

May 7, 2004

NHL EASTERN CONFERENCE FINALS

Philadelphia Flyers at Tampa Bay Lightning

An Interview With:

PHILADELPHIA FLYERS

**KEITH PRIMEAU
JEREMY ROENICK
MARK RECCHI**

*Q. Keith, do you put any stock in the sense that's going around that you've had maybe two tougher series than **Tampa**, they have been resting for eight or nine days and you might be tired and they might be tired, you might be banged up? **What's your thought?***

KEITH PRIMEAU: It's the same as, for us, reverse of what occurred in the **Toronto** series in that it can work for you and it can work against you. We faced a team in **Toronto** that just finished a grueling seven-game series and had no time really to recover and allowed us to get an early lead in the series. But also, I thought that the rest hurt our precision, hurt some of our energy and worked against us in that regard. So eight days is a long time off at this time of year. The rest is great. I think rest is crucial if you're going to make a long playoff run. But we like our situation in that we didn't have to play a **Game 7** in round two, we finished them in six and we feel that three days was plenty, enough time for rest to prepare for this series.

Q. Many of the games in the first two series, you guys were outshot; do you have to limit the chances more in this series?

KEITH PRIMEAU: It was kind of uncustomary for a team to be shot the way we were. We talked about it a lot in the **Jersey** series, that it was really part of the way they forechecked. **Toronto** did a good job, as well of getting a lot of shots, and a lot of rebounds, a lot of traffic at the net. But I agree, it's going to be crucial in this series to try to minimize scoring chances as best we can because they have, I think more dangerous offensive players than what we've faced in either of the first two rounds. I take nothing away from

either one those two teams but this is a skilled group of forwards.

*Q. In the **Jersey** series, you guys played a team that was very good in transition, and most of those games were really up-and-down the ice, and **Hitchcock** said yesterday, you can't get into this type of running game with this team, so how are you going to beat them?*

KEITH PRIMEAU: Their transition, I agree, is similar to **New Jersey**. They are as good as anybody in the **National Hockey League** on transition, but their system is more similar to what we just faced in **Toronto** if they press up and they want to try to create turnovers. Again, for us our focus has to be being strong, getting pucks out of our zone, being strong at lines, continuing to advance the puck and get pucks in behind if we are going to have a chance to win.

Q. Have you been able to outmuscle most teams you've played this year?

KEITH PRIMEAU: I don't know. I think to a large extent, at times, it's overstated. Do we have some big forwards? **Yes**. But we really transformed our defense, our defense is extremely skilled. We also have some smaller skill guys up front who just play big. And so, as far as being able to outmuscle teams, we've competed hard and that's the biggest reason we've had success.

*Q. How important is it to have the **Lightning**, as you do, I guess two, good scoring lines?*

KEITH PRIMEAU: Again, it's a different challenge than what we've faced to this point, two teams. We faced one really strong offensive line. Other guys filtered into their lineup and were capable of scoring. But this team poses a different threat in that they have their top end loaded, especially the top two lines. It becomes a challenge. More guys have to be aware of them defensively to minimize the chances they get.

*Q. You talked yesterday about feeding off of **Sami** back there; can you talk more about what he brings to you?*

KEITH PRIMEAU: He'll be a real sparkplug for us in this series because of his energy and the way he's capable of skating. Sometimes he flies under the radar because of his size, but we as a group know how important **Sami** is to what we're

...when all is said, we're done®

FastScripts® by ASAP Sports

t. 01 212 267 2727 f. 01 212.385.0349

visit our archives at www.asapsports.com

Flyers 5.7.04.doc

trying to do.

Q. When you see him -- can you describe the effect of him?

KEITH PRIMEAU: I see his energy and I always say, him at five-nine and me at six-five, he's capable of running into people.

Q. Having played these guys four times in the regular season, from your perspective, how do you label their philosophy, is there a label you can put on this type of hockey?

KEITH PRIMEAU: No, I don't know if you can. System-wise they are very strong. They don't allow you a lot in the middle of the ice; they keep you to the outside. They do a tremendous job of their forwards getting back and helping out the defense. Just staples of good teams. I don't know if you really can put a tab on what you would call it.

*Q. Even though they are a different style team than **Toronto**, do you pretty much play the same strategy, keep them away from your goalie?*

KEITH PRIMEAU: I think we have to. I think we have to be even better in certain areas on the ice. As **Toronto**, they try to create a lot of stuff down behind the net so we have to be really aware of not allowing them to create chances from that part of the rink, so that we rely on our defense and our low forward to do a lot of work.

Q. On paper this looks like their youth and speed against your experience and size; does it play out like that?

KEITH PRIMEAU: I think as the precursor, I guess it does. But once we get into the series, it all evens out. I think you look at **Toronto**, we talk about their age and experience, but it ended up being, you know, our age and experience.

So I know they are a young team, but again, they have been through some battles as a group, they were last year, as they have been this year and they have some veteran guys over there who have done a tremendous job of helping to lead their team.

Q. Do you expect this to be an emotional series?

KEITH PRIMEAU: Because of the time of year, it will be intense and it will be competitive and it will be real physical and a real challenge for both sides.

And so, only I think primarily because of the time of year it is.

Q. Jeremy, this is the first time you've been this far in a real long time, and a lot of the older veterans don't have cups; do you use that hunger to your advantage?

JEREMY ROENICK: No question it fuels our hunger. I think even more the uncertainty of what's going to happen with the **NHL** next year, not knowing whether we are going to have this opportunity again for a long time, if ever, guys like myself, this is an opportunity that doesn't present itself very often and obviously, haven't been to this point, like you said, in 12 years. It's sweet. It is a sweet feeling. We want to keep it going as long as we can.

Q. Is it something that you guys, as a group, that you've talked about, really stressed that this could be the last chance for a lot of you guys?

JEREMY ROENICK: I don't think we sit down and talk about it very much but it's evident to everybody. Everybody really realizes the situation and knows the time of year that we are in. When it gets really warm outside and gets very hot in the buildings, it starts to get a little bit more emotional and exciting. We know what time of the year it is.

Like I said, we might not get back here again, so we have to take advantage of our opportunity.

Q. You guys have been very business-like in your approach to this whole post-season, can you articulate how knowing how to deal with all of the distractions, the peripheral stuff will be an advantage?

JEREMY ROENICK: I think **Hitch** has heard enough out of my mouth all year, so he doesn't want to hear me for another couple of months. (Laughter).

I think it's important that everybody understands that this is a total team effort. We have guys that are very capable of comes out and being spokespeople, **Recchi**, **Primeau**, guys that are very well spoken, know what's going on, and for some of us, like myself, it has to be a total businesslike situation. I'm trying to learn a new position. A lot of that has to do with preparing differently every game and every day.

You know, I can't sit around and worry about what I'm going to say to the media or get caught up in verbal competitions with some of the things that go through my head during the course -- like I wanted to with **Antropov** with last series. I had to keep those to myself.

But what's most important is if the team does well and we come out and win, it doesn't

...when all is said, we're done®

FastScripts® by ASAP Sports

t. 01 212 267 2727 f. 01 212.385.0349

visit our archives at www.asapsports.com

Flyers 5.7.04.doc

matter what anybody says.

Q. Those distractions, can they disrupt a young team that's not used to dealing with that stuff?

JEREMY ROENICK: It depends on the veteran leadership. It depends on the guys they have leading them. If the team is together and the team is focused and strong, the leaders will take responsibility and bring everybody through it. We have great leaders on our team, **Recchi** and **Joni** and **Prime**, some of the best captains.

*Q. Yesterday **Hitch** said if you looked on paper, the series over the year, people would narrowly pick **Tampa Bay** in this series. Why would someone say the **Flyers** could win this series, knowing what you know in the regular season?*

MARK RECCHI: I think the biggest part is, we are a team, and we changed some personnel, we brought people in who are tremendous team players, tremendous people, and trying to win. I think since we've got **J.R.** and **Primes** back, I said all along, we are going to get stronger and stronger, because we are building as a team again and missing two important pieces like that, eventually, everything is going to continue to get better. The roles will be more defined, like they are now. Now everybody knows what they have to do going into a hockey game.

That's why we believe that we do our things right, we can be a successful hockey team.

*Q. How much better did you guys get from the start of the playoffs to where you are now? You had to go through two tough series with **Toronto** and **New Jersey**?*

MARK RECCHI: We got better and better. The better the games got, the better we got, too. We had opportunities to close things out and we did. That says a lot about our resilience. We had to play with some injuries, missing our top defenseman, **Malakhov** goes down the other night, we've been through a lot. We just, you know, we keep pushing through and we've got a very unselfish group of guys who really don't want to command any attention. It's all about what we are doing as a team now. It's not about any individual. It's about 23 guys right now trying to build something.

*Q. What are your memories of playing for **Tortorella** in **Phoenix**, the time you were together with him?*

JEREMY ROENICK: Yeah, he's a wonderful man, for one thing. He was assistant coach in **Phoenix**. He did an unbelievable job of being a grade mediator between the players and the coach. I think that's a very important thing that an assistant coach has to do is to be able to get along with the players and have a relationship with them and his personality was one of those that everybody instinctively and immediately was attracted to.

So I enjoyed playing for him, and I still enjoy having a friendship with him. It doesn't surprise me the way he's turned this organization around on the ice. Really, his attitude all the time in **Phoenix** was a competitive one, and he's just really taking that to another level as a head coach. I'm real proud of him.

*Q. I know your team has gone through quite a transformation since the last time these two teams played in **February**, but talking about the **Lightning**, they have a multitude of scorers now, what does that present to the **Flyers**?*

JEREMY ROENICK: Well, I think everybody on our team realizes what we are up against. We are up against probably one of the best players in the league in **St. Louis**; we know what kind of challenges he presents. Vinny is a confident young kid, extremely talented that. We know we have to play physical against -- we can't let -- I know we didn't let **Modin** run around and be a physical impact.

And I think with us, we realize what we're up against. We know that we have to play very structurally sound defensively, but we also feel that as high scorers as they have, we have just as high scorers. I mean, **Zhamnov** is one of most talented guys in the world, **Recchi** is one of the best play-makers, one of the best scorers in the game, **Amonte** has been one of best scorers in the game for a long time. I'll put in a puck here and there. And we have **Keith Primeau** who has been probably our **MVP**.

So, you know, they have some great players, but our players are just as good and it's going to be a fun battle.

*Q. Talk about your personal superstitions regarding the **Cup**.*

JEREMY ROENICK: Well, I saw it yesterday on **TV** and I watched everybody go up and touch it, all the fans go up and touch it. I'm happy it's down here, to tell you the truth. I'm happy it's in the area here in **Tampa**, because I don't think that's a good thing. They had better not

...when all is said, we're done®

FastScripts® by ASAP Sports

t. 01 212 267 2727 f. 01 212.385.0349

visit our archives at www.asapsports.com

Flyers 5.7.04.doc

bring that **Cup** to **Philadelphia**. Just leave it out until we get out and we can actually grab it. But I'm not touching it and I'm not going to see it until it's right in front of my face and I can get it from my buddy here next to me.

But I like that it's down here in **Tampa**. I like the way they are thinking right now.

Q. Toronto is called the toughest building in the world to win in, the carryover, winning a six-game in overtime and coming here for your first two games, is there a strong carryover?

MARK RECCHI: This is a tough building to play in. It's a tough to play in even when it's not full. It's going to be jammed. There's a lot of excitement down here. It's definitely going to be a fun place to play in. I think you've got to take it for what it is. You've got to enjoy it.

Toronto, it's a tough place to play, but it's a fun place to play. It's really enjoyable, you have to take in the atmosphere and really run with it, and we'll do that tomorrow because it's going to be a tremendous atmosphere. We'll try and obviously settle them down a little bit, but, you know, we know what we are up against and we'll be ready for it.

Q. Can you follow up on you like the way the people are thinking here in Tampa and Tampa's thinking, what are you thinking about? What are you saying there?

JEREMY ROENICK: Well, I just love that the **Cup** is down here. I love that everybody is running around saying: "**Hey**, this is where the **Cup** is going to stay, this is it, this is where it belongs." **Everybody** is all excited to see it.

We'll be excited to see it when we win it. Until then, we stay away from it.

We're hockey players and we are all superstitious, and that's a superstition and that's what we believe in. Whether you guys believe it or not, that's your own beliefs.

MARK RECCHI: I don't think their players want to touch it.

JEREMY ROENICK: I don't think some of their guys are very happy that it's around, either.

FastScripts by **ASAP Sports** ...

...when all is said, we're done®

FastScripts® by ASAP Sports

t. 01 212 267 2727 f. 01 212.385.0349

visit our archives at www.asapsports.com

Flyers 5.7.04.doc