

Daily Collegian > Sports

[Click here to find out more!](#)

Is Bobby Orr the greatest?

Ryan Fleming, Collegian Columnist

By

Published: Tuesday, January 27, 2009
 Updated: Wednesday, January 28, 2009

[SHARE](#) [PRINT](#)

The debate goes on in every sport – amongst writers, fans, players and owners. They all bicker over who the greatest ever was. The player who competed the hardest, the player who changed the game for the generations to come after him; the single individual who lives on in memories, floating around until we realize that it was their great, monumental moments that made us love the game.

Despite how we witness their greatness, their overwhelming domination over the competition, whether it was live and in person, on the television or through a book of pictures, we know who the great ones are.

In the NHL, there have been players that made their mark, destroyed records and replaced the former names with theirs. Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux, Maurice “Rocket” Richard, Bobby Hull and Steve Yzerman have made their mark on this international game, but none are so tremendous as Bobby Orr.

Robert Gordon Orr changed the way the game was played; he changed the mentality of defenseman for years to come. In 1966-67, the year Orr joined the Bruins, defensemen played their position differently than they did before he transformed it. Defensemen would stay at home, not really thinking about joining the offensive attack. It was almost as if Orr decided to throw the position’s ritual out of the window and say, “I’m going to play how I want.” That’s pretty much what he did.

It was Orr who charged up the ice, leading the offensive rush. Orr, signed at age 12 by the Boston Bruins, was tested in his first season with the club. At that time, the NHL had players, or “goons” as they are still called now, who would go up to the young rookie and challenge him in a scrap. That was the only year he would be bothered.

Orr’s offensive abilities were uncanny. He won the Art Ross Trophy, leading the league in scoring in 1969-70 and 1974-75 – the only defenseman ever to lead the league in scoring. In the 1970-71 season, Orr had 139 points, most ever in a single season by a defenseman. Some 102 of those points were assists, again, most ever by a defenseman. Orr is also the owner of the highest plus/minus in one season with a +124.

In his trophy case, however large and wherever its location might be, Orr is the holder of eight Norris Trophies, from 1968-75, given to the best defenseman in the league. He is also the only player to win four trophies, (beside the Stanley Cup, which the Bruins also won in 1970) Norris, Art Ross, Hart Memorial Trophy (MVP) and the Conn Smythe (MVP in the postseason). Oh, and he also won the Calder Memorial Trophy (Rookie of the Year).

He didn’t have a teammate to protect him; he did his own dirty work. He forced opposing teams to alter their style of play in an attempt to slow down the 1979 Hall of Famer (youngest ever inducted at 31). Orr, the Boston Globe’s greatest athlete in Boston history, skated faster, played harder, fought better and did all of those things with such great ease each time he stepped onto the ice.

Ryan Fleming is a collegian columnist and can be reached at rfleming@dailycollegian.com

Most Commented **Most Popular**

- Journalism department hosts guest lecture trio
- No 2nd chance in the case of plagiarism 33 comments
- UMass student arrested for lewd behavior
- Butterfield Timeline 1 comment
- Who shot ya? Biggie and Tupac. 11 comments
- Forum to give students chance to share feelings on war

Generation Banking is here!

Check out mycoolbank.com today.

ES EASTHAMPTON SAVINGS BANK
 My Bank. My Future.

Member FDIC
 Member NCUA