

FROM THE AMARILLO GORILLAS LOCKER ROOM

Gunner a real straight shooter

Perhaps it's only fitting given his name, but Gunner Garrett is certainly a straight shooter. He doesn't exactly get misty eyed when reflecting back on his nearly 50 years as an equipment manager, but when somebody has been doing the same job since John F. Kennedy was president, it's pretty obviously he found a nice niche for himself.

"I do the same thing every trainer in hockey does," said Garrett when asked about his duties with the Central League's Amarillo Gorillas. "I've just done it for a whole lot more years."

Since starting out with a minor pro team in Johnstown, Penn., in 1961, Garrett has done just about everything required to make a hockey team run.

"I was a spare goalie, equipment man and medical man in the ECHL in Johnstown and New Haven for 11 years," he said. "In the old days, you had to do it all yourself."

Garrett's varied experience isn't limited to the minor pro leagues, either. In fact, he spent two decades working NHL training camps for the Toronto Maple Leafs and, later, a few more with the Ottawa Senators.

"I started in Toronto in '76 and I never missed a training

camp until '96," said Garrett, who's approaching his 70th birthday.

At this point, Garrett is unsure whether he'll return next year for a 49th season of keeping players' skates sharp



**GUNNER
GARRETT**
EQUIPMENT
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and their equipment together stitched up. If he does go back to Amarillo, he'll creep closer to an unbelievable career benchmark.

"I'm going to be one game short of 4,000 games if I work next year," he said.

One thing Garrett has come to rely on heavily over the years is his Blademaster.

"I've had one for 14 years, it's still running," he said.

One reason Garrett thinks so highly of Blademaster is because when the machines were originally being put together, the designers lent an ear to the men who would ultimately be using them day in and day out.

"The guys who made the machines in the early days listened to what the trainers wanted and they built what they wanted," Garrett said.

It's not surprising that after his nearly half-century hanging around dressing rooms, Garrett has his sharpening technique down pat.

"I can sharpen 15 pairs of skates in 30 minutes and I can fix 'em all," he said. "And Blademaster is just the best."

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