INTERVIEW WITH PAUL HENDERSON

A skilled right-winger, **Paul Henderson** used his speed and a willingness to gamble on offense to great effect during his pro tenure. He scored at least 20 goals seven times in the NHL and was a top performer in the World Hockey Association. Despite an exemplary career as a professional, Henderson carved his permanent place in hockey history with his scoring heroics for Team Canada in the 1972 Summit Series versus the Soviets. His goal, with 34 seconds remaining in the final game, lifted Canada to victory in, what is now called, the "Series of the Century". Incredibly, Paul Henderson scored the winning goal in each of the last three games of this historic first series between the two superpowers of hockey. That magical moment in Moscow is still considered the greatest in hockey history. In 1997, on the 25th Anniversary of The Goal, Paul was immortalized on a postage stamp issued by Canada Post and a silver coin by The Royal Canadian Mint.

ON THE TEAM SELECTION, ON TEAM CANADA, ON THE RUSSIANS

When I heard about this Series, I was certainly hoping to be invited. I knew I could score, I knew I was a fast skater. And I was never a liability: I was always conscious of the defense and knew I could handle the Russians. I also knew they were good, however, that they had great firepower and a unique transition game. But I sincerely did not think we could lose to them: we had our best players there, I was very confident.

We were in good shape Ron [Ellis] and I when we got to camp. I always took my training seriously and did not let myself go during the summer as it was sometimes the case with several players of the NHL. But I still believed that any 35 players I would pick in the NHL would have beaten the Russians. What we didn't take into account is that the Russians were already a team, had been playing together for two years; we had to get used to each other's way of playing hockey.

ON HIS BEST MEMORIES OF THE SERIES, ON THE ICE

Of course, there is the 'goal of the century' moment, I can't deny that this was a memorable moment and, to be fair, had I not scored that goal, none of the other memories would have mattered because we would have lost.

I did score the winning goal at the last three games and I do remember feeling quite elated with the goal I scored in Game 7. I knew that if we tied, the Series was over. Time was running out on the clock and I was very conscious of that when I got on the ice. I thought to myself: "OK, Big Boy, this is the time," because it was very likely this was my last time on the ice. Let's just say that the fear of losing is perhaps the greatest motivation a player can have. I scored the winning goal, it slid passed the whole Russian team. I remember thinking that I could never score a bigger goal than this one, but I guess I had one more in me for Game 8!

ON HIS BEST MEMORIES OF THE SERIES, OFF THE ICE

We visited Russia during the Cold War: it was an inevitable clash of culture. It was extremely different than what we were used to. One of my most vivid memories is when we visited the museum. There must have been a thousand people waiting in line to get in, mostly Russians. We showed up, accompanied with some Red Army guards and they brought us to the beginning of the line, skipping what could have represented a several-hour wait. But I wasn't happy about this, because the guards pulled their rifles to push their own people back and to make sure no one was complaining about us getting to the front of the line. I thought this was a horrible way to treat your own and I didn't even want to go visit the museum after that.

We went to Russia in 1972 with quite colourful outfits, compared to the drab grey and beige that everyone was wearing. We were standing out in the crowd with our plaid pants, let me tell you. I went back to Russia in 1974 and, to my own surprise, Russians had started to dress like us! Seems we exported our style there. Then again, in only two years Russia had changed quite significantly. Having 3,000 tourists (all Canadian) stroll about Moscow and spending money probably open the Russian government's eyes on the value of tourism.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE SERIES ON HOCKEY

I must admit that I hated the way the Russians played. Their tendency to regroup in their end zone if they didn't like the way things were going was baffling to me. If we had done that in the National Hockey League, the coach would have left us on the bench!

No other team had such an effective transition game, and their passing was flawless. But in a sense, we were playing against a hockey system, not hockey players. These players had been at it for two years, training six days a

week for 11 months out of the year. They barely saw their families. They were robots! In Russia, the coach would say "Pass the puck for the next three hours" and the players would have to do it. In Canada, players would have said "Are you crazy?" Their training was intense, that's all they did. No wonder they surprised us with their skills.

ON WHAT HE TAKES PERSONALLY FROM THE EXPERIENCE

What this experience taught me is how incredibly lucky we are to have been born in Canada. Before I went to Russia, I took the ideas of liberty and democracy for granted. I've traveled to 58 countries in my life, and I must say that Canada is the best country to live in by far. Every Canadian living in Canada has won the lottery in my mind. In this country, if you work hard you'll do well, you'll live well. We can't say that about so many countries.

ON WHAT HE THINKS CANADIANS SHOULD REMEMBER FROM THE EXPERIENCE

There is nothing I want Canadians to remember about the Series because… they already do! It's incredible that after 40 years, people still come up to me to talk about the Series. Canadians are undeniably attached to this Series and I don't think it will ever be forgotten, nor its message.