

Wanted: the perfect boss

It's hard to define what makes a great coach, but we at Gateway sports know it when we see it—and what we see is ballsy suits and crazy plays



SPORTS
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Commentary

The taunts you heard in the schoolyard are true: statistics are for squares. It takes more than just a fancy Hall of Fame induction or a shiny undefeated streak to impress the truly discerning sports fan. As the squeaky kid from *Captain Planet* would say, it takes heart to truly be a champion, and that goes double for coaches—though sometimes “heart” means “yelling” and “plaid.”

In recognition of this fact, the *Gateway's* finest coaching analysts have put their heads together to make an entirely subjective list of the best coaches—any sport, any time.

Trevor Phillips

My pick can be summed up in just three words: Donald S Cherry. The loveable loudmouth commentator from CBC's *Hockey Night in Canada* is, without a doubt, the greatest bench boss in the history of sports. Statistically speaking, Grapes isn't the top hockey skipper of all time—that's obviously Scotty Bowman—but what Cherry lacked in NHL games coached he has made up for with a keen fashion sense that comes equipped with one fine pair of ass-kicking boots.

Cherry took over the Rochester Americans in '71, and two years later he won AHL Coach of the Year and was promoted to the two-time defending Stanley Cup Champion Boston Bruins. There, he won 231 games in five years, two conference championships, and the Jack Adams Award in 1976. After he and Bruins GM Harry Sinden exchanged knuckle sandwiches over a coaching blunder in '79, he was fired. But, for the record, it was a too-many-men-on-the-ice penalty, and nobody was going to beat the Habs in the '70s anyway because that jerk Bowman was coaching them.

Still, Cherry went on to revive hockey in Colorado, albeit with a fight-first, play-hockey-later strategy, before retiring from the game and filling our ears with insightful knowledge and our eyes with beautiful suits every Saturday night on his Coach's Corner segment.

Don't forget, Cherry accomplished all of this while only having playing one shift in the NHL and never finishing junior high—that alone should be reason enough to crown him as the best coach. Then again, Bowman never played in the NHL either, that wuss.

Nick Frost

As a fan of hockey, it would be absolutely criminal for me not to include a guy like Roger Neilson on a list of the greatest coaches of all time, whatever the criteria. He was one of a only a handful of coaches to have coached 1000 games at the NHL level, had 460 regular season wins, two President's Trophy-winning seasons—one with the Rangers in 1992 and the other with the Senators in 2002—and was even named to the Order of Canada. It's pretty easy to see, then, that Neilson had an astounding impact not just as a coach, but as an individual as well.

Neilson's greatest contribution, without question, was his method of using game footage to analyze the strategies of other teams and determine the areas in which is own team needed to work harder—a way of coaching that has since been adopted been most, if not all, coaches in all levels of the sport.

His innovative thinking and ability to read loopholes in the NHL's rule-book gave him a unique approach to the game, one that any coach in the current era would be hard-pressed to match. Hell, any guy that would send out a defenceman to play goal on a penalty shot—which would allow the defenseman to come out of his net and play the shooter directly, and lead the NHL to change the rule to permit only goalies to defend on penalty shots—is someone who's clearly thinking on his feet.

To this day, I'll never forget watching the NHL Entry Draft in 2003, when Gary Bettman came to the podium in Nashville between picks to announce Neilson's sad passing, and the collective lump in every hockey fan's throat in knowing that we had lost one of the best to ever stand behind the bench.

Marc Affeld

It took almost three years of petitioning the NFL, but this season, San Francisco 49ers head coach Mike Nolan was finally allowed to dress the way he wanted to, and was the first NFL coach in thirteen years to don a suit and tie on the sidelines.

Thanks almost entirely to Nolan, a special deal was negotiated before the start of this season between the league and Reebok—which owns exclusive rights to providing all of the clothes worn by NFL coaches—to create a Reebok-brand suit for Nolan to wear.

You see, while coaches in the NHL and NBA have pretty much always been allowed to wear suits, professional football coaches have for the past decade been forced to dress like the angry gym teachers that exist only in our darkest nightmares.

The reason Nolan gives for wanting to kick it old-school is out of respect for his ex-coach father and all of the suit-wearing football coaches of years past—evidence that the man has class to spare.

I don't care if current New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick has three Super bowl rings; I would personally much rather take orders from a man who is one fedora away from looking like Tom Landry than a man who is one missing tooth away from looking like he pans for gold in a tent along the North Saskatchewan River.

Of course, there are many football fans who might point out how insignificant being named *Esquire's* eleventh-best-dressed man in the world is compared to one's performance on the sidelines, but the fact remains that Nolan is a beacon of hope for old-style gridiron fans who are sick of having to hear about dog fighting, strip-club shootings, human growth hormones, and secret films of the opposing teams' defensive signals.

Ben Carter

Football is, essentially, a game of common sense. If you've prepared well enough during the week and you have quality players who know what they're doing, a football game basically comes down to two things: who can make the fewest mistakes,

and which coaching staff can make the adjustments necessary throughout the course of a game to win. Fans looking to learn a lesson in quality football coaching should have their eyes focused firmly on the sidelines at Commonwealth Stadium, as Danny Maciocia is providing lessons on what not to do, by getting thoroughly out-coached every week of the season.

When he first took over the team in 2005, Maciocia inherited a team rich in talent and experience. The Eskos won the Grey Cup later that year, where Maciocia distinguished himself by running out onto the field before the game was quite over.

Since then, the team has floundered, due in large part to one boneheaded coaching or personnel decision after another. The infamous last-play loss to Winnipeg in 2006 (in which the Eskos decided that double coverage wasn't necessary on Milt Stegall—only the greatest receiver in CFL history), the end of 34 consecutive playoff seasons, and a number of incidents that suggest the Eskimos have become a team without a lot of class (AJ Gass, Rahim Abdullah) have all occurred under Maciocia's watch.

The Eskimos, once the envy of every team in the league, have become mired in mediocrity, with a long way to go to catch up with the rest of the CFL.

It remains to be seen whether or not Maciocia will go down in history with other CFL coaching disasters such as Jeff Reinbold, Matt Dunigan, or Kay Stephenson. But as it stands, he remains the favourite coach of this non-Eskimos fan, and I will look forward to seeing his confused stare on CFL sidelines weekly for as long as I can.

Robin Collum

Records and trophies are impressive, and Jacques Demers has picked up his fair share of these. The former NHL coach and current French-language TV announcer coached in Montreal, Quebec City, St Louis, Detroit, and Tampa Bay. He won two Jack Adams awards for NHL Coach of the Year, in 1987 and 1988—the only person to have won in consecutive years—and led the Habs to their most recent Stanley Cup in 1993.

But it's not his accomplishments in the arena that have most earned my respect; it's what he did two years ago: he publicly admitted that he was functionally illiterate. Demers had kept it a secret throughout his entire career, and even many of his closest friends were shocked at the revelation. He was practiced at hiding his status: he knew a few common phrases, such as those he would write for autograph-seekers; developed an excellent memory; and would often ask for help with English text, claiming that he wasn't bilingual enough to handle it—among other tricks.

Everybody has a secret that they dread exposing to the world, and this was Demers'. He explained that he was too afraid to admit his illiteracy earlier, for fear he'd be ostracised. He figured that the NHL would never have given him a chance; he even kept his illiteracy from his wife.

It was an incredibly brave move to come forward with his story, and drew attention to a problem that gets very little attention in North America.

Good coaches lead by example, and in my books this makes Jacques Demers one of the best.

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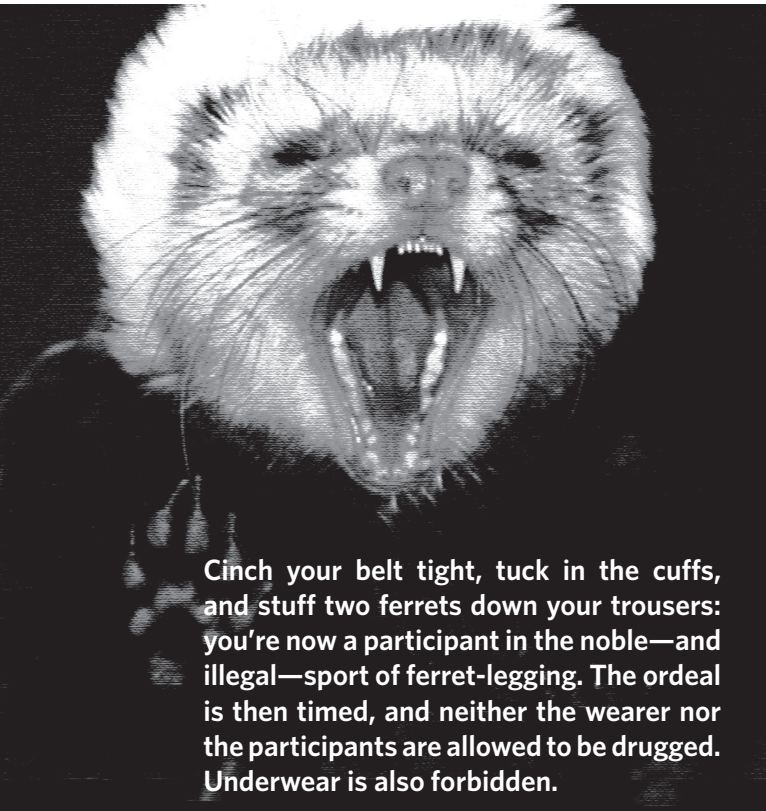
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Cinch your belt tight, tuck in the cuffs, and stuff two ferrets down your trousers: you're now a participant in the noble—and illegal—sport of ferret-legging. The ordeal is then timed, and neither the wearer nor the participants are allowed to be drugged. Underwear is also forbidden.

Gateway sports meetings, which happen every Tuesday at 5:30 in 3-04 SUB, have been designated a ferret-free zone

GATEWAY SPORTS

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