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BROOKS, Herb(ert) Paul (b. 5 August 1937 in St. Paul, Minnesota; d. 11 August 2003 near Minneapolis, Minnesota), hall of fame ice hockey coach who led the United States men's team to a gold medal at the 1980 Winter Olympics.

Brooks was the oldest of three children born to Herb Sr., an insurance salesman, and Pauline (Johnson) Brooks. His father was a well-known amateur hockey player in the 1920s, and Brooks grew up in a hockey household. Brooks attended St. Paul Johnson High School, and in 1955 led the hockey squad to a Minnesota State championship. He turned down a scholarship offer from the University of Michigan so he could walk-on with the University of Minnesota (UM) Gophers hockey team. Coached by John Mariucci, Brooks lettered 1957-1959, was heralded as one of the fastest skaters in college hockey, and finished his collegiate career with 18 goals and 27 assists. He graduated in 1961 with a B. A. in Psychology.

After graduation, Brooks sold insurance so he could keep his amateur status. He was the last player cut from the 1960 Olympic team, a loss that drove his competitive nature. From 1961 to 1970, Brooks played on five national teams (1961, 1962, 1965, 1967, and 1970) and two Olympic teams (1964 and 1968), more than any other player in USA Hockey history. Brooks teamed with his brother David on the 1964 team and captained the 1968 team. He also played semi-pro hockey for the St. Paul Steers and Rochester Mustangs during this time. An injured hand suffered during a Steers game led him to the emergency room where he met his future wife Patricia Lane, a nurse. They married in 1965 and had two children, Dan and Kelly.

Brooks had an intense desire to grow and develop the game of hockey in America and definite ideas on how it should be played. In 1969 he became the freshman hockey coach at UM. He also pioneered junior hockey in Minnesota and became the first coach of the Minnesota Junior Stars of the Minnesota/Ontario Junior League in 1970. On 21 February 1972 Brooks took over as head coach at UM, becoming the youngest college coach in the United States. Minnesota was a last place team, and Brooks introduced a new style of play, based on Russian hockey. His efforts paid off as the Gophers became a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) hockey powerhouse. During Brooks' seven-year career he amassed a record of 165-95-18 and won three national cham-

pionships (1974, 1976, and 1979). The 1974 team was the first team with only American developed players to win a NCAA championship.

In 1979, Brooks was named the United States national team head coach. For Brooks, an Olympic victory was not about patriotism but changing how hockey was played in the United States. He knew that hockey executives in the National Hockey League (NHL) and internationally did not think highly of American players, particularly college players, and was determined to prove them wrong. He built a team from scratch, putting together players he could teach a new system to as well as run through an intensive training program. He introduced a new style of play that was a hybrid of the wide-open European style with the aggressive forechecking of North American hockey. Brooks called his style “American hockey” and likened it to sophisticated “pond hockey” that allowed players creativity and freedom on offense while emphasizing speed and puck control.

To prepare for the Olympics, Brooks took the team on a sixty-one game exhibition tour through Europe and in the United States, playing against NHL and Central Hockey League teams. Brooks credited much of the Olympic success on this tour as previous Olympic teams relied on other college players to prepare. Brooks also made himself the focus of the players’ animosity, making the team hate him more than the competition. The players respected him as a coach but complained he was cold and distant. Brooks was also known for bellowing cliches while in practice, such as, “You don’t have enough talent to win on talent alone,” that the players affectionately called Brooksisms.

At the start of the Olympics, the Americans were seeded seventh (of twelve), but battled through the opening rounds undefeated to make the medal round. They faced the vaunted Soviet Red Army team in the semifinals. The Soviets were a full-time team and the recognized powerhouse in international hockey, but Brooks knew, and convinced his team, that the Soviets were vulnerable. Before the game, Brooks told his players, “You were meant to be here. The moment is yours.” The Americans stunned the Soviets, and the world, with a dramatic 4-3 comeback victory that had broadcaster Al Michaels proclaiming, “Do you believe in miracles? Yes!”

Three days later, the United States beat Finland to secure the gold medal. American hockey came of age as a result of the victory, and the team inspired a generation of players that if the Americans could beat the Soviets, maybe they could go on to NHL careers. Sports Illustrated named the team “Sportsmen of the Year” for

1980 and called the game the greatest sports moment in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The game, the team, and Brooks were immortalized in the 2003 movie *Miracle*, starring Kurt Russell as Brooks.

After the Olympics, Brooks coached the Daro of the Swiss Elite League before beginning his NHL coaching career. Craig Patrick, Brooks' assistant in 1980 and general manager of the New York Rangers, hired Brooks to coach the Rangers in 1981. Brooks tried to change the way things were done in the NHL, such as introducing off-season conditioning programs, and brought his hybrid style of hockey to the team. The Rangers became a perennial playoff contender under Brooks, and *Sporting News* named Brooks Coach of the Year in 1982. Overall, he compiled a 131-113-14 record and four playoff appearances in five years before being fired in 1985. Brooks went on to coach the St. Cloud College hockey team, 1986-1987, helping the college earn NCAA Division I status. In 1987, Brooks became the head coach of the Minnesota North Stars, the fourth time he was asked to coach the team. He inherited a bad team made worse by injuries and was fired after a 19-48-3 season.

Brooks took time off to recharge his coaching batteries working as a television commentator, hockey scout, and motivational speaker. In 1990 he was inducted into the United States Hockey Hall of Fame. Brooks returned to coaching in 1991 with the Utica Devils of the American Hockey League (AHL), the minor league affiliate of the NHL's New Jersey Devils. He returned to the NHL in 1992 as coach of the Devils, leading the team to a 40-37-7 record. He resigned at the end of the season over a disagreement with team management. When USA Hockey turned down his request to coach the national team in 1992, Brooks took a job as a scout for the Pittsburgh Penguins.

In 1998, Brooks returned to Olympic hockey as the coach of the French national team, where he suffered his first loss as an Olympic coach, and the French team failed to make the medal rounds. In 1999, he was inducted into the International Ice Hockey Federation Hall of Fame and became the head coach of the Penguins. He coached the 1999-2000 season, compiling a 29-24-5-2 record and a playoff berth. In 2000, Brooks turned over the head coaching reins to Ivan Hlinka, who served as Brooks' assistant, and returned to scouting.

Brooks took his last coaching job when he was named the head coach for the United States national team for the 2002 Olympics. There was no miracle time as Brooks coached NHL stars, not amateurs, to a silver medal, losing to Canada in the finals. Following the Olympics, the Penguins named Brooks their director of player development, and USA Hockey awarded Brooks the Lester Patrick award for service to hockey. On 11

August 2003, Brooks died in an automobile accident north of Minneapolis as he was returning from a United States Hockey Hall of Fame golf tournament. Over 2000 people attended his funeral services at St. Paul Cathedral.

Brooks dedicated his life to promoting and growing not only hockey, but American hockey, a devotion continued by his children Dan and Kelly when they helped form the Herb Brooks Foundation in September 2003. The Foundation promotes hockey development across the country, particularly youth hockey. USA Hockey honored him by renaming the ice arena at Lake Placid the Herb Brooks Arena. Despite the accolades, Brooks experienced a love/hate relationship with USA Hockey. He was very critical of how the game was played in the NHL and America. He abhorred fighting and he felt the game was misunderstood and underappreciated in the United States. He was uncompromising in his principles, and his inability or unwillingness to compromise often left him at odds with USA Hockey and NHL executives. Brooks was outspoken and had a prickly nature that caused many to not like him, but almost everyone respected him. Dave Silk, a member of the 1980 team, commented after Brooks' death that he would be remembered for never kowtowing to "bureaucrats and empty suits." Brooks made each team he coached better because he knew how to get the best out of every player, and his work proved that the United States could be a force in international hockey.

## Bibliography

The only biography of Brooks is Ross Bernstein's *Remembering Herbie: Celebrating the Life and Times of Hockey Legend Herb Brooks* (2003), published as a memorial to Brooks after his death. The story of Brooks and the 1980 Olympic team is told in Tim Wendel's *Going for the Gold: How the US Won at Lake Placid* (1980) and Wayne Coffey's *The Boys of Winter: The Untold Story of a Coach, a Dream, and the 1980 U. S. Olympic Hockey Team* (2005). Additional information can be found in Austin Murphy, "Mellow Time for a Miracle Man," *Sports Illustrated* 68:1 (11 January 1988), p. 34-35 and E. M. Swift, "Miracle, the Sequel," *Sports Illustrated* 100:5 (9 February 2004), p. His obituary appeared in the 12 August 2003 issues of the *New York Times* and *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.