

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

Lockridge the ultimate unsung hero

BY PERRY BERGSON

If there was an unsung hero on the 1978-79 Brandon Wheat Kings, it had to be Tim Lockridge.

The big defensive defenceman was one of the toughest players in the Western Hockey League during an era when that was an absolutely invaluable resource to have.

At the same time, the 19-year-old blue-liner provided a steady presence in his own end when he was on the ice with the more offensively inclined Brad McCrimmon or Mike Perovich.

Lockridge, whose teammates called him Freddy after they decided he looked like the cartoon character Fred Flintstone, joined the team full-time at 17 for the 1976-77 team. A year later, he set the franchise record with a remarkable 392 penalty minutes.

In 1978-79, his penalty totals dropped to 297, but he was able to contribute 52 points (10 goals, 42 assists) in 70 games. NHL scouts took notice: He was drafted in the fourth round, 80th overall, by the New York Islanders in 1979.

Lockridge spent his entire seven-year pro career with the International Hockey League's Indianapolis Checkers. He started selling cars and then became a sales manager in Indianapolis, but moved to Calgary in 1991. He's been there ever since.

BRIAN PROPP: "(Tim) was as solid as solid. He was tough and consistent every game. When he was fighting he was a lefty so people weren't expecting that. He was a big player and on the power play he helped a little bit. That's what we needed."

DAVE CHARTIER: "Timmy is a gentleman. He was tough. I have nothing but good things to say about him. He treated us young guys with respect. He was good to us, he's like a brother. He's one of those guys you can like right now."

BRANT KIESSIG: "You needed that guy on the team who made some of the smaller guys ... play a couple of inches taller. I could play a couple of inches taller because of Tim Lockridge. Wes Coulson could play a couple of inches taller because of Tim Lockridge. That's what Tim Lockridge did for our team. He was a solid defenceman of course but Tim allowed us to play a couple inches taller and every team needed that."

WES COULSON: "We got along real well. When I wasn't playing a whole lot, Tim would tap me on the shoulder and let me know that things were getting out of hand and he might have to go sit out five minutes (with a fighting major), and I should get ready to play. He was tough. He was one of the toughest guys I've ever played with, bar none."

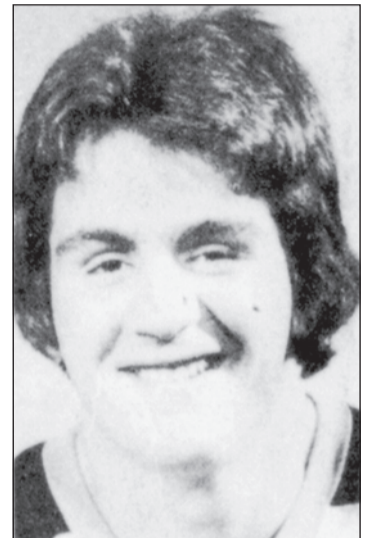
MIKE PEROVICH: "(Tim) was tough. It was nice playing with him. I could go up with the puck and I knew he was going to be back there so that worked out well. I tried to get back but sometimes I didn't and I always knew he was back there backing me up. Cheswick (Wes Coulson) was good that way too. He had some offensive ability too. I loved playing with Tim."

GREGG DRINNAN (Brandon Sun): "Tim Lockridge was such a great leader and he was so well respected by his teammates. There wasn't one player on that roster who Tim wouldn't go to war for. Every player on that roster knew that if the situation demanded it, and that player was over-matched in a fighting situation or whatever, that Tim would be coming in and bailing them out."

DAVE STEWART: "Freddy was a veteran. He was the first one, if you were in the corner



Tim Lockridge was a tough, stay-at-home defenceman for the Wheat Kings during an era when both of those qualities were highly sought after by coaches. (Brandon Sun file photo)



Tim Lockridge

teammate."

GREGG DRINNAN: "He was a horse. He could eat minutes, not to Brad's extent, because of the type of player Tim was. I don't think he was capable of conserving energy on the ice. Because of Brad's hockey IQ, he knew when to go hard and when not to go hard, but Tim went hard all the time so there's no way he could play the minutes Brad did, but he was a minutes eater. His big thing is that he was there for his teammates. I'm sure he was like Brad, and if someone went against the grain, he would straighten them out ... He would have been one of the most feared players in the league that year for his physical play, not just his fighting. He would hurt you along the wall and bury you in the corner. He was just a tough, tough player."

BRUCE PENTON: "(Tim) played a lot of valuable minutes and I know Dunc really liked him. He wasn't flashy but he was very solid, a big strong kid ... He was a key guy on that team for sure. McCrimmon was kind of the flashy offensive defenceman who played a lot of minutes but you have to have the pluggers, the big strong guys who clear guys out in front of the net and don't do it for the attention or the headlines, but do it because it has to be done. He was tremendous."

» pbergson@brandonsun.com
» Twitter: @PerryBergson

INDEX

WHAT'S COMING UP

- **Monday, July 26:** Introduction.
- **Tuesday, July 27:** Lay of the land.
- **Wednesday, July 28:** Early success.
- **Thursday, July 29:** What made them tick?
- **Friday, July 30:** Teammates who are gone.
- **Saturday, July 31:** First losses.
- **Tuesday, Aug. 3:** Forwards, Pt. 1.
- **Wednesday, Aug. 4:** Forwards, Pt. 2.
- **Thursday, Aug. 5:** Goalies.
- **Friday, Aug. 6:** Defence.
- **Saturday, Aug. 7:** Loss of Mike Perovich.
- **Monday, Aug. 9:** Season ends, Forwards, Pt. 3.
- **Tuesday, Aug. 10:** Playoffs begin.
- **Wednesday, Aug. 11:** League final.
- **Thursday, Aug. 12:** Memorial Cup round-robin.
- **Friday, Aug. 13:** Memorial Cup final.
- **Saturday, Aug. 14:** 43 years later.

and someone is picking on you, Freddy is the first guy to come in and drop the gloves. He was one of those guys who always had your back. He wasn't flashy. He was definitely one of those stay-at-home guys. He would get a goal for us but he was an enforcer too. When we went on West Coast trips, especially that last year, he was one or two fights a game. He's another good friend of mine."

RICK KNICKLE: "Tim was Brad's partner. There was so much more intimidation go-

ing on but he kept things ... in a clean way. Opponents would probably say that as well ... I knew him since I was 13 ... Any time a guy slashed me on the hands, I would say 'Freddy, get over here.' Freddy would grab him, and Freddy was a lefty and they would grab his right arm and I would go, 'Oh you dumbass, he's a lefty.'"

WES COULSON: "Tim was big and strong and tough. I don't know why guys still wanted to challenge him. That was just crazy."

STEPHEN PATRICK: "When you take the top four guys out of the equation — Propp, Allison, Boschman and McCrimmon — Tim was really, really important. He was a good hockey player, and he was tough. He kept peace on the ice and gave guys more room. I don't know if I saw a tougher guy than him that year."

DAVE McDONALD: "Oh man, (Tim) was a tough boy. He wasn't the most talented guy but you know what, he worked hard and took the man. If anybody wanted to fight, he was there. He was a good leader. Nothing would come by him. He was going

to protect Propp and Allison and Boschman and Brad, like he protected everybody. Lots of guys could fight but he was one of the toughest in the league. You would watch him out there and go 'Holy mackerel, look how hard he's working' and clearing guys from in front of the net. He was definitely a guy you looked up to."

RAY ALLISON: "If I have to name one guy who got us through that Portland series, which we ended up winning, it was him ... Timmy kept the other teams honest. There was no other way to put it ... It could still be an intimidating league. It wasn't all the time, but it could be."

Laurie Boschman: "Tim Lockridge was a tough defenceman, a right-handed shot, was solid back there on the point and he just provided a presence for us with his toughness. You needed that back in the day."

BRUCE PENTON (Brandon Sun): "Tim was a big kid. He was a little gangly and not a great skater but he was the kind of guy you needed on the back end. He wouldn't take any crap from anyone and was a

great protector of the goaltender. He would clear guys out from in front of the net."

KELLY McCRIMMON: "Timmy was probably one of the toughest guys in the league and really worked to make himself a real good player. Him and Brad played together a lot. He was very well respected in our room and very well respected around the league. He earned himself a pro career. He was a really important player on that team."

WES COULSON: "We used to stay out after practice in our 19th year, Tim and I, to get better at our skating, your edges and turning and that kind of stuff. We would skate circles and once we were done, we would jump in the car and go somewhere for dinner or lunch. I used to pick him and Knickle up because I had a car and they didn't."

DON GILLEN: "(Tim) was a very unsung player but he wasn't unsung in the dressing room. All his teammates had a lot of respect for Tim. He was a guy you could trust in all ways. He was a tough guy but he was not that way personally. He was a caring, compassionate

ON THE ICE

BRANDON 6, CALGARY 4

GAME 56, FEB. 20, 1979

Recap: Laurie Boschman took just 64 seconds to score and Brandon led 4-2 after a busy 20 minutes. The teams traded two goals apiece in the middle frame, with a scoreless third period. Brian Propp's goal, which came 13:07 into the third period, proved to be the winner. It was his 13th of the season, breaking the record that he had shared with Steve Tambellini (Lethbridge, 1977-78), Fred Berry (New Westminster, 1975-76) and Rod Norrish (Regina, 1970-71). Brandon finally had its first practice of the road trip a day ago: Coach Dunc McCallum thought that was one of the reasons the power play was faltering.

BWK goals: Boschman, Stewart, Brad McCrimmon, Kiessig, Propp, Allison.

BWK goalie: Olson.

Shots on net: 39-34 BWK.

Attendance: 4,625, in Calgary.

Record: 45-3-8.

Dunc McCallum: "Overall, we played about as well as we had to, although we had more guys going tonight than we did in the past couple of games. Guys like Steve Patrick, Dave Stewart and Brant Kiessig really played well."

BRANDON 6, MEDICINE HAT 3

GAME 57, FEB. 21, 1979

Recap: The Wheat Kings rebounded from a 3-2 deficit midway through the game, scoring twice in the final two minutes of the second period to take a 5-3 lead. With the win, the Wheat Kings earned their 100th point, 49 points ahead of the second-place Saskatoon Blades in the Eastern Division and 14 up on Portland for league supremacy. Brant Kiessig's two goals gave him 21 for the season, joining Brian Propp (81), Ray Allison (47), Laurie Boschman (46), Brad McCrimmon (20) and Brad Kempthorne (20) in the 20-goal club. Brandon goalie Scott Olson lowered his league-leading goals against average to 3.04. Propp didn't register a point for the third time this season, snapping a 10-game point streak.

BWK goals: Kiessig (2), Gillen, Allison, Stewart, Brad McCrimmon.

BWK goalie: Olson.

Shots on net: 37-34 BWK.

Attendance: Unavailable, in Medicine Hat.

Record: 46-3-8.

Dunc McCallum: "Kiessig and Stewart continued their solid play. They both did a good job killing penalties and Kiessig's two goals broke Medicine Hat's back."

BRANDON 4, LETHBRIDGE 3

GAME 58, FEB. 25, 1979

Recap: Mike Perovich broke a 3-3 tie with eight minutes remaining for his 15th goal of the season as Brandon completed its 17-day, nine-game road trip. The Wheat Kings went 6-1-2 on the trip. Dave McDonald scored in his return to the lineup after a four-game absence. Brandon played without Kelly McCrimmon, Larry Roberts (knee) and Wes Coulson (neck). Brandon headed home for one game before embarking on another road trip, this one four games in length.

BWK goals: Boschman, Allison, McDonald, Perovich.

BWK goalie: Olson.

Shots on net: 34-33 BWK.

Attendance: 4,646, in Lethbridge.

Record: 47-3-8.

Dunc McCallum: "We started off slow. We only had one hour's ice time in the past four days. And we weren't moving the puck as well as we can. The big thing now is keeping the kids from thinking about the scouts ... We've had 25 of them following us. The kids figure that if they make one mistake it may cost them in the draft."

BRANDON 6, BILLINGS 3

GAME 59, FEB. 27, 1979

Recap: After 11 scoreless minutes, the Wheat Kings and Bighorns exploded for five goals in seven minutes with Brandon holding a 3-2 edge after 20 minutes. Ray Allison's second-period goal was his 50th of the season. Saskatoon's Brent Ashton briefly passed Laurie Boschman for third in league scoring, but Boschman's four-point night gave him 119

on the season, five up on Ashton. Kelly McCrimmon returned to the lineup after missing 13 games due to an arm injury. Brian Propp's 14th game-winner extended his league record. The explosive Wheat Kings had scored 403 goals, 54 more than second-place Portland. They had allowed 180 goals, 44 fewer than Portland.

BWK goals: Boschman (2), Allison (2), McDonald, Propp.

BWK goalie: Olson.

Shots on net: 45-27 BWK.

Attendance: 3,969, in Brandon.

Record: 48-3-8.

Billings coach Dave King: "Brandon is a well-coached team. They're the most talented team in the league and they've got one of the best coaches in Dunc McCallum. And he's got all that talent playing as a team. They've got a great system and all three lines play the system well. You don't get many chances against a team like Brandon."

BRANDON 5, REGINA 2

GAME 60, MARCH 2, 1979

Recap: Laurie Boschman joined linemates Brian Propp and Ray Allison in the 50-goal club when he scored 19:30 into the second period. The goal also stood up as the winner. The bad news for Brandon was that it lost rookie forwards Kelly McCrimmon (ankle) and Dave McDonald (badly cut arm) to injuries. With the two players out of the lineup, defenceman Don Dietrich skated some shifts on the wing. Brandon also welcomed back defenceman Wes Coulson for the first time since he was injured on Feb. 18. Brian Propp was held without a point for the fourth time this season.

BWK goals: Lockridge, Kempthorne, Boschman, Gillen, Allison.

BWK goalie: Olson.

Shots on net: 49-37 BWK.

Attendance: 2,108, in Regina.

Record: 49-3-8.

Dunc McCallum: "We did not have a good first period. We did a lot of scrambling around. We hit at times, but not enough. And the defence did hardly any hitting all night."