

Rod Collins

Rod Collins is currently the General Manager and founder of Pilot Mound Hockey Academy. Originally from Pilot Mound, MB, before coming to Pilot Mound, he was the Head Coach of the Bellingham Junior Blazers U16 team. He was also the GM of the Wenatchee Wild in the North American Hockey League (NAHL) and the Head Coach of the Wenatchee Wild U18 Hockey Program. He had been a head coach of boy's hockey at Shattuck St. Mary's for 10 years and was with the Notre Dame Hounds hockey program from 1989 to 1997. He has coached the game of hockey for 30 years. He has also coached in the Manitoba (MJHL), Saskatchewan (SJHL) and BC (BCHL) Junior Leagues. Collins has Level Five Certification through USA Hockey and Advanced Level with Hockey Canada. Collins has a B.A. degree in Education from Brandon University. Before beginning his coaching career, Collins captained the Western Hockey Leagues (WHL) Brandon Wheat Kings and eventually played in the IHL for the Flint Generals.

JM: What's the thing you're most excited to do when the world gets back to normal, when COVID's no longer a thing?

RC: Well, basically, get back to our regular schedule at the Canadian Sports School Hockey League. We hope that opens up in September.

JM: What's your favorite genre of music, some favorite bands or artists, best concert you've ever been to?

RC: I guess I'm more of country music type of person, maybe Merle Haggard, that's some of the concerts I have attended.

JM: I got a lot of country fans on, so far. That's good. Favorite sport outside of hockey?

RC: Baseball. I played for a lot of years in my hometown here. I played in provincial championships and thought of myself as a decent player at those times.

JM: Favorite athlete?

RC: I think Bobby Orr.

JM: That's a good one. He's quite the player. Wish I could have seen him play. If you could have one superhero ability, what would it be?

RC: Well, make recruiting easy.

JM: (Laughs) Yeah, fair enough. Would you rather have a personal chef, personal driver, or personal housemaid?

RC: I guess a personal chef.

JM: Not a big cook, just time consuming, or what?

RC: Yeah. I prefer somebody to make it for me.

JM: Tell me a little bit about your family, maybe who's close to you, any friends, pets, where you live now, where you grew up, that type of thing.

RC: Yeah. I live here in Pilot Mound. I'm actually in my mother's house. She passed away three years ago. I'm originally from Pilot Mound, so I came back here six years ago to start this academy. We've been fairly successful. We're a small town but really family-oriented with our kids and have pretty good success with our program.

JM: That's good. What's something people might not know about you, they can't find on the internet, something like that, that you think is interesting?

RC: I guess one thing is I always become pretty attached to players. We work pretty hard on their behalf to get them somewhere in the game.

JM: Okay. What do you do away from the rink or in the off-season, not hockey related?

RC: Well, my home is actually in Bellingham, Washington, so I try and get down there for a bit. I've got grandkids there. My daughter, Delaney, who played for Team Canada for several years, she's living in Nashville. She's got a daughter and I hope to be able to see those grandkids at some point.

JM: Any other kids or just the one daughter?

RC: No, I have Delaney living in Nashville. Mark lives in Bellingham, he's got four daughters. Cameron's my oldest son, he's living in Vancouver, and his kids are pretty much grown up.

JM: Okay. I'm assuming, unfortunately COVID, you probably haven't seen them a lot?

RC: No, the toughest part is not seeing them. I have never seen Delaney's daughter so I hope this summer to be able to meet my new granddaughter.

JM: That's exciting. You already touched on this. How did you get involved in your current role? What happened to create Pilot Mound?

RC: Well, I've been at Notre Dame, I've been to Shattuck and Wenatchee. I worked in similar programs, taught, and coached. I just thought that with this arena here, new arena that was built by volunteers, excellent facility, small town, I thought this was the ideal place to start an academy and offer to Manitoba kids, in particular, who were leaving the province to go to other academies. I came back here and we've been fairly successful with it and moved kids, our girls to college, and boys to junior, which is our goal.

JM: Yeah, that's good. What's the one thing you like about the CSSHL model as a whole, maybe not just Pilot Mound, but just the CSSHL, in general?

RC: Well, I think it is education-based and that's a huge part of it. I think that the focus on education along with hockey and developing good citizens is the mindset of each program. I'm very pleased with that.

JM: Yeah, that's a good thing. Makes it easy, I find for a lot of them, to transition to University, especially on the female side.

RC: Right.

JM: What's the best piece of advice you've ever got in life? It doesn't have to be hockey related.

RC: Never compromise myself.

JM: Okay. Who did you hear that from? Is that something you just picked up?

RC: Well, I think it came from my father.

JM: Okay. I just got one more here for you, then. Your favorite, funniest, or most unique hockey memory.

RC: I guess coming out of Pilot Mound, making a junior team, the Brandon Wheat Kings. It was probably a highlight for me, coming from a small town.

JM: Do you want to touch on your playing career in Brandon?

RC: I played there, I was captain there with the Wheat Kings, two very good years there, went on, got an education, played some minor pro. It was good, I've had good coaches, and I've learned from my experiences.