

FROM THE EDMONTON OILERS LOCKER ROOM

# Steady Stafford serves the Oil

Since starting with Edmonton in 1982-83, equipment manager Barrie Stafford has built up a long and colorful resume. He was part of five Stanley Cup-winning Oilers teams and has worked extensively at the international level for Team Canada, including at the 2002 Winter Olympics. We chatted with Stafford while on the road with the team:

**THN:** You've seen many different editions of the Oilers over the years. How would you describe this year's team?

**Stafford:** Every year it's a little different. This year we have a very good mix of veterans – guys like Shawn Horcoff, Ales Hemsky, Erik Cole, Sheldon Souray, Ethan Moreau, Steve Staios. Then we have up and comers – Andrew Cogliano, Sam Gagner, Denis Grebeshkov, Ladislav Smid, Kyle Brodziak -- good young players with a lot of promise. The chemistry is awesome.

**THN:** The Oilers started this season with a lot of road games – only three out of your first 15 games have been at home. How has that been like for you?

**Stafford:** It's a challenge. There are a lot of logistics involved when you're on the road that

long. It means long hours, and a long time away from family too. But that's life in the NHL. These trips usually help a team come together.

**THN:** What do players do with their days off on the road?

**Stafford:** There are usually



**BARRIE  
STAFFORD**  
EQUIPMENT  
MANAGER



practice or workouts on days off. The rest of the time you're on a bus or plane trying to get somewhere. There are very few true days off in a season for the players. When they do get a day off on the road, most of the guys just sleep in or go

to a movie.

**THN:** Has how you sharpen skates changed over your 25-plus years in the business?

**Stafford:** Skate sharpening hasn't changed an awful lot, except maybe guys use a little less hollow. Generally, ice conditions in the NHL aren't as good as in the 1980s. The buildings get a lot of use, and we have a lot of teams in warmer climates. The players use less hollow because the ice is a little softer these days and it allows them to skate more easily. Less hollow means less bite and more glide.

**THN:** Do you use a triple-station Blademaster machine?

**Stafford:** Yes, I'm really happy with it, it's an excellent machine. When you get really busy, two guys can work on it at one time. It has a very stable tabletop.

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