

UEL HALL OF HONOUR: GORDIE HOWE, OC, UE

Howe was born in Floral, Saskatchewan on March 31, 1928, one of nine children born to Albert Howe and Katherine Schultz. The family moved to Saskatoon, where his father worked as a labourer during the Depression. In the summers, Howe would work construction with his father. Howe began playing organized hockey at age eight. He quit school during the Depression to work in construction, then left Saskatoon at 16 to pursue a career in hockey.

As a young teen, he played bantam hockey with the King George Athletic Club in Saskatoon, winning his first championship with them in the 1942 Saskatchewan Provincial Bantam Hockey Finals. He received his first taste of professional hockey at age 15 in 1943 when he was invited by the New York Rangers to their training camp held at "The Amphitheatre" in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He played well enough there that the Rangers wanted Howe to sign a contract. However, Howe did not feel that was a good fit for him and wanted to go back home to play hockey with his friends; he declined the Rangers' offer and returned to Saskatoon.



In 1944 Detroit Red Wings scout Fred Pinkney met with Howe and invited him to their training camp in Windsor, Ontario. He was signed by the Red Wings and assigned to their junior team, the Galt Red Wings. However, due to a maximum number of Western players allowed by the league and the Red Wings' preference to develop older players, Howe's playing time with the team was initially limited. In 1945, he was promoted to the Omaha Knights of the United States Hockey League, where he scored 48 points in 51 games as a 17-year-old.

Howe made his NHL debut with the Detroit Red Wings on October 16, 1946, playing right wing for the Detroit Red Wings, scoring in his first game, at age 18. He quickly established himself as a great goalscorer and a gifted playmaker with a willingness to fight. The term "Gordie Howe hat trick" consisting of a goal, an assist, and a fight in a game was coined in reference to his penchant for fighting; however, Howe himself only recorded two such hat tricks in his career. He led Detroit to four Stanley Cup championships and to first place in regular-season play for seven consecutive years (1948–49 to 1954–55), a feat never equalled in NHL history. During this time, Howe and his linemates, Sid Abel and Ted Lindsay, were known as "The Production Line", both for their scoring and as an allusion to Detroit auto factories.

He won four straight scoring titles and in two of the years (1950–51 and 1952–53) he led the NHL in both goals and assists, which has only been done by five other players in history (a total of 10 times aside from Howe). In three of those years, he led the NHL in goals. In 1952–53, Howe became the first NHL player to score 90 points, finishing the season with 95 points and a

career-best 49 goals, which just missed tying the league record of 50 goals held by Rocket Richard. Prior to Howe, no NHLer had led the NHL in points more than two times in a row.

Howe retired from Detroit at the end of the 1971 season. By the end of his NHL career, Howe had won the Hart Memorial Trophy as the NHL's most valuable player six times, and as of 2019 second only to Gretzky's nine wins. Howe was named to the NHL's First All-Star Team 12 times and to the Second All-Star Team eight times. His number 9 jersey was retired by the Red Wings on March 12, 1972.

One year later, Howe was offered a contract to play with the Houston Aeros of the newly formed World Hockey Association, which had also signed his sons Mark and Marty to contracts. He led his new team to consecutive league championships in 1974 and 1975. In 1974, at age 46, Howe won the Gary L. Davidson Trophy, awarded to the WHA's Most Valuable Player and the trophy was renamed the Gordie Howe Trophy the following year. In 1977, he and his sons joined the Hartford Whalers. In 1979 the Hartford Whalers became part of the NHL, and he played his final season with them until retiring in the spring of 1980, and at the age of 52 years and 10 days, Howe became the oldest man to play an NHL game when his Whalers lost 4–3 to the Canadiens.

Howe's nickname of Mr. Hockey became a registered trademark. Howe was given the Order of Canada in 1971 and inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1972, Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 1975 and Canada's Walk of Fame in 2000. He received honorary degrees from both University of Regina, and University of Saskatchewan. Bronze statues of Howe stand in front of the arenas in Detroit and Saskatoon. In 2015 Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced that the new bridge joining Windsor to Detroit will be named the Gordie Howe International Bridge. A movie based on his life was done in 2013 and he published his autobiography titled Mr. Hockey: My Story in 2014.



Gordie Howe was married to Colleen Joffa on April 15, 1953 and they had four children, Mark and Marty who both played hockey with their father, Murray who was a radiologist in Ohio, and Cathy who lived in Lubbock Texas. His wife Colleen died in 2009. Gordie died on June 10, 2016 in Sylvania, Ohio. He was cremated and his ashes buried beside his statue in Saskatoon.

Through his father, Gordie had many roots in the Bay of Quinte. His grandparents moved from the Belleville area to Wisconsin, and then to Humboldt Saskatchewan. Gordie Howe is a direct descendant of Loyalist John Burleigh (Burley) UE who settled in Ernestown Township.

Gordie Howe was inducted to our UEL Hall of Honour at our regular meeting on November 13, 2021 by Brian Tackaberry.