



Tom's Message Board



Humble Superstar

UVM hockey fans from 1993-97 knew there was something very special about Martin St. Louis, Eric Perrin, and Tim Thomas. These three young men brought a level of skill, excitement, and success the program never experienced before. All three went on to play in the NHL and 15 years later at the maturing ages of 37, they continue to compete on the highest levels of the sport. Perrin has a Stanley Cup, St. Louis has won every award from Sportsmanship to MVP to a Cup, and Thomas is coming off the pinnacle of any professional's career – Vezina Trophy (top goalie), Stanley Cup MVP, and his name on the Stanley Cup alongside his UVM teammates. Our boys done good and they're a great source of pride for Vermont fans. On September 2nd, Vermonters celebrated this pride by welcoming Tim Thomas back to his early career roots with a parade through downtown Burlington for both Boston Bruins and UVM hockey fans alike. At 37 years old, Thomas is the oldest recipient of the Conn Smythe trophy (Stanley Cup MVP) and only the 2nd American-born recipient of this honor in NHL history.

He made his NHL debut as a Bruin in 2002 but his playing time was spotty and before long was sent back to the Bruins AHL affiliate team, the Providence Bruins, and then to Finland during 2003-05. He was re-signed by the Bruins in 2005 as a backup to starter Hannu Toivonen but as Toivonen struggled, Tim was elevated to starting goalie where's been ever since. To watch him play throughout the 2010 playoffs was magical. He kept the Bruins in every game as he protected the goal with appendages going in different directions at the same time fending off opposing players' shots, deflections, and bodies jamming the crease for position. This is after hip surgery in 2010!

Tim played with confidence and consistency all season long, forming the foundation of what every winning hockey team relies on, a stingy goalie. To perform such a physically demanding role, at such a high level, at an age that's typically past prime, makes his accomplishments all the more impressive. His success is the result of a lifelong work ethic from his earliest working class family roots in Davison, Michigan, to adopting a yoga-based training regimen in 2007 to improve his strength and flexibility for the job, to his never-give-up pursuit to be the starting Bruin goalie.

But what really caught my attention throughout last season was Tim himself. During the final Stanley Cup series with the Canucks, when Vancouver goalie Roberto Luongo taunted Thomas, Tim maintained his cool and professionalism and shut down the Canucks with his play rather than retaliate with cheap words. In his post-game interviews he remained humble and grateful for his teammates, coaches, and the fans. After eliminating Tampa Bay and his former college teammate Martin St. Louis in the Stanley Cup semi-final, Tim made it a point to acknowledge Marty's competitive spirit and consoled his friend as the two shook hands and exchanged hugs at the end of the game. And one final character observation... I couldn't help notice that when the final siren sounded at the end of each game Timmy and the Bruins won, the first thing he did each time is stop, look up, and raise his hands. Only he really knows what this means, but I have my own thought on this and how it speaks further to his character. Congratulations to the Boston Bruins for a Stanley Cup winning season and to Tim Thomas for the thrills, skills, leadership, perseverance, and character of our humble superstar.

Tom Brassard, President