

**FROM THE BUFFALO SABRES LOCKER ROOM**

## Simonick part of Sabres history

**T**he Buffalo Sabres have seen a lot of changes over the years since getting the go-ahead to join the NHL in 1969 and playing their first game the following year. Players come and go, new arenas replace old barns, fortunes rise and fall but some teams are lucky enough to have a familiar face regardless of how many years march past. Sabres equipment manager Rip Simonick is one such stalwart, having served in that capacity since the team joined the NHL. He is the league's longest serving equipment manager.

**THN:** You've been at this for a long time. What keeps you going?

**RS:** I want a Stanley Cup ring! We've come close (lost the final in 1975 and 1999) but never quite got all the way there. I also enjoy making life easier on the players, letting them concentrate on their job. The less worries for them, the better.

**THN:** Since you don't have the ring yet, what's the career highlight to date?

**RS:** I've been equipment manager for the all-star team three times. Getting a chance to work with, and watch guys like Gretzky, Lemieux – great players and great guys – is a highlight.

**THN:** We understand you

were a bit of a rink rat. How did that come about?

**RS:** Oh yeah! My family ran a diner by the old Aud (Buffalo Memorial Auditorium) where the American League's Buffalo Bisons played. When I was



**RIP  
SIMONICK**  
EQUIPMENT  
MANAGER



around 10 years old, since we were all up early anyway, I would walk down to the rink at 5:30, help equipment manager Frank Christie set up the room for 8 a.m. and then head to school. On the way back

from school I'd stop by the rink and often go for a skate.

**THN:** How did you end up with the Sabres?

**RS:** Osmosis. I'd been around the Buffalo hockey scene for so long and when I was in college signed on with the team.

**THN:** What's the biggest change you've noticed in skates and sharpening?

**RS:** The Europeans really changed things. They wanted a shallow hollow allowing for more glide. Then others wanted that, too. Portable sharpeners have made the job so much easier and faster.

**THN:** What sharpener do you use?

**RS:** Blademaster. It's a real help.

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