

Hockey is about having fun, Bobby Orr tells kids

BY ARPON BASU, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE OCTOBER 9, 2010

STORY

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Hockey Hall of Fame legend Bobby Orr, who is known for his career with the Boston Bruins, speaks with journalists at the Sportplex 4 Glaces in Pierrefonds in Montreal on Saturday, Oct. 9, 2010. As the official spokesperson, Orr was present to participate in the Chevrolet Safe & Fun Hockey program which promotes safe and fun hockey practice for children.

Photograph by: Dario Ayala, The Gazette

MONTREAL - The youngsters on the ice Saturday morning in Pierrefonds probably had little idea of the magnitude of the man leading them through some drills. But their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles in the stands surely did, and it was awe-inspiring.

Bobby Orr brought his Chevrolet Safe & Fun Hockey program to the Montreal area for the first time in seven years Saturday, putting about 100 area kids through a hockey workout that put the emphasis on smiles more so than goals and assists.

"What we're doing here is not only trying to develop players, we're trying to develop fans," Orr said just before jumping on the ice with the kids. "We want our kids to love our game. If they're turned off the game, they're not going to be buying caps and jerseys, so there are bigger issues at play here."

Orr first approached General Motors in 1998 to begin the program, inspired by watching over-bearing parents in arenas trying to push their kids to what is practically an impossible dream of an NHL career.

Since then Orr has been joined by fellow Hall of Famer Mike Bossy and

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Cassie Campbell – who will surely join them in the Hall one day – to help spread the message that hockey, at its roots, is about having fun.

“A kid should never leave a ball field or an ice rink feeling bad about himself or herself,” Orr said. “If a kid isn’t enjoying himself, he’s not going to stay.”

The lucky kids between the ages of 5 and 8 were randomly selected from roughly 3,500 applicants, and they got a full day of instruction with two on-ice and two off-ice sessions.

The Chevrolet Safe & Fun Hockey program has had 80,000 kids spend valuable time on the ice with one of the three legends associated with it since it began in 1999, and over 600,000 coaching manuals have been sent to try and get the adults associated with the game to remember that kids just want to have fun.

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