

THE LOST HARDWARE

BY SAL BARRY | PUCKJUNK.COM

The NHL is in its 100th season this year. In 2018, the Stanley Cup turns 125. However, not all NHL awards had such a long shelf life. Here's a look at six forgotten NHL awards.

THE O'BRIEN TROPHY

First awarded to: Montreal Wanderers (1910)

Last awarded to: New York Rangers (1949-1950)

Given to: The Stanley Cup runner-up, among other things.

The O'Brien Trophy was first given to the National Hockey Association champions from 1910 to 1917. It was named after Ambrose O'Brien, who founded the NHA. Back then, the Stanley Cup wasn't owned by any league; a team had to be champions in their own league before they could challenge for the Stanley Cup. Many teams that won the O'Brien Trophy also went on to win the Stanley Cup.



When the NHA disbanded, the O'Brien Trophy was awarded to the NHL playoff champions. Once the NHL assumed control of the Stanley Cup, making that their ultimate prize, the purpose of the O'Brien Trophy shifted. First, it was given to

the best team in the Canadian Division, while the American Division winners would get the Prince of Wales Trophy. But for a 12-year span from 1938-39 to 1949-50, the O'Brien Trophy was given to the runner-up in the Stanley Cup Finals; that is, to the team that lost the Stanley Cup. After that, the NHL retired the trophy.

NHL PLUS/MINUS AWARD

First awarded to: Wayne Gretzky (1982-83)

Last awarded to: Pavel Datsuyk (2007-08)

Given to: The player that has competed in at least 60 games and has the best plus/minus rating.

Plus/minus is probably the most-criticized "old school" hockey stat. Maybe that's why the NHL Plus/Minus Award was retired after 2008. Either that, or they couldn't get a brand of beer to slap their name on it.

This award has changed names and appearances over the years. When it was first introduced, it was called the Emery Edge Award. It had no real name for the 1988-89 season, but then was renamed the Alka-Seltzer Plus Award, then the Bud Ice Plus-Minus Award and then finally the Bud Light Plus-Minus Award.

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Should the NHL re-introduce this award, hopefully it would again be called the Emery Edge Award, which sounds much cooler than the Immodium AD Plus-Minus Award or the Toyota Corolla Plus-Minus Trophy, or some other ridiculous, mile-long sponsorship name. Which brings us to our next award...

THE ROGER CROZIER SAVING GRACE AWARD

First awarded to: Ed Belfour (1999-2000)

Last awarded to: Niklas Backstrom (2006-07)

Given to: The goaltender who has competed in 25 or more games and has the best save percentage.

Officially known as the — [deep breath] — MBNA/MasterCard Roger Crozier Saving Grace Award, this trophy was given out from 1999-2000 to 2006-07. It was named after former NHL goaltender Roger Crozier, who played in the NHL from 1964 to 1977, then later worked for MBNA from 1983 until his death in 1996. But, of course, it was also named after MBNA. See a trend here? The award came with a \$25,000 prize that the winner could donate to the youth program of his choice.

NHL/SHERATON ROAD PERFORMER AWARD

First & last awarded to: Joe Sakic (2003-04)

Given to: The player that scores the most points on the road.

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. decided to sponsor an award for the 2003-04 season. The logic behind this was that players stay in hotels when they play road games. So why not give an award, sponsored by a hotel, to the player that scores the most points on the road?

The only time the NHL/Sheraton Road Performer Award was given out was 2003-04. It was won by Joe Sakic of the Colorado Avalanche, who scored 22 goals and 27 assists for 49 points in 41 road games. The 2004-05 season was cancelled due to the lockout, and then the NHL/Sheraton Road Performer Award disappeared into obscurity. Really. I can't find a picture of it anywhere.

SCOTIABANK/NHL FAN FAV AWARD



First & last awarded to: Roberto Luongo (2009-10)

Another trophy that seemed to be more about the sponsor than the award itself, the Scotiabank/NHL Fan Fav Award — yes, "Fav" and not "Favorite" — was an award where fans got to vote for their favorite current player. Not surprisingly, Roberto Luongo won the award in its first, last and only year.

NHL LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

First awarded to: Gordie Howe (2007-08)

Last awarded to: Jean Beliveau (2008-09)

The NHL Lifetime Achievement Award was given out for two years to a retired NHL great "in recognition of their overall contribution to the league and sport." Gordie Howe won the award in its first year, while Jean Beliveau won it the next year. The trophy given to Beliveau in 2009 differed from the trophy given to Howe in 2008.



Why the NHL discontinued this award is beyond me. If hockey fans like anything, it is remembering the league's past heroes. It would be great to have a retired player appear at an otherwise-boring NHL awards show, give a speech — and give fans that warm, fuzzy, nostalgic feeling.

Plus, there are so many who are deserving of this award; from Wayne Gretzky and all he has done as an ambassador for hockey, to Willie O'Ree for his work with the NHL's Hockey Diversity Task Force, to Mario Lemieux for saving hockey in Pittsburgh as both a player and as an owner. If any award should make a comeback, much like Super Mario did in 2000, it should be this one. ☐

Sal Barry is the editor of the hockey card and collectibles site PuckJunk.com. Follow him on Twitter @puckjunk

An advertisement for Cardboard Memories Inc. The ad features the company name at the top, followed by the tagline "The Perfect Store for Kids of All Ages". Below this are several images of collectibles, including a hockey card, a baseball card, and a figurine. The Upper Deck logo is prominently displayed in the center, with the slogan "COLLECT THE BEST!" underneath it. The ad lists various categories of products: Sports, Non-Sports, Comics, Collectibles, Board Games, Roleplaying Games, Card Games, Card & Comic Supplies, and Paint & Modeling Tools. It also includes a promotional message: "With over 25 years of professional and experienced service, collectors and gamers of all ages will find everything they need in one place! Check out our facebook page for weekly tournaments, events, and other special promotions: www.facebook.com/cardboard.memories". At the bottom, the address "230 Sandalwood Parkway East, Brampton" and phone number "(905)-846-1058" are listed, along with the email "cbmemories@aol.com" and website "cardboardmemories.ca".