

Ice talk

Three alums celebrate 25 seasons of hockey broadcasting

When someone thinks of RIT men's hockey, normally a winning tradition is the first thing that comes to mind. Two national championships, nine ECAC titles and 13 trips to NCAA championship tournaments in the last 25 seasons are evidence of the Tigers' long-lasting success.

For most of this magical run, three familiar voices have carried the games to Tiger fans over the airwaves. Randy Bloechl, Chris Lerch and Ed Trefzger are the men behind the microphones, describing all of the action on WITR Radio 89.7 FM for the last quarter-century.

All three are 1984 graduates. Bloechl earned his bachelor's degree in business, Lerch in applied software science and Trefzger, mechanical engineering.

All three took different paths to the broadcast booth. As a freshman in 1979, Bloechl gained a year of experience working at the campus television station. Trefzger was the station manager at WITR for his final two years as an undergraduate, and he hired Bloechl to try his hand at broadcasting in the fall of 1982.

"I was and still am a radio nut," says Bloechl. "I think I, along with Ed (Trefzger), was one of the last few people who used to stuff a transistor radio under my pillow at night and listen to baseball."

Trefzger, who came to RIT aspiring to write for the *Reporter* (the weekly student magazine), instead found his niche at WITR, RIT's very own radio station. For the first 15 seasons, Trefzger worked more on the technical side, producing the broadcasts, but would fill in as a guest analyst before joining the booth fulltime in the mid 1990s as the host of the pre-game show and as a color analyst.

Lerch, who "happened to stumble upon a few games and found that it was cool," was brought into the booth during the 1995-96 season, originally in an interview discussing his weekly columns for United States College Hockey Online (USCHO) (www.uscho.com). A year later, Lerch became the color analyst, along with Trefzger.



Three alumni have been broadcasting RIT hockey games for 25 seasons. From left are Ed Trefzger, Randy Bloechl and Chris Lerch. Photo by John Narewski.

The three men, who did not know each other while undergraduates, have become best friends. Their friendship allows for good chemistry, turning the broadcasts into a cohesive, informative and often humorous production.

Many times, all three are at the rink a few hours before game-time, finishing their pre-game preparations, hooting, hollering and having a great time. During the game, laughter is prevalent.

During one stoppage of play in the Tigers match-up versus St. Lawrence last October, Bloechl was going over the schedule and stated that two home games in one weekend plus two the weekend

after equaled a three-game home-stand. Lerch, without any hesitation, quipped, "Yes, everyone, he (Bloechl) is an accountant." The whole press box roared, and Bloechl nodded and laughed with everyone else.

"We do this because we love RIT. It's our way of giving back, and we like hockey," says Bloechl. "WITR has been great in allowing us to have freedom over the airwaves."

This season, with RIT making the jump to Division I, the schedule increased to 35 games. The trio admit the time commitment is not the easiest on their families, especially when they do not get paid for their work on the airwaves and have to take vacation time to travel. In their day jobs, Lerch is the head of technical services at RIT's Wallace Library, Bloechl is an accountant for Spoleta Construction in Rochester, and Trefzger owns a database programming and Internet development business and produces an Internet trade publication called *Jazz Week*.

"The time demands can be really tight," says Trefzger. "The funniest thing is when people find out that we don't get paid, they are shocked. Everyone assumes we get paid, but we do not."

RIT Men's Hockey Head Coach Wayne Wilson, now in his seventh season, appreciates what the men bring to the program.

"They are a part of RIT's history, doing this for the past 25 years," says Wilson.

Even though all three agree that moving to Division I is a step forward for the program, they will miss some things about the Division III atmosphere.

"I will miss doing games at the outdoor rink at Hobart, where we would freeze,"



Listen in

RIT men's hockey games are broadcast over WITR Radio 89.7 FM, which can be heard in the Rochester area. The games can also be heard live on the Internet via streaming audio at www.modernmusicandmore.com.

For more information on RIT Men's Hockey, including this season's record and news of the 2006-'07 season, visit www.ritathletics.com.

says Bloechl. "We've done games sitting with the parents in the stands at some venues, because they didn't have anywhere else in the rink to broadcast. The rivalry with Elmira was unforgettable. Those were moments you never forget."

According to Bloechl, the biggest change over the past 25 years in the booth has not been so much the quality of play, but the technology through which fans are able to hear the broadcasts.

"With the radio broadcasts being available over the Internet, now I can say hello

to players' parents in British Columbia," says Bloechl. "Now, people are listening all over North America and maybe the world."

Rick and Debbie Harris, parents of Tiger forward Brad Harris enjoy listening to the three men all the way from Portage La Prairie, Manitoba.

"Being over 1,500 miles from Rochester, we don't get to see many of Brad's games," says Rick Harris. "We rely on the Internet broadcasts of WITR. We have only missed one game in three years. We enjoy the relaxed, humorous and enthusiastic ap-

proach of Randy, Ed and Chris and we certainly enjoy their attempts at pronouncing some of the hometowns of some Canadian players. Portage La Prairie does not mean 'Plug in your car' but it's close. Keep up the great work, guys."

The three men don't plan to hang up the microphones anytime soon. "For the past 10 years," says Lerch, "I have had the best seats in the house and seen such unforgettable moments."

Bloechl agrees wholeheartedly.

"I'm with my two best friends and we have a ton of fun doing this," says Bloechl. "Until it stops being fun, I plan on doing this for as long as I can."

"We have always taken pride in the fact that we could provide a top-notch, quality broadcast, while injecting some personality, adding humor and having fun," says Trefzger. "Plus, I don't think any one of us wants to be the first one to stop."

Joe Venniro



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