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Bobby Orr scores again

Published Thursday September 3rd, 2009

NHL legend hosts charity golf tourney today at Dieppe course

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For the past six years, Bobby Orr has been Metro Moncton's perfect point man.

Each and every summer, the legendary defenceman has come back to host the Assumption Life/Lounsbury Bobby Orr Benefit Golf Tournament.

The tournament, held in support of the Atlantic Cancer Research Institute, has raised more than \$700,000 since its inception.

This year, the Boston Bruins great will do one better. He has brought former Bruins fan favourite Derek Sanderson to the seventh edition of the tournament today at Fox Creek Golf Club in Dieppe.

All these years later, Orr and Sanderson are still ultimate teammates.

It was Sanderson, of course, who set up Orr with a perfect pass right on his stick on a give-and-go for the famous overtime goal in 1970 that gave Boston its first Stanley Cup in 29 years. The image of Orr -- flying through the air, his arms raised in victory -- is the most recognized photo in hockey history.

And it was Orr, who stood by Sanderson during a very tumultuous time in his life when he battled substance abuse and bad financial investments.

It was also Orr and a friend of his, who encouraged Sanderson to act quickly after a recent prostate biopsy he took came back positive. Sanderson underwent surgery for prostate cancer in June and his prognosis is promising.

"The people involved in the (cancer) field are so good. They are all passionate, they have knowledge, they have a way of explaining it to you without scaring you," Sanderson said yesterday at Fox Creek.

"It's scary stuff because you're going to die if it gets too far."

Sanderson jumped at the chance to join Orr at this year's tournament. A fundraiser for cancer research has a much more significant meaning for the former Bruins star now.

"Bobby thought it would be a good thing to come and say a few words and maybe get someone to understand ... get checked," said Sanderson, 63, a rugged but slick forward during his 11-year NHL career.

"What's it take to go get a little bloodwork and a PSA (a prostate-specific antigen test that can detect prostate cancer)? It costs you nothing.

"People look at health care when they're young and they don't care, but when you get older, it's a scary thing."

Orr and Sanderson go way back together. They played each other in an Ontario Hockey Association game in the 1960s between Orr's Oshawa Generals and Sanderson's Niagara Falls Flyers. The two future teammates fought that night, though neither remembers who exactly won the bout.

They've been life-long friends ever since their days together with the Bruins. Orr was shaken by Sanderson's cancer scare.

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"Obviously, he's a friend and it's a terrible disease and that's why we're here. The hospital here does outstanding work," said No. 4, "but it scares the heck out of me."

Sanderson, a low handicapper, will play on a team today drawn from an online auction. Orr will hit shots and mingle with every group that plays in the tournament.

Orr impresses tournament organizers year after year with his down to earth, humbling nature. He signs autographs. He poses for photos. He socializes. He hits golf balls. From dawn to nearly dusk.

The 61-year-old Orr, who lives in Boston, works as a player agent and also with General Motors. Of all his charity work, his golf tournament in Metro Moncton is one of his favourites.

"We get to meet a lot of people, have a lot of fun and raise a lot of money for a great cause, it's pretty simple," said Orr, a Hockey Hall of Famer who played 12 seasons in the NHL and revolutionized the game as an offensive defenceman before knee injuries cut his career short.

Orr captured the Art Ross Trophy as top scorer in the NHL twice -- in 1970 and 1975. He's the only defenceman to win an NHL scoring race.

"I love the people down here and we know so many people after seven years," he said. "My wife has friends down here now. The people, the support, the cause, that's what it's all about."

Orr is embraced by fans whenever he comes to the area. He even received honorary citizenship from then-Moncton Mayor Lorne Mitton in 2004.

"It doesn't surprise me. He's been that way since he was 17," said Sanderson, who lives near Boston and runs a sports group that provides professional financial advice to athletes.

"It's just the way he handles people. He's just the best."

Orr feels blessed with his lot in life and is eager to give to others.

"As professional athletes, we have a responsibility to give back and that's a great thing about this community," he said. "Whether it's Lounsbury, Assumption and all the other sponsors, they do their business here and make money, but they give back.

"We both feel that because we're athletes, if we can help raise some money for a great cause and help a wonderful community like this, it's a win-win."

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