

The Iceman Stayeth | Talking with Jack Parker

Jack Parker has been head coach of the BU men's ice hockey team since 1973, leading the Terriers to two NCAA titles, four consecutive Eastern College Athletic Conference crowns, twenty Beanpots, and six Hockey East titles. Parker entered this season with more wins (781) at the same institution than any other college coach; only one other active college coach has more career wins. *Bostonia* spoke with Parker (SMG'68, HON.'97) about what's changed in thirty-five years on the bench.

What has changed since 1973?

The University has changed drastically. The campus has changed; the perception of the University academically has changed. You can't give enough kudos to John Silber for that. I'll never forget — we had just won the national championship in 1971–72, and John came to his first hockey banquet. He got up and said his goal was to make the University worthy of the hockey team. He certainly did that.

The admissions process has made it more difficult to get hockey players in here, or any athlete in here, because it's a tougher school to get into now. But we also have the ability to compete against Ivy League schools. Back in the 1970s, if kids were choosing between BU and Harvard, or BU and Dartmouth, we wouldn't get them. Now we're surprised if we don't get them.

"My job is not to motivate these guys," says Jack Parker. "Motivation comes from within."

What about the students?

The type of individual we get on this campus, and the type of individual we get to play on our hockey team, is completely different than it was in the seventies. Some of that is good, some of it is not so good. The word that jumps out at me is self-centeredness. It's such a problem to overcome in our society.

Our success in putting guys in the NHL has been good and bad for us. The bad part is that most of our guys come here thinking they want to be NHL players. I tell this to every single recruit: I would bet the mortgage on my house that you don't make your living playing pro hockey. I tell that kid, I win that bet 95 percent of the time.

What does it take to shape a bunch of rowdy teenagers into a winning team?

My job is not to motivate these guys. My job is to have knowledge enough about my sport to teach them skills and team play. Motivation, in my mind, comes from within. It's my job to put my players in an enthusiastic environment, so they can motivate themselves.

I took a more in-your-face, my-way-or-the-highway approach during the early part of my career; now it's a more psychological approach. And of course the final convincer is ice time. You don't do it, you won't play.

What do you like to do when you're not at the rink?

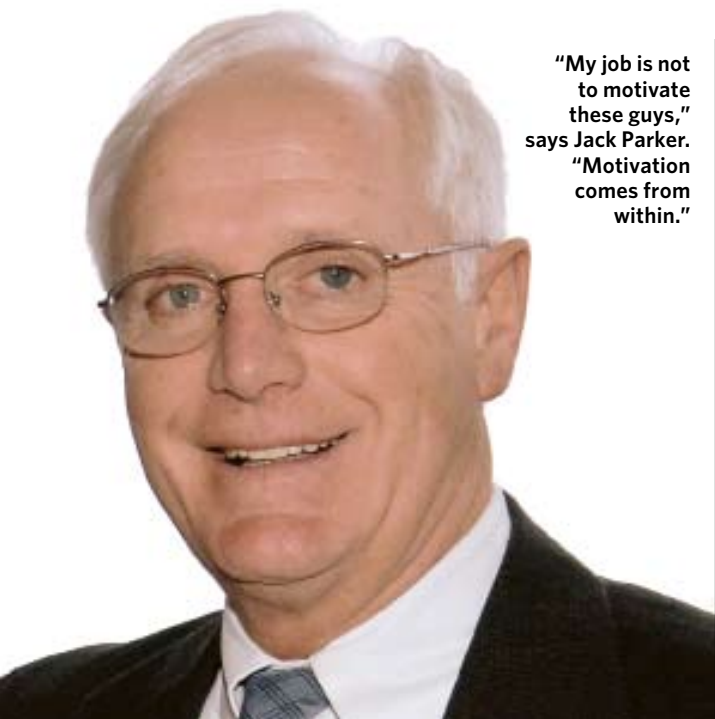
I play tennis, I sail. I'm also a movie buff. And I read a lot of history. If I'm jacked up after a game, the best thing to do is open a book.

What are you proudest of?

I always say that the lowest point in my coaching career was Travis Roy's injury. [In 1995, Roy (COM'00) suffered a paralyzing injury in his first BU hockey game.] The thing I'm proudest of is the way my university and the hockey community rallied around Travis. It was such a devastating time for him and his family, and for our hockey family. The way the University got Travis back on campus and made it viable for him to complete his education — I was extremely proud. And the amount of fundraising that was done, by people like Bobby Orr and Mike Eruzione (SED'77), to make sure he'd be comfortable in his life, and ultimately to allow him to start his own foundation and help others . . . the University helped a tragic situation get a little better.

What about a personal accomplishment?

Having the rink built was really something [Agganis Arena's Jack Parker Rink, named in 2005]. And then to have the University name it after me — that's obviously something I'll never forget. It's the kind of thing that usually doesn't happen to people until they're dead. I have a twin brother, and he used to joke that he'd gladly support the new rink if it were called the Jack Parker *Memorial* Rink. **BARI WALSH**



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