

TRY TO BEAT THAT!: THE 1978-79 BRANDON WHEAT KINGS

Hometown Stewart centred talented second line

BY PERRY BERGSON

Dave Stewart was Brandon's sole returning centre in the 1978-79 season, and played an important role on the team's second line.

The team's only born-and-raised Brandonite — Laurie Boschman moved to the Wheat City at age nine — Stewart played with the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Brandon Travellers in 1976-77 before moving to the big club in 1977-78.

The 18-year-old rookie put up 49 points in 72 games, setting up his success for a year later when he jumped to 79 points in 66 games, often centring Stephen Patrick and Dave McDonald.

After a short pro career, Stewart worked on the railway and also went into business in Brandon and Winnipeg. He moved to Calgary seven years ago, where he works in sales for a book publisher.

MIKE PEROVICH: "He was as cool as the other side of the pillow. He was funny and had a good heart. He was a good player, I remember, on faceoffs and killing penalties. He was a character. He was like Fonzie (from the 1970s sitcom Happy Days)." (laughs)

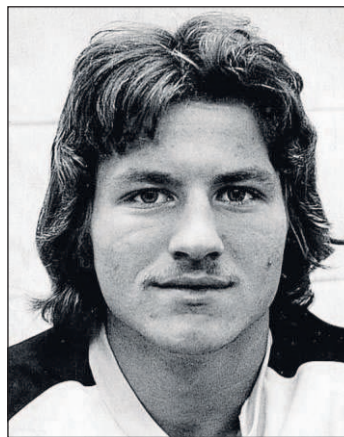
LAURIE BOSCHMAN: "When we lived on Macleod



Dave Stewart was the only born-and-raised Brandonite on the 1978-79 Wheat Kings roster. (Brandon Sun file photo)

Drive, his family bought a place and we lived next door to each other. Dave Stewart was a year

older than I was and I looked up to him. He was a right-handed shot, he was a very good player



Dave Stewart

and I wanted to be as good as he was. He was very slick and smooth. Stewie had a great impact on that team."

RICK KNICKLE: "Stewie was a smaller guy. He was our fourth-leading scorer among the forwards. It was the top line and then Dave Stewart. Stewie was really skilled and had the odd fight. Our team had some guys who were smaller and would fight and enjoyed it. Off the ice, he was one of the good guys. We had a lot of guys on our team who really stuck together and would party together off the ice, and that's why we won the ice."

STEPHEN PATRICK: "Stewie was real smooth. He was a great skater, an effortless skater. He

was a sneaky player. Dave (McDonald) and I were the grinders on the line — we didn't have the talent that Stewie did — but I don't remember him getting hit. I remember him getting pissed off and dropping the gloves but I don't remember him ever putting himself into danger."

TIM LOCKRIDGE: "Stewie was a local guy who grew up in Brandon, and knew everybody. He was a cocky, confident individual."

DAVE CHARTIER: "(Dave) always had that smile on his face. He was a little go-getter. He wasn't the biggest kid around ... we had the best team in the league and Stewie was above the rest too ... He was a good player back then."

WES COULSON: "Stewie was a real fun-loving guy. He liked to have fun and was a great centreman. He was good on the draws. He prided himself on winning draws ... He could score and he wasn't afraid to throw off the gloves and give somebody a tap upside the head if they needed it. Stewie always had fun."

DAVE McDONALD: "He was Mr. Smooth. He was very shifty and a great playmaker. He was great to play with. He would put it right on the tape every time he passed you the puck. He was very determined, and like ev-

erybody else, wanted to win. He was a hard worker, and if things weren't going good, he would get mad and say 'Let's get going!' He was one of those guys."

GREGG DRINNAN (Brandon Sun): "He would score a thousand points with the way the game is now in the Western Hockey League. He was really skilled, really good with the puck. He might well have been the best puck handler on the team. He was a little more laid-back, not as feisty or aggressive as Laurie was. You could slot him anywhere. He could play anywhere in any role."

RAY ALLISON: "Stewie was a good player. I don't know why he didn't slide into that spot ahead of Bosch. Stewie was kind of the same as Laurie I thought, a similar player, strong, wouldn't back down. I thought we probably had the two best centre men in the league."

KELLY MCCRIMMON: "Brandon born and raised, he was a really good player. Really skilled, really talented, not the biggest guy but a heck of a player, and the coolest guy there was. He had a big presence on our team. He was a really important player in our room and on the ice. A funny guy."

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Allison's work ethic, toughness drove big line

BY PERRY BERGSON

Ray Allison blended talent and toughness to become one of the greatest players in Brandon Wheat Kings history.

A product of Cranbrook, B.C., Allison split the 1975-76 season between the Wheat Kings and their farm club, the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Brandon Travellers. Even at 16, which was a lot rarer at the time than it is now, he managed 26 points in 36 games in the WHL.

He became a full-time Wheat King in 1976-77, and over three years put up 137, 160 and 153 points, finishing second overall in league scoring each year. He remains second in franchise history with 476 points in 242 games, trailing only his linemate Brian Propp who finished with 511 points. He is fourth in career goals with 188 and second in assists with 288.

He was no slouch in the post-season either, contributing 37 points in 22 games in the playoffs and eight points in five games at the Memorial Cup. After the season, he was picked 18th overall in the first round by the Hartford Whalers in 1979.

Allison played 237 NHL games and also skated in Europe, retiring after the 1993-94 season.

He worked for more than two decades at a bulk cream spending business in New Jersey, and is now retired in South Carolina.

He was named the 28th best player in WHL history when their all-time top 50 players were unveiled in 2016.

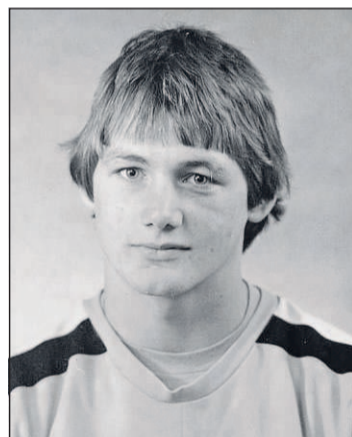
LAURIE BOSCHMAN: "Ray lived at our house for a couple of years so I considered him an older brother that I didn't have. I had a younger brother. Ray was a great junior player. We clicked as linemates with Propp after Billy Derlago left. Ray was tough, he had a quick release. It was just a pleasure to play with both Ray and Brian."

BRIAN PROPP: "I've known (Ray) for 41 years ... He's down in Myrtle Beach, he retired there so I don't see him as much anymore because we lived in Cherry Hill most of the time that we were together. He came in at the same time. I think he played a year before with the Travellers. He was a great linemate. He was so strong and good with the puck, passing and shooting. He was good in the corners and he fed me the puck. He's such a good guy, a good friend and he always looked much younger than the other players because he had a baby face."

GREGG DRINNAN (Brandon Sun): "Of the three of them (on the top line), I thought (Ray) was the best all-around player at both ends of the ice, offensively and defensively. He wasn't a guy who was going to get you 190 points but he was certainly going to score



Ray Allison is the only player in WHL history to finish second in league scoring three years in a row. (Brandon Sun file photo)



Ray Allison

some and he was tough and could handle himself ... He was a really, really good junior. Of the three of them, he probably doesn't get the credit he deserves after the fact."

RICK KNICKLE: "Ray was more of a complete player as a junior than Brian was and Laurie was. Hard-nosed, could shoot the puck off the wing, really good accurate snapshot. In the olden days, the Danny Gares and Guy Lafleurs and those guys would go down the wing and could rip shots from the top of the circles. He was hard-nosed, could fight, very tough."

STEPHEN PATRICK: "Ray wasn't as intense (as Propp) but he had a great toe drag. He was a little more quiet but really talented ... They all complemented each other. That Boston line reminds of them, with Patrice Bergeron, Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak. Whenever I watch Boston, it reminds me of Propp, Allison and Boschman."

KELLY MCCRIMMON: "Ray was such a good winger. He was uber talented and could play any way you wanted. He was tough, he played hard, he played every night and was always there."

TIM LOCKRIDGE: "Ray was a little more intense with worrying about the games. It got under his skin a little more than the other guys because of his intensity. I played a little bit of Brandon Travellers with him too. We were actually teammates for four years. The one thing about Ray, he was off by himself a little bit. Not in a bad way, but off the ice, he wasn't always in that little clique. He did what he wanted to do, very aloof in a sense."

BRIAN PROPP: "Ray's really humble. He didn't like the press and was quiet but a great

leader. He was really fast but he played hard."

MIKE PEROVICH: "(Ray) was a good guy, a great player. He kept to himself. I didn't really see much of Ray off the ice. He led by example though his actions. He wasn't a big talker, he just went out there and did it. He didn't say too much in the dressing room, but when he did, you listened."

DAVE McDONALD: "Ray was a good talent. He had an excellent slapshot. Individually as people they were all good guys. Ray worked hard. He wasn't as talented as Brian or Laurie, but he worked his butt off, and when he had a chance to put the puck in the net, he had a great slapshot. There was a lot of effort from him."

WES COULSON: "Ray was a good teammate. He was a tough kid. I want to say he's the only guy who finished second in the Western Hockey League in scoring three years in a row (behind Propp and Derlago). He would always stand up for you if somebody took a cheap shot at you and he had tons of talent too ... He was a hard-nosed kid and worked hard."

DAVE STEWART: "Ray is a good guy. He's down to earth, he wasn't too much of a big talker. He had a helluva shot. He was a natural right winger, up and down."

DON GILLEN: "(Ray) was similar (to Propp). He maybe wasn't quite as focused but still very focused."

DAVE CHARTIER: "Ray was a great guy, he was a good team guy too. Ray was a monster back then."

BRUCE PENTON (Brandon Sun): "(Ray) was sort of a lesser version of Propp. He was a strong kid, he had great upper body strength ... He wasn't as strong a skater as Propp but he had a great shot too. He was a good skater, don't get me wrong, he just wasn't quite as good as Propp but he was strong and had a good shot. He played the right side, Propp played the left side and Boschman was in the middle. He was also tough. Allison didn't mind scrapping. He scrapped quite a bit, although to have a guy on your top line spending a lot of time in the penalty box wasn't very smart and I think Dunc toned him down a little bit. Boy, he could handle himself."

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Boschman filled Derlago's spot admirably well

BY PERRY BERGSON

With the graduation of superstar centre Bill Derlago, one of the biggest questions going into the 1978-79 season was who would play between Brandon Wheat Kings forwards Brian Propp and Ray Allison.

The question was compounded because Dave Stewart was the team's only returning centre. Ultimately, 18-year-old Laurie Boschman stepped up and made a seamless transition into arguably one of the most important spots on the team.

Boschman, nicknamed "Bosch" by his teammates, moved to Brandon at age nine and got to know coach Dunc McCallum at his annual hockey school.

He spent the 1976-77 season with the Wheat Kings' farm club — the Manitoba Junior Hockey's Brandon Travellers — getting called up for three games as a 16-year-old.

He made the club for the 1977-78 campaign, and responded with 42 goals, 57 assists and 227 penalty minutes, displaying the combination of high-end skill and grit that would carry him to a 14-year career in the National Hockey League that saw him dress in 1,009 regular season games.

Boschman now lives in Ontario.

BRIAN PROPP: "Laurie fit right in with me and Ray after Derlago wasn't there. He was really good on the faceoffs and knew how to set up goals and how to shoot ... He was a little younger but he was one of the guys who wanted to work out more with weights."

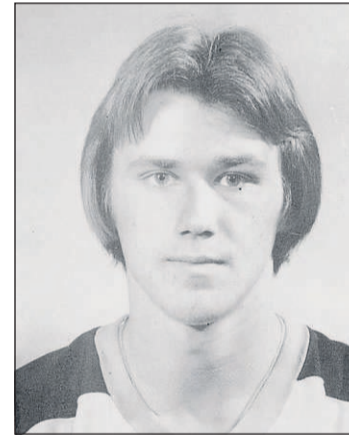
RAY ALLISON: "Bosch was strong on the faceoffs and good defensively. Unfortunately we probably left him to bear most of the defensive load on the line but he had good hands, could pass the puck well. He wouldn't back down from anybody. I think we kind of protected Brian a little bit so that nobody would go after him. Laurie was really good at it. Laurie was probably more of an all-around player than Billy was. Not as finesse but still a solid player."

DAVE STEWART: "Laurie really wanted to make it. He was always working out in the summertime. He was trying to put on more weight, which he did. When you have those two wingers, after while it's not hard to catch on when you got the calibre of Ray and Propper, who have already played in the league for a couple of years. Laurie fit in good."

DON GILLEN: "Laurie was a solid good player. He was more than tough enough. He would stand up for himself and his teammates. Laurie was a really good person. He did a lot of things right in a lot of ways. Laurie worked hard, he had the physical ability to skate quite well, was tough enough to go to the places he needed to go to. He was with two guys who were 19, top-end talent, and he was definitely capable of playing



Laurie Boschman stepped into the spot on the top line vacated after Bill Derlago graduated, and proved to a terrific linemate to Brian Propp and Ray Allison. (Brandon Sun file photo)



Laurie Boschman

with them. It wasn't easy to play with those guys but it certainly turned out he was worthy."

GREGG DRINNAN (Brandon Sun): "Laurie was really feisty. What did he have, 160 penalty minutes? (It was 149.) He was a feisty, chippy hockey player and that earned him more open ice ... He was a physical player and Laurie had that tricky feistiness to him that allowed him to win

puck battles. It really wasn't a case where Ray went in and got the puck and got to Laurie, and Laurie fed Propp. Half the time it was Laurie in the corner. He wasn't afraid of anyone and he wasn't afraid of going anywhere."

RICK KNICKLE: "Laurie was a local kid who grew up in Brandon and played his minor hockey there. He had really good hockey sense and had a confidence about him, a cockiness you might say, but in a good way. He could back things up. He would get beat up and come right back and you respect that. He was stepping into big shoes between Brian and Ray. They were there for two years together with Billy D but Laurie had a good sense for puck-handling ability and getting pucks to those wingers. He also had 66 goals that year, and that's nothing to sneeze at."

BRUCE PENTON (Brandon Sun): "(Laurie) was a pretty talented kid and he was from Brandon, which was a pretty big deal. He was a local kid. His dad was a car salesman at Canadian Motors. Laurie joined that top line and just fit in perfectly."

BRANT KISSIG: "(Laurie) was a good guy around the rink and obviously a good hockey player."

RICK KNICKLE: "Laurie fit in well with those guys because he was an agitator but also had skill and did a lot of things for that line."

KELLY MCCRIMMON: "Laurie was really, really talented. He was such a good skater and really tough. He had skill, speed, hockey sense. He was an 18-year-old when he played on that line with Propper and Ray, and they were both 19. They dominated and Laurie had a fantastic season."

STEPHEN PATRICK: "Laurie could be a lot of fun in the dressing room but he was really focused on the ice. He had a lot of skill and was a really good skater, even a simple thing like making a real good backhand pass. No one on that line ever held the puck too long. They all fed off each other. He got banged around a lot but he was a tough player. All three guys had a lot of motivation, a lot of desire and a lot of skill."

TIM LOCKRIDGE: "Laurie wanted to excel and succeed. He was as competitive as Ray was but then some. To me, Laurie always wanted to be one of the guys so bad, and that's what drove him. He was such a good hockey player. He could do everything at both ends of the ice. He wasn't a one-way player at all. He had a lot of motivation to do well."

DAVE CHARTIER: "Laurie was a playmaker more than anything."

MIKE PEROVICH: "Laurie was a good hockey player. He was like your buddy in the class who was born on Dec. 31, everybody was a year ahead of him. That was Bosch. He took a lot of ribbing but he fit right in, he picked up where Billy left off. He did a great job, and he worked hard and was competitive."

WES COULSON: "His skill level was one of the biggest things and Bosch worked hard. I think it was his skill level that complemented the other two guys. He was one of those guys who could skate and shoot and he was tough. He was tougher than I think a lot of people give him credit for and when he went on to play in the National Hockey League, he racked up some penalty minutes."

DAVE McDONALD: "Laurie was a smart player. When we got drafted, that was the first year of the underage (drafting 18-year-olds began that year) and he was the first on picked on our team, which I understand. He was a year younger than everybody else but he was very smart with the puck, a good stickhandler and a good teammate and good guy. He was nice to talk to."