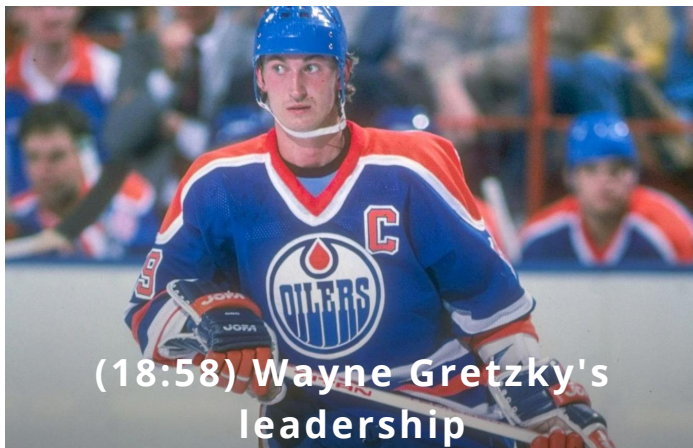


EPISODE 47 - GRANT FUHR

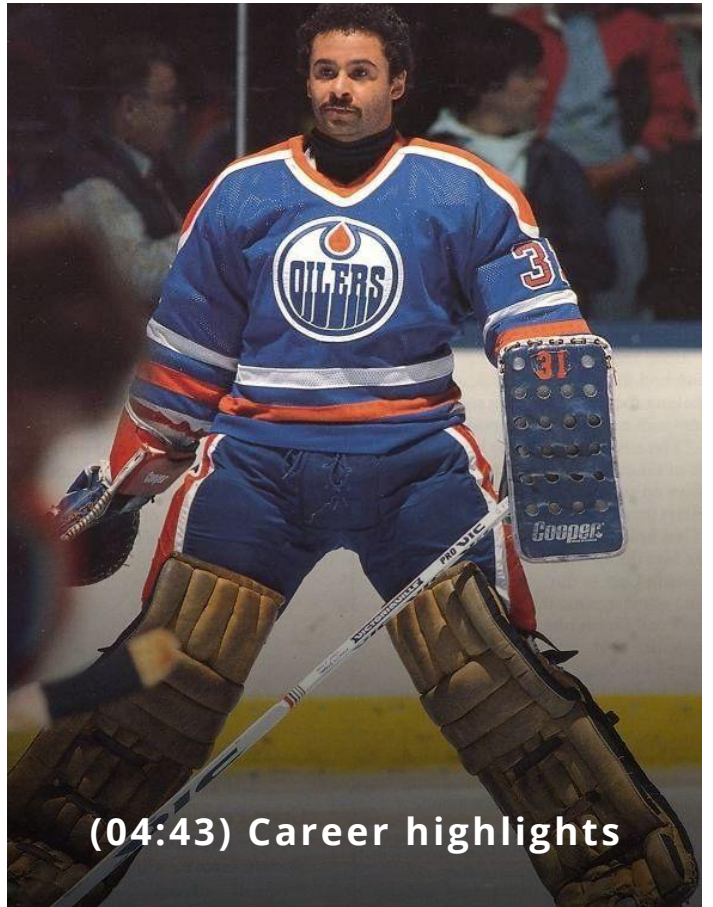
EPISODE HIGHLIGHTS



(28:01) Underrated players
Grant's played against



(18:58) Wayne Gretzky's
leadership



(04:43) Career highlights

(01:30) Rapid fire questions round

(06:36) The relationships Grant built over his career

(11:04) Former teammates and rival players

(16:36) Having a balance between tough players and skillful players

(23:12) Grant's famously calm persona

(31:29) Racism in hockey

(33:08) Stanley Cup preview

(00:35) INTRODUCTION

Brandon: And here we are. Welcome back to another addition of the Hockey Minute. I am your host Brandon. Flying solo today. Ryan's out on assignment, but that's not going to stop me. We have five time Stanley Cup champion, Hall of Famer, Grant Fuhr joining us. But first, please, subscribe wherever you get your podcast and leave us a review on iTunes. It really helps us get the show out there. So I'm thrilled to introduce our next guest.

"Grant Fuhr, the man of the hour."

Named one of the top 100 players of all time by the NHL in 2017.

"No surprises as far as the starting goaltenders are concerned. Grant Fuhr in the nets for the Oilers."

According to Wayne Gretzky, the great one himself, our next guest is the greatest goaltender of all time.

"Grant Fuhr more than likely will be named the first star. He faced a total of 47 shots and allowed just two goals."

Brandon: Grant, thanks so much for doing this man. Welcome to the show.

Grant: Hey. Thanks for having me.

Brandon: I thought we'd get started real quick here with some rapid fire questions if that's okay with you?

Grant: Sure.

(01:30) RAPID FIRE QUESTIONS ROUND

Brandon: All right. Coffee or tea?

Grant: Tea.

Brandon: Bower or CCM skates?

Grant: CCM skates.

Brandon: Jack Nicholas or Tiger Woods?

Grant: Toss up. I like both.

Brandon: Fair. Paul Coffee or Ray Bjork?

Grant: Coff only because I know him better.

Brandon: That's fair. Favorite current player in the NHL?

Grant: Carey Price. I still like the goalies.

Brandon: Oh, there you go. Favorite all time player in the NHL?

Grant: Probably Wayne Gretzky.

Brandon: Most underrated player you've ever played with?

Grant: Most underrated, probably Dale Hawerchuk.

Brandon: Best goalie of all time aside from yourself obviously?

Grant: Still a huge Terry Sawchuk fan.

Brandon: Oh wow, okay. What's your favorite mask of all time?

Grant: Between the first two that I wore. I like both of those. I'm an old school guy. I like the full face mask.

Brandon: Final one here. Who is your pick to win the Stanley Cup this year?

Grant: This year I think it's a toss up. You add 24 teams into the mix, it could be anybody.

Brandon: Yeah, it's a really wild year going into it. Okay, maybe just start by telling us a bit about yourself. When was the first time that you saw hockey and what made you get into the game?

(02:35) GRANT'S EARLY HOCKEY CAREER

Grant: I first saw I was probably about four years old. My dad played a little bit. All my friends played. It's just something you do in Canada when you're growing up. I got that opportunity, I took it.

Brandon: Yeah, that's fair. Who were your favorite players growing up? Did you always want to be a goalie or was that something you just slid into?

Grant: I picked goalie because the equipment looked cool and nobody else wanted to do it. I started at four years old and I was a goalie right up until the last day I put my skates on. So that part of it was easy. But Glenn Hall growing up for me because he grew up not far for me was obviously somebody that I looked up to. I've always been a fan of goalies just because of the masks, the equipment, and as a kid that's what I wanted to be.

Brandon: How does it make you feel to be called the greatest goaltender in NHL history by the great one himself?

Grant: It's nice to have him on your side, there's no question about that. But I look back at the guys that played before me, a guy like Terry Sawchuk who set the benchmark for goalies long before I came in the league so hence why maybe it was his numbers that we tried to get to playing, so that's why I still consider him to have been the best.

Brandon: Knowing the Oilers already had a star goaltender in Andy Moog, how did you feel when you got drafted?

Grant: You know what, it was great to be drafted to Edmonton, but I thought I was going to go back to Junior. Obviously Andy had the great playoff run against Montreal. They had Ronnie Lowe there. They had Gary Edwards. They had Eddie Mio. So they had a lot of NHL goalies that had been in the league for awhile. So I get to go to training camp with no pressure. I just got to go and play. I think if anything it made it easier for me because there were no expectations.

Brandon: Did you have any big superstitions or pre-game rituals that you stuck to? Something that you ate or you had to do before every game?

Grant: No, I'm actually the odd guy. I just relaxed and looked forward to going to the rink every day. My goal was to be there by four in the afternoon for a 7:00 pm game, that was the only thing I tried to do.

Brandon: Well, you're the absolute outlier for goaltenders then. Obviously people know they're usually the quirkiest guys on the team. It seems like you've a pretty laid back approach to everything.

Grant: Yeah, we're the oddball. We were normal.

(04:43) CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Brandon: Moving on to some of your career highlights and stuff. What's the most memorable game or save of your career?

Grant: Probably my first game. I mean I got to play my first game at home in Edmonton where I was born and raised, and I got to play it in front of friends and family. So for me that will always be one of the most memorable games.

Brandon: Which of your five Stanley Cup victories was the most memorable for you?

Grant: They're all good because they're all different. You win it with different guys. You win it in different ways. So they're all memorable, and they're all great. So that's the fun part is they're all different, so you always have good memories that are different from each one.

Brandon: Does any particular memory stand out for you?

Grant: No. It's just the fun that we had as a team. You go through different trials and tribulations over the course of a year, and the fact, you win one, it's hard to repeat. So you repeat. You get through that. You lose one. Then we win two more in a row, so you win again. Now you got to repeat. And it's just different trials and tribulations which makes the game fun.

Brandon: Speaking of trials and tribulations, can you just take us inside the Oilers locker room following the '83 loss to the Islanders. I mean, I know Gretzky tells a pretty famous story about walking past their dressing room and expecting to see them celebrating and just seeing the battle that they'd been through and seeing them ice themselves and trying to take themselves back to health. And him realizing what it takes to actually win. I'm just curious what you took out of that loss.

Grant: It's a learning process. I mean in '83 I didn't get the opportunity to play, but you get to watch an Islander team that was going for their fourth cup in a row which is an extremely hard task to do. So you look at how they treat the game, how they treat it as a business, and it was a good learning experience for us as a young team. Having not won before we had to learn how to lose before we could win.

(06:36) The RELATIONSHIPS GRANT BUILT OVER HIS CAREER

Brandon: Yeah, absolutely. Who was your closest friend or friends on those epic Oilers teams?

Grant: You know what the beautiful team was? Everybody was close. I mean I still talk to a lot of the guys through even until today. So guys I played with in my first year, guys I played with in my last year. And that's the beauty of teams is it was like a big family, and we're still like a big family.

Brandon: That's awesome. I was actually listening to your Hall of Fame induction speech as I was getting ready for this interview, and you mentioned that you had a special relationship with Glen Sather. I was just wondering if maybe you could describe what made that relationship so unique.

Grant: You know, Glen was kind of a father figure to us. And I think he allowed us to grow as hockey players but he allowed us to grow as people. And I think that was one of the biggest things at the time, we probably didn't realize. But as we got older you realized that he was molding us as people more so than hockey players because you had to learn how to be a good person also.

Brandon: There's just so much pressure in all these Canadian markets. It kind of seems like when you play in a northern place like Edmonton or Vancouver, any of these communities, there's a real emphasis on personal development as well as just as a hockey player.

Grant: There is. And it should be. We're lucky enough to play the greatest game in the world for a living. You start playing professional, I started at 18 years old. So you still have to grow as a person. And you're going to make some mistakes along the way, and it's good to have a coach to support you and an organization that supports you because it allows you to grow as a person.

Brandon: Can you just take us inside the Oilers locker room a little bit during that dynasty? What was it like, I mean obviously Mark Messier is known for his leadership, but what did that actually look like inside the dressing room?

Grant: You know what? We had more fun than anybody. I think that's the biggest thing is we enjoyed going to the rink every day. The guys looked forward to seeing each other. We had fun in the dressing room. We had fun on the ice. We had fun off the ice. It was a great place to go to work every day.

Brandon: What made your relationship with John Muckler so special?

Grant: Muck was fun to play for. He's kind of an old school coach where it's black or white. There's no gray area. You do it or you don't do it. Glen was sort of the same way, but Muck was a phenomenal X's and O's guy that we all learned a lot about the game of hockey from. And all his experiences he'd gone through and such. He was a very good tactician. So we all learned a lot about the game from Muck.

(09:00) WAYNE GRETZKY LEAVING EDMONTON FOR LA

Brandon: I'm sure you get asked about this all the time, but how did you feel about the Gretzky trade when it happened? Where were you when you found out?

Grant: I think we were all shocked. I was out at a golf tournament in Newfoundland. I was at a Bob Cole's golf tournament, actually. It's a shock to everybody. But at the same time we knew we still had a good hockey team and were still capable of winning.

Brandon: So you guys all basically took it in stride and just thought you could keep on rolling.

Grant: Well, you don't have a choice. It's still work. You still got to go to the rink every day, and you still got to perform.

Brandon: Do you think Gretzky going to LA helped grow the game?

Grant: Oh, there's no question. I mean I think it grew the game exponentially. I think if Wayne doesn't go to LA, I don't know if you see teams in Anaheim, San Jose, Florida, Nashville. I don't know if you see those teams if Wayne doesn't go to LA.

Brandon: Right, so we can almost credit guys like Auston Matthews coming out of the Arizona system. Right, it's just like it really expanded it into the south for the States.

Grant: It is. And I think as the game grows and more people get exposed to the game, you're going to see a lot more kids coming from different areas that you wouldn't normally expect to.

Brandon: Yeah, it's like it's really doing a lot for just expanding into markets where people wouldn't necessarily be interested in the sport at all. And I think once people get a chance to see hockey, especially live, it's such an addictive sport to watch.

Grant: Yeah, and that's the fun part is once you, if you take a young kid to a game that's never seen the game before, the speed of it and the excitement of it, they become a fan for life.

Brandon: Yeah, and just like the raw power and violence. I don't even mean in terms of fighting, but I remember being a kid and I'm in my mid 30s, so I was going to see Pavel Bure in the early 90's. And just seeing the physicality and how loud the hits are and stuff in person it's almost awe inspiring.

Grant: The fun part is, hockey on TV doesn't really do it justice. You have to see it live, and the closer you are down to the ice surface, you realize how big and how fast the guys are. And once you get a taste of that, then you want to see more of it.

(11:04) FORMER TEAMMATES AND RIVAL PLAYERS

Brandon: Your friend and former teammate Kevin Lowe was recently inducted into the Hall of Fame. Can you tell us more about Lowe and his style of play and what he brought to the franchise that was so special?

Grant: Well, I think if you look at Kevin, the defensive defensemen on our team got zero credit. We were built on offense. But you still had to play shut-down hockey. And Kevin was a part of a group with Lee Fogolin and Charlie Huddy, guys like that, that played shut-down hockey on a team that didn't play defense. So they got no credit. And I think if you look at what Kevin accomplished over the game, he had six Stanley Cups. I think he was an all star eight or nine times. And that's being a defensive defenseman on an offensive team. So that just shows you how good he was and what a good contribution he made all the time. Not to mention that he was phenomenal in the dressing room.

Brandon: What did that look like for him being phenomenal in the dressing room?

Grant: He's part of our leadership group along with Wayne obviously and Mark and Lee Fogolin when I first started out. They were all part of our leadership group and to be successful and to be a championship team you have to have a good leadership group.

Brandon: So the '87 Canada Cup team that you were a part of was probably the best team that's ever been assembled. Can you just maybe talk a little bit about what it was like playing on a team who's first power play was Gretzky, Lemieux, Messier, Bourque, and Coffey?

Grant: I think they're the greatest players in the game, and I had the opportunity to stand behind and watch it every day. There's no better thing than that. When you get a chance to play with the best players in the game, obviously it makes you a better player. So to be able to be a part of that group and learn from that group was a phenomenal experience.

Brandon: In '95 and '96, you played 76 consecutive games for the St. Louis Blues which is an NHL record. Do you actually have a lot of memories of that run or you were just too tired, you were unconscious after every game?

Grant: No, I had fun with it. I mean at that point a lot of people thought I was too old and was done by then. So it was kind of fun to prove people wrong. That I could still play every day and play reasonably well every day. So I enjoyed every minute of it.

Brandon: Wow. Did you have any goalies that came up when you were the starter and the star that were in a similar position? Did you ever take on more of a mentoring role?

Grant: I think by the time I got to Toronto we drafted Félix Potvin while I was there. And I got to see Cat play and grow as a goalie. So that was always fun.

Brandon: Yeah, he was wild to watch for sure. Do you have any stories that stand out for Potvin?

Grant: He was a great kid. Quiet kid but a great kid and a talented goalie. So that was a fun part of watching Felix play was he was so talented. He never really got any recognition when he was in Toronto.

Brandon: I think Toronto's pretty good for that with their goaltenders especially, right? They're underappreciated, let's say.

Grant: It happens in a lot of cities. I mean it's the beauty of being a goalie. If you're good, you're supposed to be good. If you're bad, then you're the goat.

Brandon: Yeah, yeah. Exactly. Can you just maybe tell us a little bit about mentoring Dominic Hašek in Buffalo, where you won the William Jennings trophy for best goalie tandem in '94? What was the relationship like between you two?

Grant: You know what, I'd know Dom before from the Canada Cup. Dom had played for the Czech Republic back in the Canada Cup. So I'd had a chance to see Dom play and knew how good he was. It was just he hadn't had an opportunity to play yet. When he came over he went to Chicago. Eddie Belfour was there, so he didn't get an opportunity to play there. In Buffalo he had an opportunity to play and people in North America got the opportunity to see how good he really was.

Brandon: It obviously wasn't much of a surprise for you to see him take off when he did then?

Grant: No. It was just a matter of him getting that opportunity. It was fun to practice with him every day because he worked so hard, and he doesn't like to be scored on. So in that sense we kind of had the same mentality. It was fun to compete with him in practice.

Brandon: When you had that iconic fight against Patrick Roy, what was going through your mind when you're skating the length of the Oilers to join that brawl?

Grant: Oh, you're just backing up teammates. That's all it is. It doesn't matter whether you're a goalie, a forward defenseman, you're there to back up your teammates and if the other goalie gets involved then you have a choice to back up your teammate or not, and I would prefer to back up my teammates.

Brandon: Seems like that's kind of leaving the game a little bit. How do you feel about that?

Grant: Everybody thinks it's leaving the game, but at the same time, it's still going to be part of the game. I mean you're playing a game that's fast, that's got emotion, that's got body contact. It's never going to totally leave the game. As much as they try and run it out of the game, if you take it out of the game, the worst thing that's going to happen is the next best option is guy's got a stick in his hands. You're going to get more stick work. And I think that's worse than fighting.

Brandon: Yeah, yeah. Totally. And I think a lot of the more old school guys that think like that would completely agree. I think you see it in a lot of other leagues with mandatory face shields and that kind of stuff, and there's just way more stick work. And you're going to get more concussions and all that kind of stuff with people running around that way. But I think a lot of the newer age guys have a hard time understanding that.

Grant: You know what? The game was a safer game when the players policed the players. Because you didn't see the cheap shots. And I think as the league takes over trying to discipline players, you see more and more cheap shots which makes it more of an unsafe game, and that's the unfortunate part of it.

(16:36) HAVING A BALANCE BETWEEN TOUGH PLAYERS AND SKILLFUL PLAYERS

Brandon: So speaking of the policemen of the game, you were obviously playing on the Oilers teams with Gretzky and Semenko, I mean surely you've got some neat stories about that partnership?

Grant: You know what it is? Your tough guys make your players your best players because it gives them room to play. They don't have to worry about guys taking cheap shots at them. In Edmonton, yeah we had high skilled teams but we also had very tough teams. And you had the likes of Dave Semenko, Marty Mccorley, Kevin McClelland, Donnie Jackson, Steve Smith, Jeff Beukeboom. You can go down the list that our bigger guys gave our skill players room to play, and I think if you look at the teams that have all won the Cup, they've all had that guy. You look at Vegas, a guy like Ryan Reaves, when he was in Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh wins. It allows Sidney Crosby to be the best player on the ice. You take Ryan Reaves out of that lineup, and you look at what teams do to Sidney Crosby. It makes a huge difference.

Brandon: I absolutely agree. It's the same with Tom Wilson in Washington. It seems like most championship teams have to find that guy, but now those guys have to be able to play at the pace of the game. It's such an up and down thing now. So north south, right?

Grant: Oh, most definitely. I mean even back then. Semenk could still play. He played on a line with Gretz. So if you're going to play with Wayne Gretzky and you're Jari Kurri, you got to be able to play a little bit. You take a guy like Marty Morsorley, he played a regular shift on defense, and was a good defenseman. He played a lot of times on our top four defenseman. Yeah, they need to be tough but at the same time they have to be able to play the game.

Brandon: In your opinion, who's the toughest in the NHL right now?

Grant: It's probably Ryan Reaves. And I think he's probably the toughest guy right now. But he's also a very good player.

Brandon: He can move, yeah.

Grant: He can skate, and he's got good hands. They put him on a power play once in a while, so you know he's got some skill.

Brandon: Sounds like you're still pretty active in following the game.

Grant: I'm still a huge fan of the game. I mean I watch as much hockey as I still can. So if I can get in three or four nights a week of watching hockey, I still do.

Brandon: I think we're all looking forward to this six games a day for the play in series.

Grant: I know one thing, I'm going to spend a lot of time on the couch when that starts up.

Brandon: Yeah, exactly. I think everybody but my wife is looking forward to it.

Grant: Our household's about the same. I think I'll be curled up watching a lot of hockey. I'm looking forward to it because I kind of miss watching hockey right now.

(18:58) THE QUALITIES THAT MAKE A GOOD LEADER

Brandon: Oh, man. Absolutely. Just anything for a nice distraction. Who stands out to you as the top leaders in the NHL today?

Grant: You know without being in the dressing room, it's hard to tell, but obviously a guy like Sidney Crosby is going to be good. You look at a guy, I think Connor McDavid's going to turn into being a good leader. But it's hard to tell without being in the locker room because that's where you figure out whether guys are good leaders or not is when you're in the locker room, when you see them every day.

Brandon: Watching them put in the committed work and grinding and getting better and doing the little things.

Grant: It's the little things. It's the stuff to make guys feel comfortable. I mean if you look at Wayne Gretzky for instance, any of the young guys that came to our team, he made sure that they were comfortable the minute they walked in the dressing room. Whether they needed somewhere to stay, whether they needed a vehicle. Just whatever they needed, he made sure he reached out to them so that they were comfortable.

Brandon: That must mean a lot for a young guy coming on to a team and then having Gretzky reach out and make sure that he's got whatever he needs.

Grant: Oh, no. It means the world. That was the great thing about our team was you learn from those guys and as you move to different teams, that kind of tradition sort of carried along.

(20:04) HOW GRANT MANAGED TO HAVE SUCH A LENGTHY SUCCESSFUL CAREER

Brandon: There were a couple of times in your career that you could have retired but instead you pushed on and continued to have just great success. So what does it feel like to make a comeback and prove your critics wrong?

Grant: You know what? Sometimes you have to take a deep look inside yourself and decide if you want to push yourself or not. I probably could have stayed in Buffalo for another four or five years as a backup and not really pushed myself, but that wasn't the way I was brought up. I wanted to be a guy and play every day. You take a look inside yourself and you just realize as you get older you got to push yourself a little harder. There's going to be some good day, some bad days, some painful days, but it's a commitment that you make.

Brandon: Yeah, I mean like you were awfully committed. Like we talked about a little bit before about 79 games in the '95, '96 seasons. That's just, that's insanity. That's never going to happen again anywhere close, right? They're moving towards these tandems to try and keep guys rested for the play-offs. How were you feeling at the end of that?

Grant: I felt great. The best part about it was I felt phenomenal going into the play-offs, and then unfortunately had a little crash and burn with Nick Kypreos and wrecked a knee, but I still managed the next year after rehabbing all summer to get 73 games in the next year. It's mind over matter more than anything.

Brandon: I can totally see that. I think a lot of the time when you think you're at your limit, you always have that extra gear, and it seems like the guys that have great success just always know that inherently, right? They always find a way to push.

Grant: You know what? When I was in St. Louis I got to train with a gentleman by the name of Bobby Kersee who trained with the US track team. And training with him and seeing him work with the lead athletes, you get to a certain point and then you realize you can actually get past that point. And he'll push you past that point. And I was athletically good up until then but I wasn't a good athlete. But after training with them you understand what a good athlete is.

Brandon: That's wild. So I mean what changed in your game to make that switch? How did he form you into being a good athlete?

Grant: He just pushes you harder than you've ever been pushed. And the fact, yeah, you don't like it but you can still do it, gives you kind of a breath of fresh air mentally, knowing that you can do it. There's days he pushed where you just thought you were going to drop and you couldn't do it any more, and he'd push you a little harder. You'd get through it. Yeah, you didn't like it. You weren't very happy about it but at the end of the day when you looked back at it you were like, that's pretty cool that I could push myself past that point. So it was part of growing as an athlete.

Brandon: That's awesome. You've learned to embrace the suck in a way, right?

Grant: Yeah. I mean there's parts that definitely suck and that was one of them, but once you get through it you enjoy it.

Brandon: We hear you're a pretty good golfer. Kevin Lowe said during the '87 Cup run that you took a break to play 36 round of golf in the middle of the finals. I guess when you're asked why you only played 36, you said that it wasn't enough time to play 54. Are you still very involved in golf?

Grant: You could say that. I work as a director of golf down here in Palm Springs at a golf course. With COVID and everything going on right now I'm probably playing six days a week. So we're still pretty avid at it.

(23:12) GRANT'S FAMOUSLY CALM PERSONA

Brandon: You've got this well-known, laid-back persona towards hockey. Do you think that helped being calm in those third period clutch moments?

Grant: Oh, it definitely made a difference. I mean if you're an uptight guy playing in a style like that, you're not going to like it very much. Or if you're a numbers oriented guy, you're not going to like that kind of a style because your numbers aren't going to look great. But at the end of the day you win and that's all you were supposed to do, and it's still the number one statistic as a goalie is if I've got a goalie playing for me, I want to know if he can win a hockey game or not.

Brandon: Oh, man. I think that's absolutely true. I guess there seems to be a bit of a split now between people who think that you need your star goaltender, you need your number one with a bullet and there's other schools of thought where people think that you can have a decent goaltender with a really good goalie coach to mold them into whatever the system is and they can get by that way. How do you look at that now?

Grant: A lot of times now they get hooked up on, they're all hooked into saves percentage, goals against average. I want to know if a guy can make a save for me with two minutes left in the third period to win a hockey game. If he gives up an extra goal here or there and he's still winning hockey games, I'm okay with that. I want to know if that guy can make a save when I need it. And that was the biggest thing when I was coaching is, you tell the guys, I really don't care about save percentage. Just make the saves when we need saves. It's a more relaxed way of playing and at the end of the day, coaches get paid to win. They don't get paid if your goalie's got a great save percentage and keeps losing. They say winning isn't everything but if you're not winning you get fired real quick.

Brandon: Exactly. Winning is everything when you're a coach, for sure. Just on your last answer there when you're talking about laid back and that helping, I imagine if you're playing that wide open system and you're uptight, and you're bitching at your teammates and stuff, it would have made a lot more stress and strife, and you probably would have been a lot less successful overall.

Grant: Oh, yeah. I mean we knew if we were up five, one it's got a chance of being eight, four because you're going to give up some chances because guys are going to take chances to keep scoring. So you know going in if you're not uptight about it, you just play.

(25:24) HOW HOCKEY HAS CHANGED SINCE THE 80's

Brandon: Right. I was watching some of your highlights when I was getting ready for this. Like I was saying, I got into hockey about '91, '92 so I'm looking at some of the 80's highlights, and you're alone. You're totally alone. It's like you and three

attackers coming at you, and you're making these insane saves. It's a whole other world back then, right?

Grant: Ah, we just played a little different style. Nobody ever attacked all the time at that time. Glen Sather wanted to play an attacking of style, so we attacked all the time. We knew there were going to be some odd man rushes. We were going to give up some chances, but at the same, we were okay with that because as long as we were playing offense, we just thought we could out-score the other team.

Brandon: Yeah, and I mean what a perfect mentality to have, right? Always going in with this two-nothing lead in your head no matter what, right?

Grant: Hey, when you know they're going to score you three or four goals a night, you can make some mistakes along the way.

(26:12) GRANT'S COACHING CAREER

Brandon: I'm just wondering if you have any stories about coaching in Arizona.

Grant: You know what? I loved coaching in Arizona. We had a lot of fun. I mean I had a chance to coach Curtis Joseph which is not much younger than I am but it was fun to see how he thought the game, to see how close we were to thinking the game. We got a couple of really good years out of him. So that was fun. You get to see the young guys. Of course, coaching with Wayne's always fun. We had a great coaching staff with Wayne, Ulfie Samuelsson, Rick Tocchet, so it was a good time there.

Brandon: You mentioned Wayne Gretzky, and I just have to ask what it was like seeing him as a coach?

Grant: I enjoyed it. I know how competitive he is, so that was the fun part is you knew going in how competitive he was. I'm not sure the players realized how competitive he was. So between Wayne, Ulfie, and Rick Tocchet, they're very intense guys. And they coach like they were intense too. So that was the fun part.

Brandon: You've kind of touched on it a little bit earlier, but you had a collision with Kypreos, it set you back. It was an injury that you struggled with until the end of your career. What's it like talking to Nick now? Have you guys talked about it or mended ways?

Grant: Oh, no. We're fine with it now. It's something that happens in the play-offs every year and has since long before I started. Guys fall on goalies all the time. I just happened to have a leg caught in the wrong spot and it tore a couple of ligaments in a knee. Up until that point I'd probably been fallen on a hundred times that year and nothing happened. So

does he mean to fall on me? Yeah, he did. Did he mean to hurt me? No. Guys do it to distract goalies.

Brandon: Right, yeah. The old accidentally on purpose.

Grant: Yeah. And it happens. Every year we played Calgary in the play-offs. If it didn't happen 10 times a night, you'd be in shock. It's just one of those odd things where it finally caught up with me.

(28:01) UNDERRATED PLAYERS GRANT PLAYED AGAINST

Brandon: Who was the most underrated player that you played against?

Grant: Underrated that I played against. Probably a guy like Theo Fleury was fairly underrated and I played against him. Alex Mogilny. I don't think Alex got a lot of credit for how good he really was.

Brandon: Yeah, yeah. We saw him here in Vancouver for a little bit, and he was definitely an excellent player. What made him stand out to you?

Grant: He had all the skills. I mean I didn't realize how talented he was until I played with him in Buffalo. He could skate. He could shoot. He could check if he wanted to check. He had all the, everything you check off in a box from a player that you want, Alex had. Did he show it all the time? Not really, but when you saw him and played with him every day you realize how good he really was.

Brandon: What about Theo Fleury then?

Grant: Just a competitor. I mean that was the great thing about Theo is he's four foot nothing but just the ultimate competitor. He never gave up. It was a hard grind for him every day. And that was the fun part about playing against him. Dougie Gilmour was like that too. Not a very big guy but always fun to play against because they always gave 110% and cared. And they made it fun to play against them.

Brandon: Right. I think those guys are always the fan favorites too, right? What comes to mind for me is somebody like Brandon Gallagher for the Habs now, right? He has that same attitude.

Grant: Yeah. You hate playing against them, but the hate's out of respect.

(29:18) GRANT'S SUSPENSION FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Brandon: Exactly. Moving on a little bit, it's pretty famous that you were suspended for 60 games for substance abuse. I think looking now, if that were to happen in today's era, it would be handled completely differently. Do you think that that suspension was fair?

Grant: No, but there's nothing you can do about it. At that time there were no rules for it. So they just kind of made it up as they went, and I paid the price for it. But if you do the crime, you got to pay the price. So whether I liked it or not, whether I thought it was fair or not, didn't really matter. It's just the way it was going to be.

Brandon: When did you know that substance abuse was a problem for you?

Grant: It wasn't so much that it was a problem. The part that I didn't like was I got punished because I admitted it. They had no real idea. The fact that I came out and said, "Yeah, I did it." They decided they wanted to punish me for that. It was almost two years past from the time that it actually happened. So that was the problem.

Brandon: It's like how backwards is that whole situation. You come out. You're honest about the situation. You've dealt with it yourself, and then you get punished. I just feel like that must discourage everybody else who is in a similar position to you to just shut up and not say anything, right?

Grant: Oh, anybody that had a problem would have been driven underground. There's not a chance they'd ever admit it. I think the good thing is the league came out with rules afterwards to try and help the players. At that time they weren't there to help the players. It was more to punish the players. So if there's anything good that came out of it, it's that they came up with some bylaws and some rules to help the players.

Brandon: From my perspective it almost seems like they were trying to cover their ass. Like they were to not suffer some sort of embarrassment to the league which I don't think it was, but it just felt really short-sighted. If I were you I'd be irritated, so good on you for being so gracious about the whole thing.

Grant: Well, there's a couple other guys that had gone through the issue and didn't get punished near as badly. It's just they needed a scapegoat at that time, and I fit the bill.

(31:29) RACISM IN HOCKEY

Brandon: So you've obviously felt the pressure of racial tension. After hearing articles by Akim Aliu, what would you say to young players who are going through those kinds of experiences today?

Grant: In a perfect world they won't be going through it. It's 2020 right now. It shouldn't be happening, but you don't ever want to see it in sport. You don't want to see it in minor sport with kids. You don't want to see it anywhere. And the fact that it's still happening is disappointing. The way I look at it is, kids aren't born hating. It's taught somewhere. So I think the biggest problem is you got to find out where it's being taught and change that. And if you look at everything that's going on in the world right now, there's a lot of hate being promoted that shouldn't be. And that's where the issue's going backwards if anything else. You're looking back into the 40's and 50's as to where it is today. So they're going backwards instead of forwards, and society should be progressing forwards.

Brandon: I think that's absolutely right. Did you ever have any experiences with racism just in hockey when you were growing up in that world?

Grant: Oh, you get called the odd name, that sort of thing. As a kid my parents had taught me, don't let it bother you. If you react then they react. So if you say nothing or do nothing, then a lot of times it just goes away. Is it right? It's not right. But at the same time, the minute you react it's going to get worse.

Brandon: That makes sense. Yeah, it's just typical bully stuff. It's just like don't give them the time of the day and move on. Don't give them the satisfaction of a reaction.

Grant: Yeah. It's just a different version of bullying is all it is.

(33:08) STANLEY CUP PREVIEW

Brandon: Moving on a little bit to the hockey world today, what are your thoughts on the 24 team tournament? It's obviously going to be a unique thing. Do you think that there's any kind of asterisk attached to whoever wins the Cup this year? Or do you think it's going to be even harder?

Grant: I think it's going to be harder. If you're going to put an asterisk to it, I'd put an asterisk to them saying it's going to be harder. Instead of 16 teams it's 24 teams, and you've also just taken three months off. So get yourself geared back up again, play what one exhibition game and jump right into the play-offs, it's going to be a lot harder than it would be if you were coming out of a season.

Brandon: Yeah, yeah. I think that's exactly right. I'm so curious to see what it's going to be like because I'm sure you know this better than anyone, but there's lots of guys that train at varying degrees during the off-season. I think some guys who would have been right into it for the last couple of months and some guys maybe not so much. So I bet for that play-in round we're going to see some pretty wild disparities between fitness levels.

Grant: Well, it's going to be interesting because some players are going to think, "Okay. Well, this is going to start back up again." And they would have gone into summer mode. Other guys would have pushed themselves all the way through. And now you've added eight more teams. So now you're going to get some teams that didn't think they were in it who all of sudden in it. So now you're going to see where those players are at. So it's going to be a wild crapshoot.

Brandon: What do you think it's going to be for players living inside a bubble for maybe six weeks at a time? Do you think it's going to be easier or harder than what you had to go through?

Grant: Well, training camp's kind of a bubble any way. Because they basically chew up your whole day at training camp. So I think it's going to be a lot like training camp. It's just going to be that it lasts a lot longer. Instead of being a three or four week bubble, you're in a three or four month bubble. So at some point that's going to get a little frustrating, but once the games start it will be a little easier.

Brandon: It has to be a real challenge to be leaving their families and that kind of thing for such a long time. I mean I give them credit for making such a big commitment.

Grant: Oh, it is. It's a huge commitment for the players, and it's a huge commitment for the families. So the fact that the families are going to have to either live in that bubble or they're not going to see their loved ones while they're in the bubble. It's going to be hard on families. It's going to be hard on the players.

Brandon: Do you have any Cinderella or Dark Horse pick for who you think just may come out of this?

Grant: You know what? I think it's the one year where it's hard to pick somebody because the teams that were playing good have had three months to cool off. And you take a team like St. Louis that was rolling along and if you look at the start of last year, they were a little slow starting the year. Well, do they start faster or do they start slow? If you start slow you could be gone in the first round. So it opens a lot of doors.

Brandon: That's actually really interesting. Towards the end of the season I definitely had Boston as my team that I thought was going to roll through it. And I mean I hate to say that being a Vancouver fan, but it's the way that they were playing. But then now it's just like I have no idea how they're going to come out.

Grant: No. I mean take a look at the Canucks. You don't know what they're going to be like. I mean they were making huge progress towards the end of the year. Does that progress slow down because they had three months off or does it pick up where they left off? That's

the crapshoot. You look at a team like Montreal. They were kind of going nowhere. Now they've got fresh life, and they've got a fresh Carey Price.

Brandon: Oh, man. If you were Pittsburgh, wouldn't you be choked to draw that? You have to play Carey Price and beat him three out of five. It's like, man, we were totally in the play-offs. Montreal had a 0.5% chance of making it, and now we have to do this.

Grant: Most definitely. And it's a crapshoot in a three out of five. That's the one series where a goalie can steal the series. Goalie gets hot for two games, you're in trouble.

Brandon: Oh, yeah. Exactly. Like if you're down two buzz to Carey Price, that's going to be tough.

Grant: That's going to put the pressure on the upper seeds because you get the two home games and you lose a home game in a best of five, it's a big deal. Not so much in a best of seven, but in a best of five, you lose that first home game, it's a big deal.

Brandon: What do you think about those teams that have the byes? When they're basically waiting for the play-in round to be over and twiddling their thumbs. I know they're doing basically exhibition games to keep warm, but it's going to be a completely different pace.

Grant: Oh, there's no question. You play a couple of exhibition games, it's not like playing a play-off game. So the teams that are actually playing in the play-in round are going to be closer to firing on all cylinders than the lower seed that they're going to play against. They're still trying to find their legs and game shape. So it's going to be interesting. It's going to even everything out which is going to be fun to watch.

Brandon: Yeah, yeah. I think all the hockey fans are happy that we get an extra two weeks out of the play-offs.

Grant: Extra two weeks. You get six games a day on TV. It's a great thing.

(37:52) HOW GOALTENDERS HAVE EVOLVED OVER TIME

Brandon: How do you think today's game has changed just in terms of the goaltending position? Obviously you played for, in my opinion, the largest era of change in any position which is goaltending in any modern sport, right? I think from the 80's to the 2000's it underwent just an absolute revolution. Do you find that hard to keep up with or was it a natural part of the progression for you?

Grant: No, part of playing goal is being able to adapt. And I think what you've seen is from the time I played it went into a transition where it was more about angles and percentages. And I think what you're seeing is more of a transition back to the way I played where you have to be a little more athletic now because there's no hooking, there's no holding. And goalies have to have movement again. So the guys who just drop and take angles are having a little tougher time now.

Brandon: Yeah, that's really interesting that you mention that because you're saying you like to watch Carey Price still now. He's almost like an ice man out there, right? He's so clinical with his angles and he doesn't really move unless he has to, but he still has that just extreme athleticism when he needs it.

Grant: Yeah, he's more of the hybrid. And I think you're going to see a lot more goalies going to that now where I think it's trending back towards a hybrid that yeah, you can butterfly and take angles away, but you still got to be athletic and be able to move.

Brandon: Are there any up and coming goaltenders that you're keeping an eye on now?

Grant: I think Carter Hart's going to be really good in Philly. And I think he's the real deal. He was great in junior and his first couple years in the league he's been really good. So he's going to be the next up and coming star, I think.

Brandon: Well, awesome, Grant. Thank you so much for doing this, man. Is there anything that you'd like to promote or plug before we let you go here?

Grant: No. I just hope everybody stays safe and everybody's good.

Brandon: Awesome. Well, Grant, man, thank you so much again for coming on the show. This was an absolute honor for me, and I know all of our listeners are going to get a great kick out of it. So stay safe out there and thanks again for doing this, and hopefully we'll talk to you later.

Grant: Sounds great.

Brandon: All right. Thanks, everybody, for listening. From Brandon, we'll catch you next time on the Hockey Minute.