



Thundermouth: Memoirs of a Broad Street Bully and NHL Lifer

Joe Watson

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Filled with fascinating stories from on and off the ice, the memoir Thundermouth will be a treat for true hockey fans.

With a foreword by Hall of Famer Bobby Orr, two-time All-Star Joe Watson's engaging memoir *Thundermouth* recounts the hard-hitting defenseman's National Hockey League career, including his Broad Street Bullies glory days in the 1970s, when he helped the Philadelphia Flyers win back-to-back Stanley Cup championships.

Sharing memories of how the the expansion Flyers went from having a welcome parade that few attended to winning over their city and becoming one of the decade's most iconic teams, this chronologically told life story stretches from Watson's childhood to his postretirement involvement with the team, including as a scout and advertising executive. His hockey career started in a humble manner: he used frozen horse dung as pucks in his British Columbia hometown. As an adult, he had a fourteen-year NHL career and reached the sport's zenith, twice winning a championship with his brother Jimmy Watson. He is enshrined in the Flyers Hall of Fame.

There are peeks at Watson's athletic perspective throughout, as when he discusses his rivalry with his brother, his avoidance of penalty minutes, and what it's like to play against fearsome opponents. Still, such personal details are less focal than exciting highlights from sports history, as when Watson recalls scoring in an exhibition against the Soviet Union's Red Army team in the only match where an NHL team bested the Russians in 1976. There are entertaining insider's details as well: Philadelphia's indoor arena, the Spectrum, was not finished in time for the team's first practices, and the players shot pucks at the workmen who were still painting.

The prose is, at various times, muscular and boasting (a teammate is "hard-nosed" and "rawhide-tough"), colloquial (the "freakin' Stanley Cup"), and dishy (Watson notes that Orr was skinny at first but used a rowing machine to bulk up). Some clichés are incorporated, though, including "Suck it up and deal with it" and "That's how it's always been and always will be"; these undermine the book's more singular insights. And the text becomes more contemplative as it progresses—for instance, weighing in on the toll that hockey's drinking culture took on many fellow players. Further, personal and archival photographs, ranging from vintage black-and-white family photographs to candid locker-room shots, punctuate the text to illustrate Watson's stories. Many of the images hold historic interest, as with a shot of the Flyers traveling back to Philly with the Stanley Cup and with another of Watson hanging out with stars Bobby Clarke and Phil Esposito.

The sports memoir *Thundermouth* includes riveting tales of hockey action from a Hall of Fame player.

JOSEPH S. PETE (February 28, 2024)

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