

# Deshielo (Melting Ice)

An Ice Skating Rink instead of a castle?

I live in the tropics -I try not to be too busy  
On my front porch overlooking the Caribbean sit five full hockey bags with enough equipment to put more than a full team on ice-goalie gear too-, these haven't been stolen yet. Others Have. . I'll help you load it if you're on a crime spree. Many are. You run this Circus. I dare you. There's a rink. RING (sic).fifteen miles down the road; -This gear won't be seeing the ice soon, if ever.

El Deporte De Hockey sobre hielo no hay permiten a practicar aqui!

Evoking Graham Greene's take on Haiti during the Duvalier (Papa Doc's) regime-"The Comedians." An American investor is given a tour of the yet to be built city of Duvalierville, amongst the plans for a Cathedral, hospitals, shopping malls, factories and hotels, the Haitian emissary tells Mr. Brown, the investor, (later played by Richard Burton in his final role) that Papa Doc also was going to build a skating rink in this utopian city of the future.

Mr. Brown asks; "Whatever for?" the Haitian replies; "Because it will be Chic."

Well our rink has been in operation of sorts for the last eight years with one inept management team after another. I've lost count of how many they've cycled.

"Chic" is not the operant word for the history of Ice Hockey in the Tropics.

It is only a matter of time before the building is abandoned for good and left to be yet another mismanaged local enterprise. I live in a town with an abandoned nuclear plant, a vacant plastics factory, a multi-million dollar baseball stadium that has never seen a game played since its' inception, and a Marina that has been unusable for the last eight years, and has the distinction of being

one of the only places in the western world where the police have actually left town. (Not to mention the countless boats that used this spot, the westernmost on the island, as the first stop after the Dominican Republic. Or a launching point for Mona and Desecheo Islands that lay between.)

We do have an ornate new fountain in the Plaza that should be operating soon.

As I'm writing this ,I have just been contacted by the International Hockey Almanac based in Prague, CZ who is compiling data from the 69 countries around the world that have Ice Hockey programs. They were inquiring about ours. For the last three years I've been soft-pedaling our problems to the International community in hopes that in time our program would return to a functioning entity, and these last few years were just a speed bump in the eventual growth of a unique program that would be beneficial on a myriad of fronts, including desperately needed youth programs, a new tourism niche and being responsible partner in one of the largest sporting organizations in the world, second only to Futbol (Soccer).

Unfortunately, during these seven years, the Island's crime and drug rates have climbed to some of the highest in the world, and our youth diabetes rate has escalated to the highest in the western hemisphere. All , highly indicative of the need for youth to have an outlet to learn honor, respect and sportsmanship as well as getting the physical activity to prevent these health issues.

Meanwhile the tourism department is spending money like a drunken sailor trying to lure tourists here. Albeit ,to no avail.

The rink, the first in the Caribbean is going out of business.

This is not "Chic".

This is Puerto Rico

Citing correspondences, press coverage from the International Media, memo's from meetings and my own personal involvement since the since the rinks' opening 8 years ago, I will try to relay what went wrong and who is to blame.

It will serve as a microcosm of why this Island, adrift for 500 years, the last 100 as a Commonwealth of the US, has no intention, or plan, of how to become self reliant and moving into the new millennium in any responsible way.

This is Puerto Rico.

Only Dennis Leary can save us now. And he just might  
But our inept government is not the only guilty party here. The National Hockey League (NHL), the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) and big businesses that claim to want to participate in community involvement.(Hey Scotia Bank !)

## Chapter One-Opening Night October, 2004

I had to see it to believe it.

After living seasonally on the Island for the better part of three decades there are things you miss by choosing life in the Caribbean, among them- normalcy- in the North American sense of the word-whatever that means. Herman Wouk has this covered in “Don’t Stop the Carnival”, so I needn’t reiterate on that realm.

It was the lack thereof that was so attractive back then-beautiful beaches, great surfing, fishing and diving. Nightclubs that stayed open all night, gorgeous women and most importantly-Chaos.

Life was moment to moment and you never knew what the next one would bring. If the power was out at 10 am that meant that happy hour started at 10:30, if only to save the precious ice. If the surf came up for two days, that meant no one worked for three. Not that anyone was actually gainfully employed. These were the days before guest houses, designer coffee shops, condominiums sprouting up at an alarming rate, making the construction crane the national bird. Trees were not the enemy. Basically we had

everything normalcy was not. More importantly, we had the time to enjoy it.

Yet still there are things every traveler misses when away from home. In my case it was Ice Hockey. These were the pre cable TV days, ESPN highlights were still years away. The local papers had no interest or space to even remotely cover it. The only news of standings, and or stories of the NHL or the like came from freshly arriving visitors, who as a service to all, would bring the paper from wherever they arrived. A Sunday New York Times was a treasure along the lines of the Dead Sea Scrolls, even if it was two weeks dated. It would be treated as such, being carefully relayed from one culture starved reader to another.

After living along these lines for so long it, came as close to a dream- like surprise to hear that the Government was planning to build a rink –with real ice-in the next town-Aguadilla. Also in the complex were going to be a boxing club and a fitness center. I couldn't even to begin to take it seriously, as so many crazy ideas had been foisted upon us already. Aquariums-TV Stations- Upgraded Marina facilities, water and electric on a daily basis-. The only real selling point to the possibility of truth was the Boxing Club, as our long history of Boxing rivaled Baseball as the national sport of choice.

So for a long year I tried to follow news of any progress regarding this fantasy becoming reality. The only physical indication anything would ever develop was the endless bulldozing of the town's derelict waterfront.

Aguadilla - reputed to be the landing point for Columbus on his second tour of the New World to replenish his water supplies from the pristine waters that ran down from the lush hills, had come a sad long way in the following centuries. You were more likely to find a dead body floating in the water along with the scores of syringes and other assorted wrack.

This was an area only the brave or addicted ventured after dark. Yet over the course of a few months all the near abandoned shacks and their denizens were slowly disappearing, leaving only a razed area that nobody had the slightest idea of what could eventually replace this tropical oceanfront ghetto.

A Skating Rink? Only in my wildest dreams.

In the Late spring my dreams were confirmed as I stopped at the largest of the projects that were going on simultaneously, a park, a boardwalk, running a stretch that only a year prior, could have doubled for a war ravaged Baghdad. (Which ironically we did this past year in the film Men Who Stare at Goats) A running track, a skateboard park, a soccer field and, Tabernac! An honest to god Ice Rink, with yes, a boxing club and fitness center on the top levels.

We were about to have it all. The Sun, the surf, the lifestyle, and yes, Ice Hockey.

I was beyond myself when I returned to Atlantic Canada for the summer .Telling anyone that would listen about our good fortune. Just as the concept of surfing the frigid waters along the coast there was in its infancy, and I was already thought of as foolish in that regard, trying to get anyone to believe this was even more absurd. The only selling point is that Nova Scotia is the birthplace of Ice Hockey, adapted from the Mic-Mac Indians and the Scottish game of Hokay. Only to evolve into the National Pastime and one of the most popular sports in the world.

Not even the biggest blasphemer would lie about the latest evolution of the national pastime.

This was to be the beginning of the untold times the response was to become one of two obvious retorts.

1) "Oh, just like "Cool Running"- The Story of the Jamaican Bobsled team .Starring Canadian Icon John Candy.

2) "Oh, like when Wayne Gretzky was a Hawaiian Hockey player on Saturday Night Live."

To the first I would respond; Yes; except that Jamaica has no snow and has to practice in Canada....WE HAVE ICE IN PUERTO RICO!!!

To the second; Yes, But Wayne Gretzky played in Los Angeles NOT Edmonton anymore. The NHL now has teams in Florida, Texas AND Arizona. Not to mention they really do have a rink in Honolulu.

Hockey in Puerto Rico... This was too good to be true. It was time to put this dream into gear, literally. Hockey Gear. Knowing that even if we were really to have a rink, it was going to take some equipment to make this work. So, for the rest of the summer I picked up whatever gear I could find (There's no shortage in Canada) to bring on my southern migration. Armed with a dozen sticks and assorted skates and gloves to pass around I headed south. For myself, I had brought old Ridell metal blade skates from the late 40's and an old straight Northland stick. I was going to have the first skate in this cultural oddity returning the history of the game. "Old School. Dit Clapper, Eddie Shore".

Getting off the plane and waiting for the luggage attendant to give me my sticks and gear bags among the tourist's usual arsenal of surfboards and golf clubs that get checked through was one of the greatest feelings I ever had. This was ground zero. Where would it lead? For all its cultural oddity and strange looks from airport personnel, I knew, No matter what, History was being made.

It also meant so much more on a personal level. Hockey Hall of Famer Reginald "Hooley" Smith was my Great Great Uncle. Hooley (Short for Hooligan) Had won The first Gold Medal in Hockey for Canada in France in 1924 and had played in the first professional game held in the USA, Playing for the Montreal Maroons against the Boston Bruins..

My mission was certainly groundbreaking, yet my own family had done the same almost 80 years before.

"Hooley" was posthumously elected to the HHOF in 1972 with "Mr. Hockey" Gordie Howe, "Gentleman" Jean Beliveau and Bernie "Boom Boom" Geoffrion.

This is often referred to as the greatest class ever inducted.

I was walking with giants.

Upon my return I would check the progress in Aguadilla.

Puerto Rican work crews usually consist of five workers sharing a shovel and three government employees supervising the five.

Surprisingly, things were actually getting done. I was later to learn

why. The rink builders were a Philippine company that builds similar facilities around the world and they had their own deadline to meet. A look inside the building was a touch of a letdown as this was not going to be a full size surface (200' x 80') but a junior arena at 2/3<sup>rd</sup> size.(140' x 60'). I really couldn't be disappointed as any surface at all is better than none, although this would mean any hockey would be 3 on 3 not 5 on 5. The location of the rink more than made up for it as it was a snowball's throw from the ocean. There was also an oceanfront bar that served dollar beers in the parking lot.

It wasn't a perfect rink, but it was going to be OUR rink.

The statue of Christopher Columbus ( Cristobal Colon) directly in front proved our point. We were the new explorers. Well, at least for the modern Hockey world.

After scouring the local papers and radio, the former more notorious for graphic photos of the previous evening's crime rampage-Bloody corpses on the street seemed to be the most effective selling tool. The latter a cacophonous mix of banter, crazy sound effects and more birthday greetings than people to celebrate them. I stumbled upon a press release stating the Rink was to have a grand opening in three days! Even more surprising was the mention of the Puerto Rican Figure Skating team giving an exhibition Where did they come from? Roller Bladers? Refugees from a 3<sup>rd</sup> rate Ice Show? I was going in.

The next morning I arrived for my first of many volunteering missions. Amidst the fray of Government employees and the Philippine contractors trying to finish up, there they were. The Puerto Rican Figure Skating team, jumping and stretching in a room off the lobby. A quick glance verified their dilemma-There Was No Ice!

The boards were up and the concrete sub floor was in place and I saw a Zamboni looking thing being removed from a crate.

There seemed to be an issue of sorts between the government and the contractors about the final payment, and the making the first Sheet of ice was the bargaining chip.

Uh-Oh, We were off to a dicey start already.

So here's where it would begin. I found the chief engineer and was told of the problems. I asked if the refrigeration pipes under the concrete were working yet (they were), and what if I just started to spray the frozen concrete with water from the dormant hose running into the building. He looked at me quizzically, as this is not the normal operating mode here. Volunteering? After verifying, yes, I did know how to lay ice and my future commitment to the facility, he just said, sure, go for it.

Minutes later, there I was with a fire hose and a large squeegee working my way around the surface laying the first sheet of Tropical ice.

Within minutes I was approached by a woman that looked and sounded like Fran Drescher's television character "The Nanny". Adorned in a power suit and wearing more jewelry than necessary. She immediately started pressing me on when the Ice would be ready for her team. Before I could introduce myself and tell her I was volunteering my services and was the force behind the Hockey program that would be here as well, she was off to deride some other set of her ears about the issues facing her team, who were at this point were jumping and twirling in the lobby amidst the power cables, ladders and other assorted tools the workers were using in their mad flourish to get ready for the opening.

While I was waiting for the first thin coating to freeze I made my way to the four figure skaters to inquire what this was all about, and more importantly ,where were they from? It turns out there really was the makings of a Puerto Rican Figure Skating team. They were based in the D.C suburbs, and the "Nanny" was one of the skater's mothers and the Major Domo.

International residency issues let a descendent of a nation play for another country. Think Mike Piazza playing for the Italian Olympic Baseball team because his grandmother was Italian.

So, in effect, yes Puerto Rico did have a Figure Skating program. The Nanny's mother was Puerto Rican.



Not unlike the very Jamaican Bobsled team I would be peppered with as a comparison endlessly. They were based off the Island!

We were to be based right here. In this Country. In this Rink. As the proximity of the upcoming opening in two days was starting to gather some attention and various officials were walking around wondering who was in charge, and more importantly, would we be ready? I was finding myself in the middle of three separate factions. The Government, The Contractors and last, but far from least, the Figure Skating Organizer, who finally introduced herself as Lynette Spano, who had finally acknowledged I was doing this on my own and would get it done no matter what. This was good as she then directed her attention to the sound engineer to make sure her music would be in synch with the lights and other parts of the gala. While all this was getting to be a bit taxing, I did what seemed to be the smartest option, and that was to sequester myself in the Zamboni gate to start assembling the Zamboni while the second layer of water was setting up.

I had never seen anything like this machine before. It too was made in the Philippines, and looked like a three wheel electric golf cart that had mated with on oversize Bumper-Car. I hadn't the vaguest idea where to start, so I started unpacking the assorted parts and prayed there was a manual that at least had a picture of what it should look like when complete. The options looked endless and I could only guess and use my childhood fascinations with erector sets and Heathkit radios as a guideline.

Of course there was no Manual

I did the first obvious choice available, which was to find the electrical charging components and batteries. At least this Frankenstein would have power, and hopefully I could figure the rest out.

As I looked for the head engineer, or whoever might have the manual, I looked as the workers on the catwalk above the ice, who were installing the biggest disco-ball I had ever seen. Think of the scoreboards in normal facilities and replace it with a giant Dance-Fever Orb. As I had grown up with Disco on ice being the rage, my

nostalgia was in overdrive. Many were the Saturday nights doing the "Hustle" in a pair of goalie skates before practice.

After a quest I could never imagine, searching for a Philippine zamboni manual in a Puerto Rican rink. I finally tracked it down in a stack of maintenance manuals for everything else being installed. Most of the other manuals had more in common with a Pink Floyd show than a rink. Laser lights, a deafening sound system and black lights that would make your teeth glow. I wouldn't have been surprised to see a guide how to inflate a giant floating Coqui frog\*.

It was now after normal work hours and the scurrying panic was dwindling down. I took the opportunity to spray another coat of water on the ice and return to building the zamboni so I could spread the coloring agent on the ice. Without it the ice would be a translucent dirty gray. I was going to make it a milky white.

I could hear that Lynette must have been diverting her attention to the audio room as the same opening bars of skating intro music repeating endlessly. Loudly. Good God, I felt as if I were doing last minute back stage work at an off-off Broadway production. I didn't have a script but I did have the Zamboni manual that was in 12 languages and a translation of English that was more humorous than informative. Within a few hours of wrench turning and laughing at the translations. Make fit wetting post. Hmmm... I was able to cross the threshold. There was a full charge on the batteries and I was going for the first Zamboni drive ever in the Caribbean.

I was barely even finished after the first run laying the hot water and coloring agent when Lynette frantically inquired when her performers could practice their routines.

Tomorrow, I responded as I had been in the building 16 hours and needed a break as there was one more full day of work to prep this for the opening. And there were one dollar beers in front.

The next day came with a perfect welcome as I entered the parking lot, the sign installers were on the cherry picker putting up the sign in front of the building. We were to be named the Aguadilla Ice Skating Arena (AISA) with the profile of a speed skater replete with the full lycra suit and hood. Fantastic! We were

a junior rink and our image is a silhouette of Eric Heiden winning the 1000 meter sprint.

As I entered the building I was immediately confronted by Lynette asking at what time could her skaters practice. I was still a few layers away from having the ice thick enough for the digs and cuts figure skating puts in the ice. So I told her the late afternoon would work. She then shifted her attention to event planner and started in on what our hockey team planned on doing in the festivities. And more importantly, did we have entrance music.

This was heading into Slap Shot 2 territory and we were now hockey artists/performers.

Our “Team” consisted of me, in 50 year old skates, Jari, a Finnish transplant that hadn’t skated since grade school. Scott, who grew up in Toronto watching Hockey on TV, and Bundy from Connecticut, who seemed to be at any opening, whether it was a supermarket or gas station. He had a pair of skates that had never seen a sharpening machine.

Even better was that Scott had procured Hockey sweaters from a long lost local roller hockey league that glorified our long dormant nuclear reactor. So for the opening we would be the Puerto Rico Reactors.. Complete with a Three Mile Island –esque Logo that glowed in the dark-Black Light ready.

I didn’t have time to pick an entrance song, although the options seemed endless. Gary Glitters’ Rock and Roll Part Two would have worked the crowd-yet Negativlands’ Car Bomb seemed more appropriate.

I’d leave it up to Lynette. A Dios Mio!

I returned to spray another layer of water on the now white ice and Lynette was getting itchy. There was still no rubber matting to enter the ice without damaging skate blades on the concrete and she asked what I could do about it. I took the cardboard and wood from the Zamboni packaging and made a pathway to the refrigeration maintenance room. I told her you now have a dressing room and a safe passage to the ice. Leave me to the ice surface.

By now the Philippine contractors were packing it up and assuming my work would cover their closing check, so they could head off to Abu-Dhabi or whatever mall was looking for cheap ice next in the developing world.

I had still yet to meet an actual Puerto Rican in any sort of position of responsibility and wondered who was actually in charge. Was I? Lynette seemed to think so.

I spent the rest of the morning adjusting the zamboni blade and waiting to spread the last passes of water to get to the desired thickness. Things were looking good so far. The press had started to show up, as well as expensively dressed officials. Most of the last minute prep was getting finished up and I was excited to be taking the first ever Zamboni, or whatever this three wheeled doodle –bug was really called. And then go for a skate.. I was determined to have the first ever skate on my Ridells! Even if no one else saw the history of it all, I did.

Lynette meanwhile was determined to run a full dress rehearsal and was playing her entrance music repeatedly. And loudly!

The Figure skaters were in full costume and she was frantically trying to get my attention. I assumed it was to inquire when I'd take the last run. No; it was to choreograph the hockey entrance. She played some kind of generic techno and starting to clap the tempo. I said sure, whatever. I didn't have the heart to tell her of our dubious lack of recent ice time to rehearse our "Routine".

We quickly had jumped right into the real Slapshot 2 (The Crappy Baldwin sequel). We were now "Hockey Artists". What Next?

This seemed a good a time as any to lay the final sheet. So out of the gate I came! The first ever Zamboni run. I fine tuned the blade and had a full tank of hot water to spread. And the little rig surprisingly was leaving a nice surface. When I was about 2/3rds done and getting the feel of it the Philippine crew chief and two people I hadn't seen before stopped me at the open gate. I assumed it was to ask to see how the machine was doing its job. No, this was where I met the new facility Manager Carlos and his sidekick, Choco. After a confusing introduction I was informed Choco was

to be the Zamboni driver for the opening. Sure, I replied at this point any help was good .Except for one thing. Choco was the most cross-eyed human being I'd ever seen. This was obviously a typical Puerto Rican job appointment.Choco looked as though a drinking straw could do serious damage and if he ever presented a drivers license, even the meanest cop on the Island would have to laugh as the entire windshield would be considered his blind spot.

All I could do was walk him across the first ice he had ever encountered and prop him up on the machine and put the blade up and shut off the water flow. This was too much to take in all at once. Lynette was too entrenched in clapping off beats to the music and the figure skaters were ready to start. I figured No way were they beating me for the first run and I figured it would be easier to skate to the far end of the ice where I assumed Choco was sure to lodge the machine against the far boards. I laced up the first and last leather boot, metal blade skates to ever be worn on the Island.

And he's off! Choco was without a doubt equal to the task of total mayhem as he was spinning in circles where I had landed him on the machine and was just starting to widen his arc and careen into the first thing available, so I jumped on the ice to straighten the wheel and send him off at a slower speed to minimize his eventual collision. The run he took was by far the most demented zamboni run on record. Not even the drunkest driver ever could match this display. Carlos the manager was yelling crazy commands to avoid the imminent damage. Sure enough he jammed the machine in the corner and I skated over and guided the machine out the gate and here we go! Open Ice! History starts now.

Lynette was taking her team through the opening entrance and the skaters started their group entrance. On beat, of course.

I definitely needed a beer and went outside to the Veradero bar in front where my ""Hockey Artists"" were waiting to get their practice in after the figure skaters finished up. They were still in a state of hilarity after witnessing Chocos' performance .I told them to drink up as I hadn't told them of Lynette's desired artistic presentation of our entrance. Nor did I tell her of our ""Rustiness"".

Sure enough after an hour of beer and laughter we entered the building, ready to represent as Puerto Rico's first Hockey team. The figure skaters were wrapping it up and it was go time. I had put a piece of cardboard in front of the benches located on the benches gate of the rink so we could enter from the side. Lynette frantically ran over and said this wouldn't do as she was going to teach us our cues and we'd come out the Zamboni gate at the far end of the rink, the same as her squad would do . .

It was futile to tell her this was going to be the first skate in years for 75% of our squad. So we crawled across the concrete on our knees to enter the surface at her desired spot. She played us our theme, that seemed to be a midi version of the "Ibiza" dance song popular at the time, and tried to get us to recognize our prompts to enter one at a time.

We agreed on an order, and as I wanted to see Lynette's expression while seeing the state of our crew , I chose to go last. Bundy entered first and slowly headed up ice, Scott followed and immediately went to cling to the boards for support. Jari got both skates on the ice and immediately went down, I finished up and quickly passed Bundy ,who had remained upright, despite having no edge whatsoever on his blades .At this point Lynette turned off the music and gathered her team up to return to the Hotel. And presumably have a bottle of booze. We all needed it

We skated for an hour or so, and then I prepared to lay one more sheet to set up overnight. Choco was nowhere to be seen. Possibly having walked himself into a corner, awaiting a spin like those old electronic puppies. I then laid what was to eventually to be the last of good ice in the building. And it was back to the bar for a beer or 10 (They are 10.oz here and light) and plan for the next day's festivities. Also of note I took the ice scrapings off the zamboni blade and packed a half dozen small snowballs so we could have the first snowball fight in all the tropics. Beachfront no less.

We returned at 5 the next afternoon to have a few hours to feel everything out and make sure all was ready. As we knew our skating prowess wasn't going to dazzle the crowd despite

Lynette's influence we had a trick up our sleeves, we had bought Puerto Rican flags to wrap on our sticks and unfurl at a good time. So while we had our last minute prep Lynette only asked that no one fall down. This was also when I was to have my first, of what were to be many, encounters with Aguadilla Mayor Carlos Mendez who had been quietly watching the progress for the last 48 hours and wanted to thank us . I wanted to ask who was responsible for hiring Choco, but I figured that could wait. I also met Juan and Luis, two older Puerto Ricans who had showed up with hockey skates and told me they used to skate on a tiny patch of Ice in San Juan in the 70's called the Palacio de Hielo (The Ice Palace)-Long since closed. This was cool, we had all assumed we were the first and here were the Louis and Clark of the Tropics .We had extra sweaters and said of course they were in on the first night. Not to mention a few more skaters would make us look more of a team than a demolition derby on ice.

This was to be a major event for the Island and the building was filling up with local Political Heavyweights and Media Outlets with full camera crews. This was to be a private event with an open bar and food. I had told our local friends to come in through the open zamboni door that opened into the back parking lot, this gave everyone their first chance to wear winter clothes here. We loitered around in our ridiculous Reactors sweaters as the lights dimmed and the Speeches began;

The Governor, the Mayor, the Director of Sports and Recreation, Tourism and any other dignitary that always seem to find a live microphone and a captive crowd were wowing the audience pledging this was the Start of a New Island! Get on Board!

The Lasers and Black lights kicked in as did Lynette's music and the Figure Skating team was introduced and took the ice to raucous cheers, they performed a group routine and then did a few solo routines, performing axels and spins to crowds delight. They finished up with a group skate and threw flowers to the crowd.

Our theme came on and we were welcomed as Puerto Rico's first hockey team, the Rincon"Reactors", the crowd went wild and we

chased a few pucks around (we had no nets). Fortunately the light show kept our skills hidden in the dark although the disco ball threw crazy spots all over the ice occasionally focusing on someone. We used this opportunity to unfurl the Flags from our sticks and wave them with Orgullo, the crowd erupted into the largest cheer of the night, until... Jari took this moment to lose his footing and go down in a feet up header that would have made Charlie Chaplin proud. He got back up to more cheers and the figure skaters returned and we all skated together for the last 10 minutes. This was really a special moment that I will never forget. We all posed for photos and took off our skates and headed to the bar. A dream had come to fruition. Granted, there was enough absurdity in it all to keep Fellini arching his brows. History was made. And we were part of it.

And here's where the story picks up, or tails off.