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FROM THE BUFFALO SABRES LOCKER ROOM

Simonick set for playoff run

Rip Simonick, who has worked for Buffalo since it entered the league in 1970, has seen a lot of playoff hockey over the years. In fact, the Sabres have qualified for 27 springtime tourneys in 36 NHL seasons. We chatted with the Sabres' Simonick about the chase for Stanley:

THN: Does your job change at all during the playoffs?

RS: We try to match the players. We try to be at the top of the game, try to get everything done properly and make sure the guys don't wait for anything.

THN: Do you put more hours in during the playoffs?

RS: Yeah, you pretty much do. You don't like to go away, you like to stay at the rink. It's easier now though with cell phones. If a player needs to come in an hour early to work on his skates or stick, he can always call you.

THN: How do you deal with the emotional ups-and-downs of the playoffs?

RS: The best thing to do is just ride the wave. When you win, don't get too high, when you lose, don't get too low. Keep an even keel. The killer in the playoffs is injuries.

If you can go through and have a healthy team you can be successful.

THN: What role does experience play in the playoffs?

RS: We had a good run last year (Sabres lost in the conference final) and we're hoping that experience will help us this year. Experience is something you can't buy. In the playoffs, you're going to the well every night, you're taking every ounce of energy from your

body to win the ultimate prize, the Stanley Cup. We're just hoping we get another kick at the can.

THN: It seems in the new NHL, any team could win the whole thing.

RS: Yeah, there's a lot of parity. I think the era of the dynasty is gone. And as the playoffs approach, you can see how all the teams are starting to come together.

THN: Is home ice really an advantage?

RS: I think it is. When you're at home, you can prepare a little better. Guys are comfortable, they're sleeping in their own beds. They're in their comfort zones. And for us, we can make sure the players don't lack for anything equipment-wise.

THN: Do any of your players have any particular skate-sharpening quirks?

RS: Not really. Most of our guys are 1/2-inch hollow, with a couple of our defensemen – Dmitri Kalinin and Teppo Numminen – using a little deeper hollow, 3/8.

THN: How are you finding the new Blademaster BR2006VSV Ultimate skate sharpening machine?

RS: It's very, very good. It's very true and consistent. I've been very happy with it.



Rip
Simonick
Equipment
Manager



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