

Jeremy Mylymok

Now the Director of Hockey at Notre Dame, Mylymok brings a wealth of playing, coaching and directing experience to the organization. Following his four-year NCAA, Division I career with the University of Alaska-Anchorage, Mylymok spent 11 seasons playing professionally (1995-2006) in the WCHL, ECHL, IHL and AHL. A three-time captain of the ECHL Idaho Steelheads, Mylymok led his team to an ECHL Kelly Cup Championship in 2003-04. Mylymok also captured two IHL Turner Cup Championships (1998 and 2000) with the Chicago Wolves. The former defenseman won various awards including the WCHL Outstanding Defenseman award (2000-01) and was voted to the Season Ending All Star team twice (2000 and 2001). He also served as an assistant coach of the Steelheads during his playing days. He attended Athol Murray College of Notre Dame for four years and graduated in 1990.

Martin: I'll start with what's the one thing you're most excited to do once we kind of get back to normal and COVID is no longer a thing.

Mylymok: I think, basically being back in the arena behind the benches and just having the buzz and the rink with all the kids on the ice, and watching, just with the energy back into our facilities. It's pretty special that we go on these road trips. It's not just one age group or two age groups. So, we're going to get that, you get that atmosphere when we can play for the most part. Those are showcases we get and then I think just seeing the smiles on the kids' faces too once we get back when we play the first game is going to be, can be wild sometimes.

Martin: Yeah, that's a good one. You kind of touched on this a little bit with that answer but what about the CSSHL model do you like?

Mylymok: I think the biggest thing is everybody is committed to development, that's what comes first. It's nice to win. Everybody wants to win, but over the course of the years in our league nobody sacrificed development for the sake of winning. There is time for, maybe, to shorten the bench in crucial games. Overall these kids play and the coaches are very respectful of their programs expectations for developing each player. I think the camaraderie amongst the staff throughout the league is great too, I mean rarely is there animosity between coaches or programs or the heads in a league, everybody is kind of going in the same direction. I think there is some great cohesiveness amongst our programs and it's just getting better. And the players feel it and I think you can argue with our recent success with our players moving on higher levels and having success there too, so I'm proud to watch our kids develop, I'm just watching these kids' and programs develop as well.

Martin: I'm not sure if you're a big music person, but maybe your favorite genre of music, favorite artist, the best concert you've ever been to?

Mylymok: You know, I'm not a big concert guy. Last concert I went to was Garth Brooks. I'm not someone who's a big country guy but that was an amazing show and he's my wife's favorite performer so we went to Mosaic Stadium here in Regina, SK a few summers back and it was an unreal concert. As far as artists go, someone great one's would be Colter Wall, he's a guy I listen to. Who else? I think from the, 1970s to 1980s you name it. From alternative, U2,

Blink-182, Whiskey Myers, I listen to a lot. So, in my playlist, it's all over the map. Tom Petty. I just like anything with a good message in the song and a good beat.

Martin: Favorite sport outside of hockey?

Mylymok: Favorite sport. I would have to say I grew up playing a lot of different sports, but my passion going up was surfing. I was born in London, Ontario, but grew up in Newport Beach, California. Any free time I had in the summer and even the wintertime but I'm on the beach, surfing. Golf is also something I've come back into in recent years, used to play a lot while I was playing pro but surfing was one. But for the last 10 years, the most time I spent outside the rink is fly fishing with my kids. My boy, fly fishes as well, so we're having fly fishing any chance we get to hit the river, we do. And every time I go somewhere on road trips, I usually pack to fly fish, just to get some time and get out and canvas some new waters.

Martin: Okay. That actually, kind of touches on one of my questions, what do you do away from the rink? What do you do in the off-season? So, you've obviously mentioned surfing, golfing, fly fishing, anything else?

Mylymok: No, I do a lot of recruiting in the offseason. We have 11 teams so rarely do we have a summer off. We'll spend time in the States, out east in the Maritimes, recruiting various showcases. Spend my summers really recruiting or running our office, it's 12 months a year gig. So, it's something that if I find some downtime lately, if I'm in a golf course or if I'm somewhere where there's a river. I will take some downtime away from the rink.

Martin: Favorite athlete?

Mylymok: Favorite athlete is Terry Fox.

Martin: Okay, that's a good one. Any particular reason?

Mylymok: I just think, you know, what he did, the crazy work that he did and doing for no other reason. He basically wanted to find a cure for cancer, and thought, you know, he shows you about who you are. How the significant thing you want in life may be to do something, people will catch on with. I can only imagine in today's social media the magnitude that he would have, without even caring about the fanfare. Very emotional. He's on the Wall of Fame at our school, he's a guy that is a very inspiring athlete. And the legacy is amazing and there's a lot of great athletes out there in every sport. But when you asked that, I think that he was the first one that popped into my head. So, he was always somebody that I've always admired.

I was able to get to Thunder Bay there few years back. We had our AAA team played in the Westerns there and we were able to spend some time and took our team up there and see the statue and stuff. So, he's a pretty inspirational guy, and his legacy continues today. So, the impact you have after you leave this world is something that everyone inspires too have, he didn't shoot for the glory but he's getting it.

Martin: This might be a little bit an interesting one for you. Would you rather have a personal chef, a personal driver, or a personal housekeeper?

Mylymok: Housekeeper. For sure.

Martin: Not big on cleaning?

Mylymok: I don't mind cooking. I like the grills, I like it when it's that time of the year and the sun is out, and the weather is great, we do all of the cooking outside for the most part. I like driving as crazy as that sounds. One thing that I have missed. You know, I always look forward to getting on the road because it clears my mind, makes me calm so just to take these away. You know where I'm driving on game day or driving to watch kids at night, that's windshield time. But yes housekeeping, I dread housekeeping.

Martin: I'd pick the same. So, let's touch on this a little bit. You're born in Ontario and moved to California, just kind of talk about where you grew up, the family life if you have any pets, stuff like that?

Mylymok: My dad was a very successful businessman. He works for an international planning company and I was born in Ontario and moved to London, England when I was three then to Nashville, Tennessee when I was 5. Back to Ontario when I was 7 or 8 and then to California Newport Beach by the time, I was like 12. And then we stayed there for many years. So, I kind of grew up there, that was my home base was Newport Beach, which is an unreal place to grow up. And then I left there in high school to come and live in Notre Dame because hockey is my passion so that was kind of my background growing up. It was the surf and the sand and Southern California and then hockey was my passion, so I went back to Canada and chased my dream there, and that the opportunity to be a Hound and being a four-year guy, I went there to graduate here.

I've had a dog in my house ever since I was born, we always had dogs around even in college. I got my girlfriend then, now my wife, a dog in college, and we have three right now.

I have a twin brother. He's Head Coach and GM at Maryland in the NAHL. Older brother is in the RCMP. My sister is married, with two girls in Vancouver Island. My parents are still in Vancouver. My wife's side is actually in Alaska, so it's a West Coast family and obviously growing up with three other siblings we became pretty close; we're all within two years of each other and we see each other and stay in contact all the time. And it's something that having a close family, something you look forward to and something I probably miss the most with COVID here with a brother in the US, and with things being shut down, not being able to have our get-togethers. It's something that we would miss. But everyone is healthy and we're doing well. So, I can't look back with any regrets of my childhood. There's a lot of opportunities, a lot of fun, and a lot to good experiences. What my dad always says to me 'There's a big world out there, and don't be afraid to go outside your comfort zone.'

Martin: How did you get involved in your current role and coaching and stuff like that after you were done playing?

Mylymok: So, I played for 11 years in the minors and when I was done, as I was getting closer to retirement, I sold insurance for a year. So, I got a license and I was still playing, and then stepped into the insurance world and did that. Then hockey just came about with a youth hockey program in Boise, Idaho, that is where I kind of got my start. I started a hockey school when I was still playing professionally, and then that kind of grew into a local association needing some help. So, my wife and I started the Idaho Jr. Steelheads program with the blessing of the professional team to give us their logo and their moniker so we started a travel hockey program, and we had 9-10 teams. So, I got out of the insurance business and then I got the Director of Hockey job there. Idaho is a great spot but it wasn't really a hockey hot bed back then but it has grown since then. But we went to Florida for two years, the Florida Panthers came calling and they had a position there to run their practice facility, that's a three-sheet arena. It was a really nice training facility, and so, I took over their youth hockey in South Florida. So, we had a good experience there for two years and then there was the opportunity to come back to Notre Dame. I wouldn't say it came out of nowhere but it wasn't something I was really looking for. We we're happy in Florida, it was a great experience for my kids and my wife loved it. But I always had in the back of my mind, I always thought, what a place to go back with my kids one day. And if I can find a way to make it work to send them to Notre Dame, that will be a fantastic experience. I know how much it did for me. Not just as a player, but as a person, academically and socially, those types of things. So, that opportunity came, so we moved back and we had a family conversation, the boys were ecstatic to go to the program. At the time my twin brother was coaching the Junior A team, so that was kind of a bonus to come back, have some family around and then I was Bantam Male Coordinator here. I kind of came back and I didn't have any contacts in Canadian hockey, nothing I just dug my heels in, I went to work and made my contacts and got reunited with some old Hounds that led to more and more contacts and then I ended up taking over the Director of Hockey here five years ago.

I look at all of the prep schools in Canada, major prep schools, Notre Dame is one of the most iconic prep schools in the world. And I didn't take the opportunity lightly when it came my way, and I was very, very honored, very excited to get this position and spend a great amount of time with my family. Both my boys came through Notre Dame now. They've been four-year hounds, and ones at Minnesota Duluth playing there and one's going to be at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, playing there next year. So, it was great for my family, it's great for my wife. She was able to work for the school the last eight years as well as one of the house Parents. She runs one of the dorms, does a fantastic job there, and she really has become ingrained in the campus life as well. So, it's something that having a family full of Hounds, and my kids having their own goals, and both my brothers went through the program as well. So, I'm waiting for them to come back from school and their uncles and their dads went through and now they're blazing their own trail. So that's kind of my nutshell. That's all my life in hockey, I've been fortunate, I don't feel like I go to work every day. I get to go to the rink, I get to watch a lot of hockey, have an impact on a lot of young men and women's lives, not just in the hockey side, but I'm here on the social side as well making sure that they're prepared for university and the next step and they're ready to be leaders in their community. So, it's something that we get a lot of facetime here because it is a private campus and we see these kids seven days a week. So, we have a chance to have a really positive influence on our student-athletes. Notre Dame is a special place with a lot of history, and a lot of tradition here, and the kids, feel it when they get here and

again, I've been fortunate. I feel like I've cheated life a little bit. Other than the one year I worked in the insurance business, I've been in hockey my whole life for the most part. So, very fortunate, very blessed. Now, it's fun to watch my kids take their path and learn from programs such as this one, and put things in place to help them to become successful where they're at now. So, a lot of fun.

Martin: That's good to hear, that's a good story. Interesting that you got to start your own kind of program and kind of build your own path while you're still playing. That's pretty cool.

Mylymok: It's a risk you know. You have a job and you have a guaranteed income and you have family insurance; you know it's comfortable. But I don't know, I think comfortable can be great but, if it's not your passion and, you're not going to be happy going to work every day. And to me, that's more important. Your passion is something that's here all the time. If you turn your passion into a living, easier said than done, but the thing is you have to work, extremely hard and you know it's going to be doubting yourself sometimes but if you know what you're doing and you have confidence in your abilities and you have good people around you, then you can have success. I've been fortunate to have that everywhere I've been; I've had a great staff here that I can rely on and I can micromanage. I can subdue their jobs and get things done, and I don't have to worry about it so much. Again, it's just been nice but yeah, it's not a common life. If you want success, there are going to be some risks you have to take, and fortunately for me, I was able to turn my passion into a career.

Martin: That's awesome. So, I just got two more here for you. What's the best piece of advice you have received in life? And it doesn't have to be hockey-related, it doesn't have to be from a coach, it just something that's going to be stuck with you.

Mylymok: I think the one thing for my father, as he told me years ago, he said: 'it's a big world out there, don't be afraid to take risks and don't be afraid to try new things.' You know, just for his career, he moved around even before I was born knowing the different places across, not just Canada but the US and in England, and he traveled also. He's always said that a lot of people get kind of hunkered down. You know, they grow up in the same community and same area that they don't leave home ever which is great but I don't know if you're really experiencing every opportunity you can unless you take those leaps of faith and try something new and maybe it doesn't work out but okay, that didn't work out, but you learned from it. And so, I think that's the biggest thing. My dad was very hardworking, humble, and I grew up, never knowing where it came from but I never went without, I was very fortunate that way, but at the same time, the work ethic. Like in hockey with getting traded and getting cut or released here. Always kind of bounced around a little bit where don't be afraid to try new things and roll with the punches and see what happens. The biggest thing is just keep working hard and have to be a humble person and have to be someone people want to bring along for the ride. So, I'm fortunate to have a supportive family helped me out in those areas in life.

Martin: That's good to hear. Last one here, favorite, funniest, or most unique kind of hockey memory? Something that just has always kind of stood out to you and just kind of maybe look back and reminisce on.

Mylymok: You know, it's something where I was fortunate despite never having played in the NHL but played pro hockey for 11 years. I like to back with a group of teammates and we sit down and the stories come flowing out and things you forgot about even. That's what I miss, just the camaraderie. I just miss the laughter, it's a different kind of laughter. When you go to the workplace and everything's a little more toned down, everything is a little more professional. And the locker room is still a place in the hockey side where you can come in and 100% be yourself and have some laughs. And you have the ability to laugh at yourself when you make a mistake and take the criticism or the chirps for your teammates. Having that fun and then just the banter going back and forth is something that you miss a lot, you know? So that's the one thing, when you're telling stories again and get to reminisce. And we got to win some championships, and when you play in playoffs there's more and more time for stories to happen.

The coolest story I had, not really a funny story, but the year I played with Brent Gretzky and he was my roommate, and we got to the finals with the Chicago Wolves in the IHL. Marty Howe was our assistant coach and we had Gretzky on our roster. As the playoffs went along and we got closer to winning all of sudden, Gordie Howe was around the locker room every day, every game day he went for a couple of rips with the boys after the pregame skate. He would get on the ice and fire some pucks. Walter Gretzky was in the locker room. We had a day off in L.A. and Wayne Gretzky took care of us. Me and Brent went to the Dodgers game with him and Tommy Lasorda. The boys started calling it fantasy camp and we had a good laugh about it. It was a very special time and obviously to win the championship but have guys like that in the locker room on a daily basis, was very surreal. And it was an opportunity that all the guys in the locker room knew the impact they've (Howe and Gretzky) had on hockey as a whole and to be able to spend time with those guys on or off the ice or out for a bite to eat after with Gordie and with Wayne too, it was something that's pretty special, there's no doubt.

Martin: That's really cool. I'm sure that was exciting to go to the rink every day and see those guys.

Mylymok: Oh yeah, playing in the minors it's not the same experience as you would get playing in the NHL. But to have those guys around on a daily basis was pretty surreal and was a good memory for sure.