

REMEMBERING PAT QUINN: 1943-2014

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 24, 2014

A life in hockey. For a boy growing up in Canada, that is the ultimate dream – and for John Brian Patrick Quinn, he had the honour of living it.

After a nine-year playing career in the National Hockey League that saw him suit up for the Toronto Maple Leafs, Vancouver Canucks and Atlanta Flames, Pat Quinn joined the coaching ranks where he would quickly gain critical attention.

Starting out with the Philadelphia Flyers in 1978, Quinn didn't take long to make a name for himself. In just his second season behind the bench, Quinn led the Flyers to a league-best 116 points, a 48-12-20 record and a trip to the Stanley Cup Final – but not before coaching his team to a record 35-game unbeaten streak that lasted from Oct. 14, 1979 to Jan. 7, 1980. During that stretch, Quinn's Flyers went 25-0-10, regaining their popularity from their championship years in the mid-70's.

After Philadelphia, Quinn went to Los Angeles where in his first season (1984-85), guided the Kings to a 23-point improvement and back to the playoffs after a two-year absence. Unfortunately for Quinn, he was unable to coach in the NHL for three years (read story here) but returned in 1990-91 as head coach and GM of the Vancouver Canucks.

There, he turned the Canucks into one of the better teams in hockey, guiding them to within one game of realizing their Stanley Cup dreams in 1994. Then, in 1998, Quinn joined the Toronto Maple Leafs as their head coach and GM, helping to turn them into a contender as well.

Overall, Pat Quinn's coaching career spanned 20 seasons where he coached 1,400 games and won 684 regular-season wins (fifth on the NHL's all-time list in both categories). But it was Pat Quinn's contributions in international play that further cemented him as one of the all-time greats behind the bench.

In 2002, Pat Quinn guided Team Canada to the top in Salt Lake City, leading his country to their first Olympic gold medal in 50 years. Quinn would later strengthen his notoriety as a players' coach by leading Canada to their fifth-straight World Junior championship in 2009 – a team that included the likes of John Tavares, PK Subban, Jamie Benn and Jordan Eberle.

For nearly 50 years, Pat Quinn has been a significant part of hockey. While his playing career won't likely be remembered by many, his coaching career certainly will.

He was better at motivating his players than anything else and it can be suggested that his players were better having played under Quinn.

His trademark hair, grin and gum-chewing made him look uncannily like my grandfather. Watching Quinn made me miss my grandfather but at the same time, remember him reverentially. Yet while most others would not be reminded me of my grandfather when watching Quinn, you can be sure that his trademarks have stood out.

Pat Quinn passed away on November 23 at a Vancouver hospital after battling a lengthy illness. He was 71.

Some may suggest that he left this world too soon – and they may be right – but Pat Quinn made his time count while he was here, making a name for himself in the sport he loved so dearly since he was a young boy growing up in Hamilton, Ontario.

Toe Blake, Scotty Bowman, Al Arbour, Fred Shero. Pat Quinn's name is right there with the greatest bench bosses the game of hockey has ever seen – and what a rightful honor that is. A life in hockey. I don't believe Pat Quinn would have had it any other way.