

Gretzky has left the building

Source: The Nugget
(Northern Alberta Institute of Technology)

By John Shields

EDMONTON (CUP) -

There are a select few players in the NHL that have had the honour of being inducted into the Hall of Fame. There are even less that have been selected by their respective teams to have their number retired.

There wasn't too much debate about Gretzky.

The evidence of a fantastic career was laid out in a video presentation that was shown at the Skyreach Center this past Friday.

There were about three minutes dedicated to all of the accomplishments and records that Wayne has achieved in all his years, proving he is truly the greatest thing that has happened to the game.

The evening started out early as hockey games go, with the presentations slated to begin at 5:15. The drive to Skyreach Center was slowed by the mass of traffic that had to get to the

game through the newly-coined Wayne Gretzky Drive. As the crowds arrived and began to file through the door, they quickly realized that this was no ordinary season opener for the Edmonton Oilers. There were mobs of people all trying to get their hands on one of the special Gretzky tribute programs.

The poor guy that was selling them couldn't open the boxes fast enough as the fans circled like vultures. The ceremony itself began with drummers from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, and then a short video presentation on Gretzky's life and career. The video started off with Wayne as a child and then went on to his first game as an Oiler, first NHL goal and other such accomplishments.

There were points in the video when you would have actually thought that you were at a funeral.

The video tried so hard to toy with the fans emotions, that it didn't come across as genuine at all. In the end, all that the fans came to see was the man himself. The Great One managed to stay

composed through the event, unlike some of the family and friends that surrounded him as his number was hoisted into the rafters. His wife, mother and master of ceremonies Rod Phillips were all moved to tears as the evening went on.

The most moving moment of the evening came from Oiler General Manager, Glen Sather, who related stories of Wayne as a father would. "Slats'" composure never wavered for a moment, but the words he spoke were the most heartfelt of the evening.

Gretzky has left the building folks, for the first time in 21 years, there will be no 'Great One' on the ice. Instead, Gretzky has left a very different league than the one he first joined.

Instead of a league where every team plays on an even surface, the league has been divided into the teams that have and the teams that have-not. Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a country of have-not NHL franchises. END

