

July 22, 2008



NHL Winter Classic 2009 Press Conference:

**COMMISSIONER BETTMAN
CRANE KENNEY
ROCKY WIRTZ
PAUL KELLY
JIM DELLAVANO**

EDDIE OLCZYK: Good afternoon, my name is Eddie Olczyk, and I'd like to welcome everyone here today, as well as everybody watching on television here in Chicago on Comcast Sportsnet, and everybody in Detroit and across North America on the NHL Network.

We are at Wrigley Field, historic Wrigley Field, the home of the Chicago Cubs. But on January 1st, 2009, it will be the home of the National Hockey League Winter Classic as the Chicago Blackhawks take on the defending Stanley Cup Champion Detroit Red Wings. We have some distinguished guests here not only in the stands here at Wrigley Field, but also up on stage.

At this particular time I'd like to acknowledge the people that will be taking part in today's festivities. First, the gentleman that made this really happen and allowed the National Hockey League to come to Wrigley Field, the Chairman of the first-place Chicago Cubs, Crane Kenney, the Commissioner of the National Hockey League, Mr. Gary Bettman, the Chairman of the Chicago Blackhawks, Mr. Rocky Wirtz, the Executive Director of the National Hockey League Players' Association, Mr. Paul Kelly, and representing the Detroit Red Wings and the Detroit Tigers, Senior Vice President Jimmy Devellano. To your right and my left, the gentleman that really spearheaded the Chicago Blackhawks and the City of Chicago's participation in the National Hockey League Winter Classic along with his staff, the President of the Chicago Blackhawks, who is a long-time member of the Chicago Cubs family, Mr. John McDonough. Three hockey Hall of

Famers, three gentlemen that have their numbers hanging in the rafters of the United Center, Bobby Hull, Stan Mikita, and Tony Esposito.

Standing behind, the current members of the 2008-2009 Chicago Blackhawks as well as in the stands, front office of the Blackhawks led by General Manager Dale Tallon, and Hockey Hall of Famer and the current head coach of the Chicago Blackhawks, Mr. Denis Savard.

Some very special athletes have entertained on this field both baseball and football: Cub greats, Ernie Banks, Billy Williams, Ryne Sandberg, my favorite, Billy Buckner, visitors Roberto Clemente and Tom Seaver, the Chicago Bears, the great Gale Sayers, Dick Butkus, and the coach, Mike Ditka.

Now the National Hockey League Winter Classic, the players will take the ice on this field, Wrigley Field, players such as Blackhawks Young Stars Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews, and for the Detroit Red Wings, Henrik Zetterberg and Nick Lidstrom.

At this time I'd like to introduce some of the people that I mentioned earlier that made this day possible and January 1st possible, the chairman of the Chicago Cubs, Mr. Crane Kenney.

CRANE KENNEY: Thank you all, I want to welcome everybody to Wrigley Field on this beautiful day. It's an exciting moment in our history. I want to take you back for a minute before we talk about what's going to happen in January.

Since its opening in 1914, Wrigley Field has played host to sporting events of almost every type. Home to the Cubs since 1916, Wrigley Field has hosted two professional football teams, both the Cardinals and the Bears, professional soccer, professional boxing, rodeos, the circus, the Harlem Globetrotters. In 1944 we actually had a ski jumping event here. More recently we've hosted concerts, and next Tuesday we'll host the first ever minor league game when our Peoria Chiefs play the King County Cougars.

This coming January we'll have another first, and I believe it will be one of the events most

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memorable when people look back on the history of Wrigley Field, and that is the Winter Classic. We're very excited to host the event here, and we're very excited that Commissioner Bettman and the team behind us have agreed to allow Chicago to be the home of the second winter classic.

I want to thank the people in our organization that are making this happen: Mark McGuire, Carl Rice and Mike Lufrano. From the moment I raised this idea back in February, they're the one who's stepped forward and will actually do the hard work that will pull this event off, and I want to thank them for being willing to sacrifice their off-season to make this happen. So to all of you, thank you very much.

Brian Jennings, and Don Renzulli, I invited them here in April to show them why we're so proud of this great ballpark, and why we think this is the right venue for the Winter Classic. In a nice comeback win for the Cubs that day, I think we sold them on what is so important about Chicago, and we want to thank them and look forward to a great partnership.

Mayor Daley and Alderman Tunney, clearly we couldn't do it without our elected officials, and we want to thank them. And certainly, John McDonough, our good friend who has supported our effort from the beginning to get the game here in Chicago. Welcome back to Wrigley, John, and we look forward to spending more time with you as we go forward.

Finally, to Commissioner Bettman for agreeing to bring hockey to Wrigley. We have a motto around here, and that is the best games are played in October. So maybe for one year we'll have to suspend that and say maybe the best games are played in January as well. So now I'd like to welcome and present a Cubs gift to Commissioner Bettman, the Commissioner of the NHL.

COMMISSIONER BETTMAN: Good morning and welcome. The National Hockey League is absolutely delighted that Wrigley Field, this wonderful historic landmark, will be the site of the Winter Classic for 2009.

I want to thank Crane Kenney for everything you've done to make this a reality. The entire Chicago Cubs organization for sharing your home with us.

Just as there is much history at Wrigley Field, there is much history as well between the Chicago Blackhawks and the Detroit Red Wings. They will have played 700 regular-season games against each other by the time we play the NHL Winter Classic 2009, and that will be just 163 days

from now. No teams in the NHL have faced off as many times in regular season play.

This will be the clubs' 345th meeting here in Chicago. And there have been several outstanding athletes who have played on both sides of the rivalry. Actually, I think there have been 147 players who have played for both teams. And you could make up a fairly spectacular all-time team from the players who have competed for both franchises. To name a few, in goal you would have Glenn Hall and Dominik Hasek, on defense, Al Arbour, Chris Chelios, Paul Coffey and Bill Gatsby, and up front you would have such forwards as Sid Abel, Wendel Clarke, Dennis Hull and Ted Lindsay.

These teams currently include players who have competed previously on outdoor rinks. Notably Brian Campbell of the Blackhawks, and Ty Conklin of the Red Wings played in the inaugural Winter Classic at Buffalo last year. And Ty Conklin also played for Edmonton in the Heritage Classic in 2003, so for him this will be an outdoor hat trick.

The Heritage Classic and the inaugural Winter Classic were magnificent reminders of our sport's majestic beginnings and firm roots outdoors, exposed to the elements. Now these great clubs will combine at this unique venue to contribute to our newest tradition, outdoor regular season hockey on the first day of the new year.

With the Red Wings defending their Stanley Cup title, and the Blackhawks bringing outstanding new energy to the Chicago sports scene with their great revival, this should be a truly fantastic afternoon for our clubs, for our fans, and for our viewers on NBC, CBC and RDS, and for our listeners on NHL Radio.

There are several people to thank for their contributions for the planning and execution of this event. Thanks, of course, to Dick Ebersol and Ken Schanzer of NBC. Scott Moore at the CBC, Paul Kelly and the NHLPA. And of course thanks to the Cubs, the Blackhawks and the Red Wings, and, of course, to Mayor Daley and the City of Chicago. There are our sponsors, more on that later.

We certainly expect that the NHL Winter Classic will be a home run for hockey in this ballpark. Thank you, and it's my pleasure to present Mr. Wirtz.

ROCKY WIRTZ: On behalf of the Chicago Blackhawks and Wirtz Corporation, I want to thank Commissioner Bettman for the great honor of holding the Winter Classic here at Wrigley Field on New Year's Day. I also want to thank our host the Chicago Cubs and the chairman Crane Kenney for the use of this legendary venue, and of course

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Mayor Daley and Alderman Tunney for helping make this event possible.

Jim Devellano, we are proud and grateful to have the Detroit Red Wings participating as well. Most of all I want to thank the Blackhawks fans whose support was key in bringing this game to Chicago.

In addition to showcasing the excitement of today's NHL to the millions of Americans on New Year's Day, this game will also reintroduce America to the new Chicago Blackhawks. This is a team of young and talented players who are renewing our franchise's proud tradition. They'll see a team that represents the new generation of hockey, the next generation of stars. This is a great move forward towards our future and the Blackhawks' ultimate goal of winning the Stanley Cup.

This game is also going to be wonderful for our fans, the fans who share the excitement of the new era in Chicago hockey. We are grateful for their strong support. We're also grateful for the neighbors in our Lakeview area, and we are committed to working with local leaders to ensure this event is a wonderful experience, not just for the 40,000 fans who will attend the game, but for everyone in the community.

In closing, Mr. Commissioner, we know that on January 1st the dead of winter, when Chicago is before the world, the world will feel the warmth of this great city and its people. Thank you very much.

EDDIE OLCZYK: Thank you. At this time I'd like to bring up the Executive Director of the National Hockey League Player Association, Mr. Paul Kelly.

PAUL KELLY: The NHLPA is very excited to support the Winter Classic in this great place in a game between Chicago and Detroit on New Year's Day. If that's not the definition of classic to have two original six NHL teams competing in a game in one of North America's Legendary sports venues. We only hope that the ivy that they put on the boards and the glass doesn't slow the game up too much.

It's actually a pleasure for me to be here with several of our NHLPA members. Behind me, I know that the players are thrilled to play in this game. And it's a particular honor and pleasure to be here on the same stage with three of my childhood idols. Even though I was a Boston Bruins fan, I revered the play of Bobby Hull and Stan Mikita and Tony Esposito, and it is really an honor to be on this stage with them.

I know that for young kids, they will one day have the same thing to say about many of the great Blackhawk players who are behind me.

Our members of the NHLPA have participated in the previous two outdoor games in Edmonton and Buffalo and have come away with a tremendously positive experience from these events.

You know, when I travel around and talk to our teams I get a lot of questions about is there any chance that our team can participate in that event? You know, many of the guys that are playing games on the road, they watch the Winter Classic from Buffalo last year with snow coming down, and the dramatic finish, and it's something that particularly guys that grew up playing the game on frozen ponds and frozen lakes would love to experience. It's great for the players, it's great for the game.

It will be special to have, of course, the Blackhawks and the Red Wings. Both of these clubs have an illustrious history with terrific players that will be playing in this game. Many of whom are behind me, and unfortunately we don't have any of the Red Wings players here but having watched the Stanley Cup finals, most of you know who they are. They have an array of great players. Not just Nick Lidstrom and Henrik Zetterberg, and Pavel Datsyuk, but Chris Osgood and Marian Hossa will be joining them as well.

I think this game will certainly help to revitalize the historic rivalry that's existed between these two great franchises. And Wrigley Field is a special place, and this will be an amazing experience for the fans, for the players, and for the viewers on TV.

It's also a wonderful time to be a Chicago sports fan. I give great credit to Mr. Wirtz and Mr. McDonough for all that they are doing to this great hockey franchise, and of course, Chicago has two Contending baseball teams at the present time. Being from Boston, we've had a pretty good run of sports teams, and I sense that it's now starting to turn and it's Chicago's opportunity.

So in closing I just want to say that the NHLPA and its members look forward to playing a vital role in the Winter Classic in helping it to become a very successful event, and to showcase the many talents of our players in our great game today.

I want to thank the city of Chicago, the Chicago Cubs, the National Hockey League and Commissioner Bettman. The Chicago Blackhawks, the Detroit Red Wings and all of the many wonderful hockey fans, and, of course, the

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players who will participate in what will be a most enjoyable game.

With this, it's my great pleasure to introduce the president of the Detroit Red Wings, Mr. Jimmy Devellano.

JIM DEVELLANO: It's great to be here today in this great cathedral of baseball. And I guess at least for one day it will be a great cathedral for the NHL and hockey. Both the Chicago Blackhawks and the Detroit Red Wings entered the league the same year in 1926. And as Commissioner Bettman pointed out, we probably have played more games than any other two teams in the National Hockey League. So there is a great rivalry.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Blackhawk organization, starting with owner Rocky Wirtz, President John McDonough, and General Manager Dale Tallon who have just done a tremendous job in getting the franchise up and running and revitalized. It's been very exciting to see. It's great for the league.

We, in Detroit, are very pleased about it. But we hope they don't go so hard on us as they did last year. They had a darn good record. I see Denis Savard down there.

But we're very excited on behalf of the Detroit Red Wings to play an outdoor game here, to expose both the Blackhawk Crest and the Red Wing Crest across North America. A lot of nontraditional people that wouldn't normally watch a hockey game will watch it, because it's at Wrigley Field, it's in the middle of the winter time, so I think it's going to be a tremendous spectacle. I want to thank Gary Bettman and the league for making us part of it. Thank you.

EDDIE OLCZYK: On behalf of the Chicago Cubs, Major League Baseball, the National Hockey League Chicago Blackhawks and the Detroit Red Wings, we thank everybody for coming here to Wrigley Field today, everybody watching across North America, all the great hockey fans.

This concludes our formal part of our press conference, and everybody up here on stage will be available for interviews and scrums out inside the makeshift rink on the field here at Wrigley Field. Thank you very much, and have a great day.

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