

Winter Classic
Home

A Surreal Visit With Bobby Orr on the Ice at Fenway Park

by **James Murphy** on Dec 18, 2009 7:24:12 PM

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Friday was one of those days when, as a hockey reporter, I'm reminded just how lucky I am to be doing what I do. In the future, when I look back on my career, I'll immediately think of the day I saw the first skate at Fenway.



Unfortunately, in our business, we often lose the fan in us. We lose sight of how blessed we are to walk among legends and talk puck with people every hockey fan would only dream of saying hello to. But the fan in me came back in a hurry on Friday morning as I stepped onto the benches of the newly constructed Fenway Park rink.

As I pushed my way through a scrum of photographers to the boards, there in front of me -- on skates and on two artificial knees -- was the man my father and late grandfather forever raved about. He is the man who is **immortalized in time**, flying over the ice after scoring the game-winning goal in overtime to win the 1970 Stanley Cup for the Bruins. He is the man who revolutionized not only the game of hockey, but the hockey scene in Boston, prompting the city to build all those MDC rinks that still stand today.

He is the greatest hockey player of them all, **Robert Gordon Orr**.

"I never imagined I'd be standing out here, no, never," Orr told the awestruck media. "This is kind of surreal. You look around, and you're in a baseball park, Fenway Park. Then you look down, and you're on ice. Really unique, that's for sure."

Yeah, Bobby, I guess that described the numbness I was feeling -- and it wasn't caused by the frigid temperatures. "Surreal" was basically how I felt the entire time I stood on that bench on Friday, listening to and then interviewing Orr, and later watching him and **Terry O'Reilly** guide another legend, **Milt Schmidt**, on the ice. It was surreal to watch Orr play and joke with the Somerville youth hockey team that was skating with him and the numerous Bruins alumni.

"They don't know who we are," Orr jokingly said of the kids. "The parents do, I'm sure, but it's great to see them out there with us. It's really special for them and us. That's what it's all about."

Orr did not overlook the significance of taking the ice once again with his own former teammates.

"Pretty good hockey team out here, not bad," he said of his Bruins brethren. "Little slow, but we still got it. Being with all these guys is always nice because we don't see each other enough, and to do it here was amazing."

Eight year-old **Nicky Merkel** was asked if he realized that he just skated around the Fenway Park ice rink with the man that most New England hockey fans consider the second coming of God.

"He's the first in our house -- we're recovering Catholics," his mother, **Belinda Gaskill**, said with a proud smile.

Merkel apparently forgot his hat on this cold December morning, but guess who made sure he found one and kept one? Yep, Bobby Orr, the man who made sure hockey fans in the 1960s and 1970s witnessed magic every time he stepped on the ice -- and he always remembered the less fortunate, taking part in numerous charity events throughout his career and even today.

I texted my father a photo of Orr and myself on the Fenway ice, and he replied, "The best player and role model of my time."

Nicky Merkel will look back one day and tell his kids of this day -- as will I -- but something tells me even his kids will be in awe. We will always be in awe of No. 4, and that's just a feeling I will never lose, no matter what my job is.

Thanks for another great memory, Bobby Orr.

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
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- | | |
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