

Sports Book Review Center

Reviews of sports books from the past five years from Budd Bailey.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2023

Review: Behind the Mask (2023)

By **Randi Druzin**

Ah, goaltenders. They are a different breed.

They work under tremendous pressure, since their only job is to prevent something negative from happening. Goaltenders can't win a game, but they can sure lose it. And when a mistake is made, a red light comes on behind them, and thousands of people at the workplace react accordingly.

It takes a certain type of person to want that sort of job, and that's why there are references to a "goaltenders union." Many are a little, well, different in the personality department.

Toronto writer Randi Druzin already had some success at mining this particular area with a 2013 book called "Between the Pipes." But that look at 12 goalies hardly was the last word on the subject, as more have come along since then while others no doubt just missed the cut the first time around. So Druzin is back with another professional job called "Behind the Mask."

The tough part from the start, no doubt, is deciding who should be included. Druzin went back into the 1950s and 1960s to include such greats as Terry Sawchuk, Glenn Hall and Jacques Plante in addition to more "modern" goalies like Dominik Hasek, Martin Brodeur and Patrick Roy.

Here are the 12 goalies she picked for Book Two: Roger Crozier, Rogie Vachon, Gerry Cheevers, Ed Giacomin, Tony Esposito, Vladislav Tretiak, Mike Palmateer, Grant Fuhr, Roberto Luongo, Marc-Andre Fleury, Henrick Lundqvist, and Carey Price. It's hard to quarrel with too many of those choices. Most are either in the Hockey Hall of Fame, going to be in the Hockey Hall of Fame, or are/should be at least a strong candidate for such honors. It could be argued that Mike Palmateer might be the outlier in the list, but we know that hockey fans in Toronto do buy books.

All 12 goalies receive a good-sized profile. The articles take up an average of 20 pages of text, with Crozier's lasting 14 pages and Fleury's going for 29 pages. That's enough space to allow more than just hockey to appear, as the individual personalities are allowed to come through. That's a particularly good idea in the case of someone like Cheevers, who was quite a character during his long career on and off ice.

Points go to Druzin for research. She hits a variety of sources, and interviewed many of the subjects. That helps the profiles to remain interesting all the way through. She also can have some fun with turning a phrase along the way, which is a nice part of the story.

"Behind the Mask" is not a book for advanced hockey historians, since there probably isn't too much that is surprising to such students of the game. But it's not designed for that audience. Those who simply are seeking a full introduction into some top goalies in history ought to find that quite satisfactory in meeting that goal.

Four stars

Learn more about this book from [Amazon.com](#). (As an Amazon affiliate, I earn money from qualified purchases.)

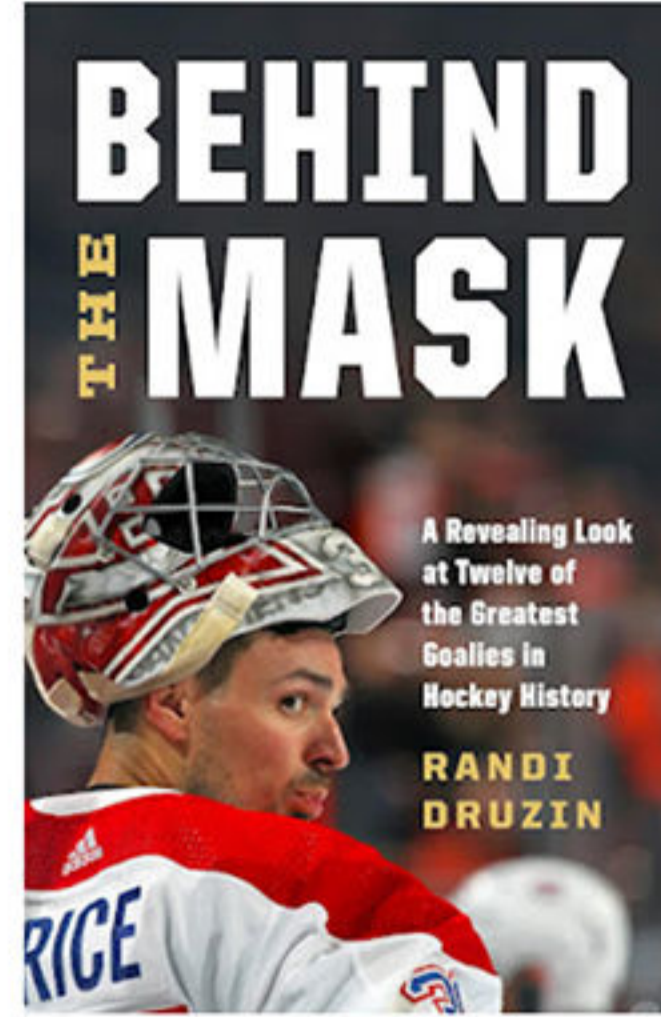
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Posted by Budd Bailey at **1:05 PM**

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