching ramifications on player contracts in the NHL . At the time , the deal made him the highest @-@ paid defenceman in the league . In addition , the deal included a \$ 1 @. @ 4 million signing bonus . Several defencemen considered superior players to Stevens , including Ray Bourque and Chris Chelios , were earning less money , and Capitals defenceman Kevin Hatcher held out until he received a contract similar to that of Stevens . General managers worried that these players would begin demanding bigger contracts . The players did end up asking for more money , and this escalation was one of the factors in the 1994 ? 95 NHL lockout several seasons later .

After his arrival in St. Louis , Stevens was named captain of the Blues . He scored 5 goals and added 44 assists for 49 points , good enough for fifth on a team led by Brett Hull and Adam Oates . He made the Campbell Conference All @-@ Star Team as well . The Blues were eliminated in the second round of the playoffs by the Minnesota North Stars .

= = New Jersey Devils = =

Stevens ' time with the Blues would only last one season . In the offseason following the 1990 ? 91 NHL season , the Blues signed Brendan Shanahan from the New Jersey Devils , who , like Stevens the year before , was a restricted free agent , entitling the Devils to compensation . As the Blues still owed first round picks to the Capitals (now five instead of two , as the 1991 pick given up ended up being the 21st pick) , other compensation had to be negotiated , and the Blues and Devils could not agree on what the compensation was ; the Blues offered goalie Curtis Joseph , forward Rod Brind 'Amour , and two draft picks , but the Devils only wanted Stevens . The case went to arbitration , and arbitrator Edward Houston awarded Stevens to the Devils as compensation on September 4 , 1991 .

= = = 1991 ? 1995 = = =

Initially , Stevens refused to report to the Devils for training camp , and would not report until September 26 , 1991 , 22 days after the arbitration ruling . The Devils were already worried after captain Kirk Muller walked out of camp . Stevens and his wife had made plans to settle in St. Louis , and he wanted to end his career with the Blues . In addition , he was concerned about the apparent lack of unity in the organization , citing Muller 's walkout as proof . Several Devils players were upset

over the feeling that Stevens was being forced upon the team ; some players , including Ken Daneyko , wanted more money , while other players wanted general manager Lou Lamoriello to trade Stevens . He would eventually report to the Devils three weeks later .

Stevens finished his first season in New Jersey fifth on the team in scoring , first among defencemen and good enough for a spot on the Second All @-@ Star Team . He earned a spot on the All @-@ Star roster for the second consecutive season , and would miss only one All @-@ Star game for the remainder of his career as a Devil . The Devils would be taken out of the playoffs by their rival , the Rangers , in seven games . In the offseason , Stevens replaced Bruce Driver as team captain , a title he held until his retirement .

Although he would miss part of the following season with a concussion , his 12 goals and 45 assists still led all Devils defencemen in scoring , The Devils were eliminated in the first round of the playoffs again , losing to the Pittsburgh Penguins in five games . Stevens stepped up his offensive game in 1993 ? 94 . He posted 18 goals and 60 assists , good enough for the team lead and a career high in points . He won the NHL Plus @-@ Minus Award , finishing with a + 53 ; only Vladimir Konstantinov has led the league with a higher plus / minus rating since Stevens ' win . The Devils made it all the way to the Conference Finals against the Rangers , where they fell in double overtime of Game 7 . Stevens finished as a runner @-@ up to Ray Bourque for the Norris Trophy ; the four @-@ vote difference was the closest in Norris Trophy voting history .

After the 1993 ? 94 season , Stevens was a potential free agent . Officials from the St. Louis Blues discussed a return to the team with him , and persuaded him to sign an offer sheet worth \$ 17 million over four years on July 4 , 1994 . Five days later , the Devils matched the offer , and thus Stevens remained in New Jersey . However , the Devils later found out that Stevens had heard from St. Louis management before the free agency period began , which was illegal under NHL policy . After a five @-@ year investigation , the league fined the Blues \$ 1 @.@ 5 million USD , and awarded the Devils two St. Louis first @-@ round draft picks . Devils general manager Lou Lamoriello felt the punishment was not enough ; he wanted five first @-@ round draft picks plus damages . Despite the investigation , there was no evidence that Stevens was aware of any wrongdoing .

After the 1994 ? 95 season was delayed due to an owners ' lockout , the Devils were off to a slow start , winning only 9 of their first 24 games . Despite the reduced schedule , Stevens managed two goals and 20 assists , once again leading defencemen in scoring . The Devils finished fifth in the conference , and advanced to the Stanley Cup Finals , where they swept the heavily favored Detroit Red Wings to win the franchise 's first championship . Stevens ' reputation as a hard hitter was reinforced in Game 2 , where he leveled Vyacheslav Kozlov with a body check that temporarily knocked him out of the game . It was later determined that Kozlov suffered a concussion . Stevens then turned to Wings forward and former Washington teammate Dino Ciccarelli , who was upset about the check , and said " You 're next ! "

= = = 1996 ? 1999 = = =

The Devils expected to defend their Stanley Cup title the following season . However , they became the first team in 26 years to miss the playoffs following a championship . Stevens voiced the team 's disappointment , saying " After winning the Cup , you expect to definitely be in the playoffs the next year ... Maybe it was just a wakeup call to get back on track . "

Stevens started the 1996 ? 97 season with a one game suspension due to a high @-@ sticking penalty against Igor Larionov , which drew blood . The team , however , returned to a solid style of play , and finished the season atop the Atlantic Division , though they would be eliminated in the playoffs once again by the Hudson River rival New York Rangers . Stevens finished second on the team among defencemen in scoring behind Scott Niedermayer .

Stevens ' leadership continued into the next season . He signed a contract extension with the Devils , stating at the time that he wanted to finish his career with the team . Stevens was especially important to the Devils ' defensive corps , as longtime Devil Ken Daneyko was undergoing rehabilitation for alcoholism . However , he suffered a hip pointer injury against the Tampa Bay

Lightning , and missed several games . Stevens once again had a good defensive season , although his lack of scoring kept him out of consideration for the Norris Trophy . The Devils finished as the top seed in the Eastern Conference , but were eliminated in the first round by the Ottawa Senators .

The Devils made several changes prior to the 1998 ? 99 season , including the hiring of Robbie Ftorek as coach to replace Jacques Lemaire . The team continued its focus on defence , as the solid corps of Stevens , Daneyko , and Niedermayer finished with plus @-@ minuses of + 29 , + 27 , and + 26 , respectively . Unfortunately , the team was once again eliminated in the first round of the playoffs , this time by the Pittsburgh Penguins .

= = = 2000 ? 2004 = = =

The 1999 ? 2000 Devils focused more on offense , which was reinforced by their 251 goals scored , good enough for second in the league . With four players scoring over 50 points , including rookie Scott Gomez 's team leading 51 assists , Stevens ' 29 points were only good enough for tenth on the team , and third among defencemen behind Niedermayer and Brian Rafalski . Stevens also set an NHL record , becoming the first player to play in 600 games with two teams . After finishing the season in fourth place in the conference , the Devils swept the Florida Panthers and defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs in six games .

The Devils then met their bitter rivals , the Philadelphia Flyers , in the Eastern Conference Finals . After getting behind in the series three games to one , the Devils managed to win games five and six , setting the stage for game seven in Philadelphia . During the first period , Flyers star centre Eric Lindros was skating alone through the neutral zone with his head down . Stevens leveled him with a shoulder that appeared to hit his chin , forcing Lindros out of the game with a concussion . It was only Lindros ' second game since returning from a concussion suffered in March against the Boston Bruins . Stevens had previously taken Flyers centre Daymond Langkow out with a concussion after game 2 .

The Devils completed the comeback against the Flyers with a 2 ? 1 victory and faced off against the defending Stanley Cup champion Dallas Stars in the Stanley Cup Finals . Stevens and Rafalski were tasked with the responsibility of shutting down Dallas ' scoring line of Mike Modano , Brett Hull , and Joe Nieuwendyk . Stevens scored the game @-@ winner in the first game of the series , en route to a Devils 7 @-@ 3 victory ; the goal was his third of the playoffs . The Devils went on to win the Finals in six games , after Game Five went to three overtimes and Game Six was decided in double overtime . Stevens earned an assist on Jason Arnott 's Cup @-@ winning goal , and won the Conn Smythe Trophy for his leadership role on the team .

During the 2000 ? 01 NHL season , led by Patrik Eliáš ' franchise @-@ record of 96 points , and Alexander Mogilny 's team @-@ leading 43 goals , the team finished first in the conference . After defeating Carolina , Toronto , and Pittsburgh in the playoffs , the Devils once again made the Finals , this time against the Colorado Avalanche . Despite being up three games to two , however , the Devils could not finish off the Avalanche , and lost the series in seven games . Stevens finished third in the voting for the Norris Trophy .

The next season , Stevens finished with his lowest scoring total in his career , though he did become the youngest player ever to play in 1 @,@ 500 games . The Devils , however , fell in the first round of the playoffs to the Hurricanes , who went on to lose to Detroit in the Stanley Cup finals .

Stevens and the Devils once again had success in 2002 ? 03 , finishing first in the division . In addition , he was named as captain of the Eastern Conference All @-@ Star team for the first time , and finished the season with the fewest penalty minutes over a full season in his career . The Devils played well in the playoffs , knocking off Boston , Tampa Bay , and Ottawa to face the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim in the Finals . Stevens and the Devils had a minor scare in Game 3 of the semifinals against Tampa Bay when a slapshot from Pavel Kubina hit the side of his head and forced him to leave the game . Although there was uncertainty whether he would return for Game 4 , Stevens in fact returned , and did not miss a game throughout the remainder of the playoffs . In Game 2 of the

Finals , he set the record for most playoff games by a defenceman , breaking the record by his former coach , Larry Robinson . Stevens added to his list of playoff hits when he knocked down Ducks forward Paul Kariya in Game Six . However , Kariya came back shortly thereafter and led the Ducks to a victory , forcing a seventh game . The Devils kept the Ducks scoreless in Game Seven , 3 @-@ 0 , to win their third Stanley Cup in nine years . Stevens ' appearance in Game Seven tied Patrick Roy 's record for appearances in Game Sevens , with 13 . Despite the play of Stevens , Martin Brodeur , Jamie Langenbrunner , and Jeff Friesen , the Conn Smythe Trophy went to Ducks goaltender Jean @-@ Sébastien Giguère . Some speculated that there were too many worthy Devils candidates for the trophy , resulting in a split vote among sportswriters .

The 2003 ? 04 NHL season would be the last for Stevens . Before ending the season , he surpassed former teammate Larry Murphy as the NHL 's all @-@ time leader in games played by a defenceman , when he appeared in his 1,616th game in November . He missed several games in January with the flu , and while he was out , he was diagnosed with post @-@ concussion syndrome (which would eventually coerce him into retirement) . Despite missing the second half of the season , he was still voted in as a starter for the Eastern Conference All @-@ Star team . Scott Niedermayer filled in as captain in Stevens ' absence , but the loss of Stevens , as well as Daneyko , who had retired before the season , was too much of a loss for the Devils ' defence , and they fell to the Flyers in the first round of the playoffs . In the offseason , Stevens recovered and continued to work out , and expected to return to the Devils for the 2004 ? 05 NHL season . However , the lockout canceled the entire season , and Stevens retired on September 6 , 2005 , after 1635 NHL games , fourth at the time (and now seventh) all @-@ time in games played , the leader in games played by a defenceman (since passed by Chris Chelios) , and 14th all @-@ time in career penalty minutes .

= = = 2012 ? 2015 = = =

On July 17 , 2012 , the Devils announced Stevens would return to the team as an assistant coach . After two seasons of failing to make the playoffs , Stevens stepped down as assistant coach in September 2014 . His role as the assistant coach for defenseman was filled by another former Devil , Tommy Albelin . However , only three months later Stevens returned to the Devils along with former assistant coach Adam Oates , relieving Peter DeBoer of his coaching duties . In a unique move , both Stevens and Oates were named as co @-@ head coaches with Stevens focusing on defenseman and Oates on forwards .

= = Minnesota Wild = =

On June 7 , 2016 , the Minnesota Wild hired Stevens as an assistant to head coach Bruce Boudreau .

= = International play = =

In addition to his NHL career , Stevens represented Canada in several international ice hockey competitions . He attended summer camp with Team Canada prior to the 1983 World Junior Championships , but because of his commitment to the Capitals , he was unable to join the team . His first experience with the senior team was at the 1983 World Ice Hockey Championships , where he won a bronze medal . The following year he made the Canadian team for the 1984 Canada Cup , but he did not play . During the 1985 World Ice Hockey Championships , he scored a goal and added two assists as Canada finished with a silver medal . He played only two games during the 1987 tournament ; Canada finished in fourth place . Two years later he scored two goals as Canada once again won the silver medal . During the tournament , he suffered a serious cut when Borje Salming 's skate sliced his face ; he would receive 88 stitches for the wound . He finally won international gold with Canada during the 1991 Canada Cup . Five years later , he played in the 1996 World Cup of Hockey , the successor to the Canada Cup . Finishing with two assists , Stevens

won the silver medal ; Canada finished in second place after giving up four goals in the final four minutes of the championship game against the American team .

National Hockey League players were first allowed to participate in the Olympic ice hockey tournament at the 1998 games . Stevens was selected to join Team Canada , but finished without a point for the only time in his international career . Canada would finish fourth after losing their semi @-@ final match @-@ up against the Czech Republic in a shootout . Stevens would be part of Canada 's orientation camp for the 2002 Games , but he would not make the final roster .

= = Legacy = =

Stevens left a lasting legacy on the NHL . Stevens was the longest reigning captain in Devils history . Later on in his career , he mentored the younger Devils defencemen like Colin White and Brian Rafalski , who was Stevens ' defensive linemate . Longtime teammate Scott Niedermayer said Stevens was " not the most vocal guy around " , but he would talk to players when it was necessary . Stevens was honored by the Devils by becoming the first player in team history to have his number retired by the team ; his # 4 was raised to the rafters on February 3 , 2006 . Additionally , the Kitchener Rangers have retired # 3 for Stevens .

Stevens was also remembered as a hard hitter , often leveling players who crossed an open part of the ice with their heads down . Among the victims of Stevens ' body checks were Slava Kozlov , Eric Lindros , Paul Kariya , Shane Willis and Ron Francis , the last of whom was inducted with Stevens into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2007 . Some players have accused Stevens of playing cheap . After his check on Willis , Carolina Hurricanes goaltender Arturs Irbe said Stevens was " trying to kill [Willis] or put him out of the playoffs . " Stevens responded :

On the other hand , Kozlov did not blame Stevens for his hit , and said he was a clean player . Despite his penchant for hits , Stevens finished his career with only four elbowing penalties in the regular season . He was often credited with changing the momentum of a game not with a goal , but with a hard check , earning him the nickname " Captain Crunch " . He was named the fifth most fearsome player in NHL history by the Sporting News in 2001 and was voted the toughest player in the NHL by the voters . NHL defencemen Dion Phaneuf and Francois Beauchemin are often compared to Stevens , and Phaneuf says he has idolized Stevens ' style of play .

= = Personal life = =

Stevens met his wife Donna while he was playing junior hockey with Kitchener . The couple have three children ; Kaitlin , Ryan and Kara . He is a fan of the outdoors , and spent his summers away from hockey at Lake Catchacoma . He also enjoys duck hunting in his spare time , and is a fan of the Three Stooges . After the September 11 , 2001 attacks , he started a program called Scott 's Kids for the families of the victims . Stevens resides in the town of Far Hills , New Jersey .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = Regular season and playoffs = = =

= = = International play = = =

= = = All @-@ Star Games = = =

= = Awards = =