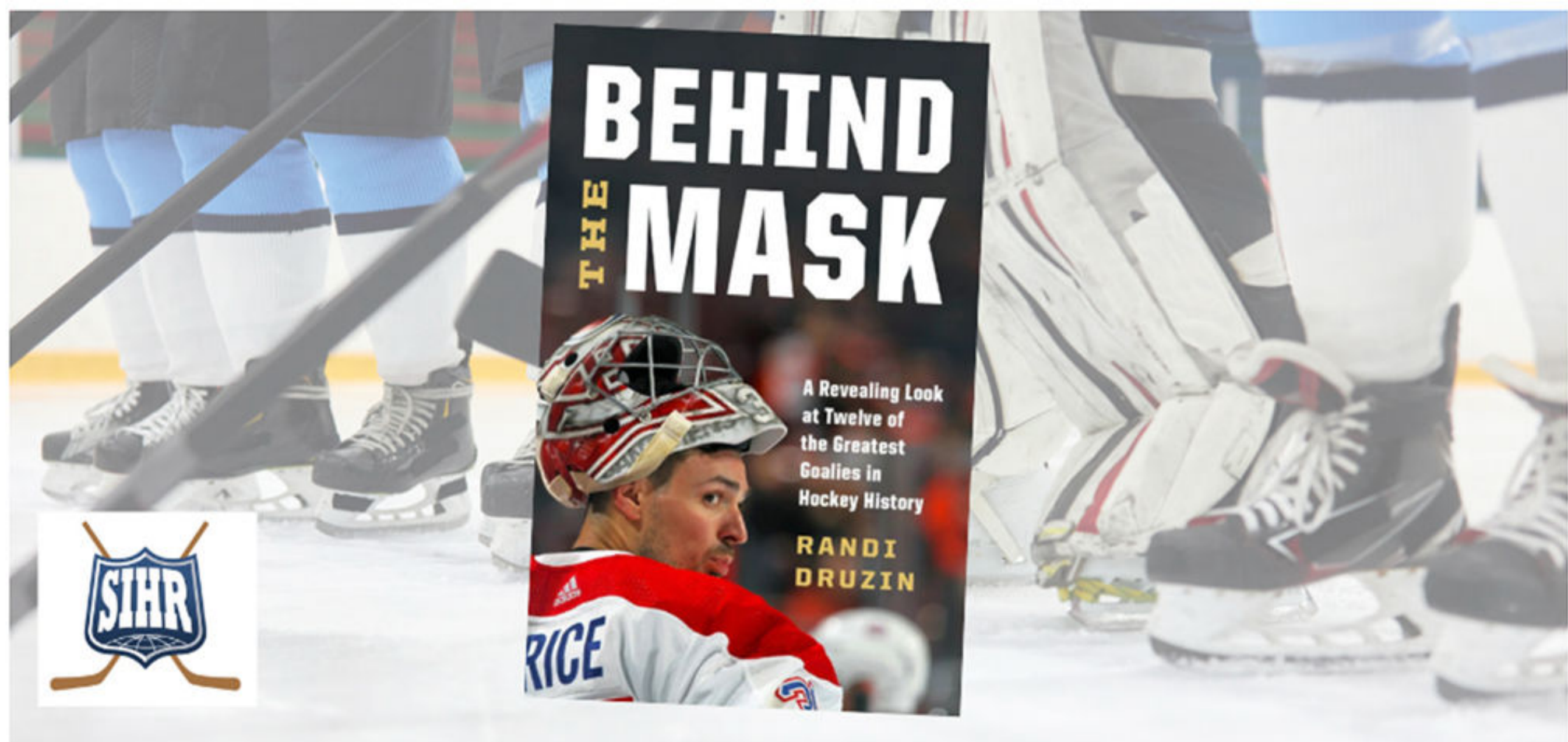


Goalies make Randi Druzin happy

251

Two Minutes for Reading so Good

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Posted December 6, 2023



Goalies make Randi Druzin happy, really happy.

That's in direct contrast to her actual day job, which can be incredibly mentally taxing.

It's the yin and yang of our discussion over her second book about hockey netminders, *Behind the Mask: A Revealing Look at Twelve of the Greatest Goalies in Hockey History*.

Like the warriors who put on the pads and helmets and tend goal, providing a vital service for their teams, Druzin plays a key role primarily behind the scenes at the CBC, as a producer in national and international news.

"I edit scripts, I'm the last set of eyes before it goes on to the teleprompter. This is one of the reasons I like writing hockey books, actually, because when I'm writing about war and famine and natural disasters, it's not fun," Druzin recently told Two Minutes for Reading So Good. "It's all very serious and very upsetting and draining. Whereas I find the opposite with hockey. It's just fun, it's fun to watch, it's fun to talk about, it's fun to write about."

In the 10 years since her first book came out, *Between the Pipes: A Revealing Look at Hockey's Legendary Goalies*, Druzin said that she has become a more confident writer and that's evident in *Behind the Mask*, where the little asides and humorous quips make for a fun read.

"They said write the book in your voice, the way you talk, the way you write. And I said, 'Well, my voice is a little quirky, a little irreverent, a little cheeky, and a little different. Are you okay with that?'" she recalled, referring to Greystone Books, which published both goalie books. As much as Druzin relied on her editor for wise counsel, she also consulted other hockey fans, asking questions like, "Is it too much of a stretch to compare Bobby Hull to Darth Vader?"

Whereas Druzin can't put her voice into copy about a bomb blast in Gaza, she can writing about hockey. "For a long time, I couldn't break out of that reporter mentality, which is just the facts, just the facts, ma'am," she said. "I think I'm at the stage now where I can wear both hats, like I can do the reporting when I'm in the newsroom, and then come home and work on my passion projects and speak in my own voice. ... I just kind of let loose."

Passionate fans are part of the reason for some of the names in *Behind the Mask*.

"My starting point was the goalies who were not in the first book, but who many readers felt should have been," she said. "After that first book came out, I can't tell you how many messages I got from Tony Esposito fans complaining that he wasn't in the book. 'Why is Ron Hextall in the book and not Tony Esposito?' Then I got questions about Gerry Cheevers and Rogie Vachon. So, a lot of the people who are upset about particular goalies not being in the book are now in this one."

The second book includes biographies on Roger Crozier, Rogie Vachon, Gerry Cheevers, Ed Giacomin, Tony Esposito, Vladislav Tretiak, Mike Palmateer, Grant Fuhr, Roberto Luongo, Marc-André Fleury, Henrik Lundqvist, and Carey Price.

The publisher asked about including a female goalie, and Druzin stood tall in net. "There's no goaltending equivalent to Hayley Wickenheiser. For that reason, I said no," she said, launching into a complicated reality about a woman writing about hockey. "I'm guilty until proven innocent in the eyes of some hockey fans, just because I'm a female. So they think she can't possibly know hockey or care about hockey the way a man would, which is not true. And so I thought if I just put in a woman there, because she's a woman, it's going to look like tokenism and people are going to assume that I did it because I'm a woman—I'm a woman writing a book, so I'm going to put a woman goalie in there." There are some female voices, though, including Canadian goalie Sami Jo Small talking about Tretiak and Fuhr.

Real life was part of the reason it took a decade between books. With her brother acting as a single father to a young boy, Druzin was there whenever she could to act as a maternal figure. That hasn't changed, and she takes her six-year-old nephew to hockey on the weekend. Zachary's enthusiasm for the game matches his aunt's. "Last week, I think his game was seven o'clock in the morning, and I was in excruciating pain waking up that early, but he was just skipping, literally skipping to the hockey arena. He was so excited," she laughed.

With Zachary a little older, Druzin "got the itch again" to write. "Then I started thinking about ideas. And it just so happened that that week, where I started thinking about it, I got yet another email demanding to know why Tony Esposito was not in *Between the Pipes*. So I thought, okay, you know what, maybe it's time to write another goalie book before I move on to other things. (She also wrote Reggie Leach's 2015 autobiography, *The Riverton Rifle: My Story - Straight Shooting on Hockey*, though isn't credited on the cover, and 2001's *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Women in Sports*.)

Each write-up contains a mix of original interviews and a wide variety of source material. Things have changed a lot in a decade, like the proliferation of podcasts as a resource. "For the older goalies, obviously, it was newspapers. There's not a podcast about Roger Crozier that I could have gone to," she said. "But for the more modern goalies, there's a lot of that. I did find a lot of that. For example, I wrote about Fleury, a lot of what I wrote was based on his interviews, his TV interviews, comments he made on the radio and different podcasts. So the Fleury chapter in particular, I leaned on that heavily." And the Fleury chapter is one Druzin is particularly fond of: "I loved writing about him. And I love talking to him. He's such an uplifting person to be around."

Druzin tried hard to include new anecdotes about each goalie and made sure to include detail about both their family and post-playing career lives.



Randi Druzin, right, with a friend.

The secondary quotes matter too, Druzin noted. For the Lundqvist chapter, she spoke to hockey officials in Sweden who had worked with him on the national team and the national program. "I asked them about the positive and the negative and they did say, 'You know what, when he was starting, he just had no faith in himself. He just wasn't playing well and he was just really disheartened.' They did mention that which you don't see that often when you talk about Lundqvist, that there was a time in his life where he was really insecure about his goaltending. I did get a full picture, like positive and negative, and I did include a lot of the negative but I included more of the positive because I love these goalies and I loved writing about them and I think they all had more positive qualities than negative."

Lundqvist tied into her day job too. Just before his induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame the second weekend of November, Druzin was tapped by a senior producer at the last second to go on air and talk about him.

"I didn't have any time to prepare. I stopped editing scripts at three, my shift ended at three," recalled Druzin. "I had to run to the makeup room to get the makeup slathered on my face. Then I had to go right from there to the chair in front of the camera, to talk to the host remotely. Then I was sitting in a newsroom, being interviewed by someone who's a work friend, sitting in a newsroom full of work friends. I was so nervous that I was just talking off the top of my head about Henrik Lundqvist, and I forgot to mention his relevant stats. But I mentioned that he played in a band with John McEnroe, but I forgot to mention he's sixth on the all-time wins list."

But all that is indeed in *Behind the Mask*, and so much more.

Druzin awaits the thoughts of hockey fans, convinced that her unconventional approach to a book about hockey will upset purists. "I'll just see what happens. I'm just waiting for the blowback," she concluded.

For more on Randi Druzin, see her website, www.druzin.com.

FEEDBACK

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