



It was about 355 days ago that Tyler Seguin was sitting in the Staples Center in Los Angeles wondering if his name would be called first or if that distinction would go to Taylor Hall. The Edmonton Oilers had the first pick. The Boston Bruins had the second pick as a result of a salary cap-induced trade that sent Phil Kessel to Toronto in exchange for Toronto's 2010 first round draft pick.

Taylor Hall's name was called first. His name was called by a team sputtering around helplessly in circles, trying desperately to get in to the playoff picture of the crowded Western Conference. Tyler Seguin's name was called second. He wound up going to Boston, a city he may have been disappointed to go to because Brampton, his hometown, is just outside of Toronto. But, in his heart, Seguin knew that going to Boston gave him the best shot at reaching the playoffs in his rookie season.

At 19 years old, Tyler Seguin held the Stanley Cup last night in Vancouver.

Probably in about the same timeframe, close to a year ago, Mark Recchi sat at home and pondered retirement. He had enjoyed a brilliant career, won two Stanley Cups and was widely regarded as one of the nicest guys to play the game. He was then 42 years old and thoughts swirled through his brain about spending time with family and catching up on things he had missed while playing hockey for 27 years.

He decided to give it one more shot, although he had announced prior to the 2009-2010 season that it would be his last. Knowing that he could handpick a coaching job or a scouting position if he wanted to, Recchi could have let the nightly abuse to his body end and go out with a brilliant career and two Stanley Cup rings.

At 43 years old, Mark Recchi held the Stanley Cup last night in Vancouver. Following the game, he announced his retirement.

Tim Thomas was selected in the 1994 NHL Entry Draft by the Quebec Nordiques. He was the 217<sup>th</sup> player selected out of 286. It was after his first season at the University of Vermont and he would never play a game for the franchise that drafted him. For the next 12 years, Thomas suited up for the Birmingham Bulls of the East Coast Hockey League, the Hamilton Bulldogs, and Providence Bruins of the American Hockey League, the Detroit Vipers and the Houston Aeros of the International Hockey League, AIK of the Swedish Elite League, and Jokerit, Karpat, and HIFK of the Finnish Elite League.

By the time Tim Thomas appeared in a NHL game, he was 29 years old. The appearance was a short-lived four games and he would not return to the NHL for another three seasons. Manny Fernandez was signed by the Bruins in 2007. Tim Thomas was slated to be his backup. Fernandez got hurt, Tim Thomas took the reins, was selected to the All-Star Game and never looked back.

Never looked back, that was, until just last season. Thomas lost his starting job to Tuukka Rask prior to the start of the playoffs. Despite that, he was named to the United States Olympic Team, where he backed up Ryan Miller. Tim Thomas would regain his starting job for the 2010-2011 season. He posted ridiculous numbers with a 2.00 goals-against-average, stopped almost 94% of the shots he faced, and shutout the opposition nine times.

Tim Thomas's greatest shutout of the season would be in the deciding game of the Stanley Cup Finals.

At 37 years old, Tim Thomas held the Stanley Cup last night in Vancouver. He also held the Conn Smythe Trophy awarded to the playoff MVP. He will likely hold the Vezina Trophy for the league's best goaltender after the NHL Awards in Las Vegas next week.

Ryan Kesler was selected in the 2003 NHL Entry Draft by the Vancouver Canucks. Many people in hockey circles consider the '03 Draft to be one of the best in NHL history. He flew under the radar in that draft, with several big names selected in front of him and he was the 23<sup>rd</sup> pick of the first round.

Kesler developed a national following in the United States after his tremendous Olympics in Vancouver in 2010. He had experienced success in international play already, winning an under-17 gold medal in 2002 and under-20 gold medal in 2004. He had done so by being tenacious, being a great defensive forward and faceoff specialist. His work ethic was on display in the Olympics and all playoffs long this year.

On February 28, 2010, in Ryan Kesler's home rink in Vancouver, he came up short in overtime as a member of Team USA, losing to teammate Roberto Luongo and Team Canada 3-2. On June 15, 2010, in Ryan Kesler's home rink in Vancouver, he came up short as a member of the Vancouver Canucks, one game away from winning the Stanley Cup.

At 26 years old, Ryan Kesler knelt on the ice and cried last night, covering his face with his glove, and wondering if he will ever get another shot at the Cup.

A hard-fought series came to a close last night in Vancouver, seeing the road team win for the first time in the series. The Boston Bruins celebrated while the city of Vancouver set fire to anything with four wheels in downtown Vancouver. The NHL's grueling nine month long season,

with training camp in late August/early September, and the final game of the Stanley Cup playoffs in mid-June has come to a close.

I have been in the presence of the Stanley Cup at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto. As is superstition among hockey players, I have never touched it. The only time you touch it is after you win it. I will never win the Stanley Cup. I will never hold it. But, there is that inimitable aura about it that almost forces anyone who plays the game of hockey to keep your distance.

Last night, every Boston Bruins player except for Mark Recchi touched the Cup for the first time. As is hockey tradition, every player from that team will have a day with the Stanley Cup. Zdeno Chara will take it home to Slovakia. Patrice Bergeron will usher it to Quebec. Ironically, Milan Lucic will take it home to Vancouver.



Locker room celebrations include drinking from the bowl at the top. Some players take it to a local hospital. Other players spend the day with it and their closest friends and family in the backyard. Some people, like Andrew Ladd, take it to the top of the world with them. Jonathan Toews rode the cross-town bus with it in Chicago.

It is the hardest trophy in sports to capture. The physical pain and nagging injuries begin to mount in January and have to be dealt with for six months. At the end of the season, holding that 35 pound silver Cup makes it all worth it. The names of the 2010-2011 Boston Bruins will now be etched in history alongside the likes of Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux, Patrick Roy, Martin Brodeur, Bryan Trottier, Gordie Howe, Mark Messier, and Bobby Orr.

Around a year or so from now, another group of players will realize their childhood dream. One team will feel jubilation and the other team will go home after the handshakes are finished and ponder what could have been. Every playoff year creates heroes and rewrites history. That is why they play the game and that is why we watch it. For one fan base, today is a very difficult

day, filled with disappointment and sadness. For the other fan base, today is one of the best days of their life and a day of rejoicing. For all the other fan bases, they dream of when their day will come.