

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH BARRY TROTZ

SUBJECT: CAPITALS COACH BARRY TROTZ WILL DISCUSS THE PERFORMANCE OF WASHINGTON'S NHL FRANCHISE AFTER HIS FIRST YEAR AT THE HELM AND WILL LOOK AHEAD TO NEXT SEASON

MODERATOR: JOHN HUGHES, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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**JOHN HUGHES:** (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is John Hughes. I'm an editor for Bloomberg First Word, that's Bloomberg's breaking news desk here in Washington, D.C. And I am President of the National Press Club. Our guest today comes from a world of high-flying elbows and occasional big egos, where sometimes a fight breaks out. No, our guest is not a member of Congress. [laughter] He is Barry Trotz, Head Coach of the National Hockey League's Washington Capitals.

[applause]

I want to introduce our distinguished head table. This group includes Press Club members and guests of our speaker. From the audience's right, Matt Friedman, Producer and Supervisor with AP Video. Bill McCloskey, retired Executive with Associated Press and Bell South, a Press Club Broadcast Committee member, and along with his wife Nancy, he's a 15-year Capitals season ticket holder. [applause] Pete Webber, play-by-play voice of the Nashville Predators, a friend and former colleague of Mark Hamrick, who we'll get to in a moment, and also a guest of the speaker. Laurie Russo, Managing Director of Stanton Communications and a Speakers Committee member who is also going to be live-tweeting today's event. More on that in a moment. Curt Kuehl, Senior Vice-President and Chief Communications Officer of Monumental Sports and Entertainment. That's the parent of the Caps organization. And he's a guest of the speaker.

Mark Hamrick, he's the Washington Bureau Chief for Bankrate.com. He's a former National Press Club President and, along with the help of the Pete Webber, he organized today's luncheon. Thank you very much, Mark.

Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Sergei Kocharov, Senior Director of Communications for the Washington Capitals, and a guest of the speaker. Pat Host, a reporter for Defense Daily and Rotor and Wing. Jeff St. Ange, an Editor with Bloomberg Intelligence. And Carl Lubsdorf, Washington Columnist of the Dallas Morning News and a season ticket holder of the Washington Capitals. [applause]

I would like to welcome our Public Radio and CSPAN audiences. You can follow the action on Twitter today. Use the hashtag NPCLive. That's a new Twitter handle, NPCLive.

Well Barry Trotz, a native of Manitoba, Canada, came to coach the Washington Capitals a little more than a year ago. He had spent 15 previous seasons coaching the Nashville Predators. His 602 wins against 505 losses placed him 4<sup>th</sup> all-time in victories among active NHL coaches. The Capitals are not Trotz's first professional foray in the Mid-Atlantic Region. He previously coached the American Hockey League's Baltimore Skipjacks, the Washington team's minor league affiliate, and before that team relocated to Portland, Maine. Now, working for owner Ted Leonsis, his mission is to win a Stanley Cup. [applause]

This, of course, is a prize that had eluded the Washington franchise since it began back in 1974. That's a long drought. Don't feel any pressure, Mr. Trotz. [laughter] This spring was promising, though not entirely satisfying, for Washington sports fans. Both the Capitals and the NBA's Washington Wizards, also owned by Mr. Leonsis, exited the playoffs before the championship rounds. But in the case of the Capitals, at least, many fans have a sense that the team is getting closer to that elusive championship, especially because of the discipline the team showed under Mr. Trotz.

For many guests, our introduction would end with highlights of professional achievement. But a big change in Trotz's life occurred early last decade. He and his wife Kim learned their newborn son Nolan had Down's Syndrome. They gained, along with their loving son, a cause that they have used to make a difference in their community. They have recruited volunteers and raised money in an effort to create friendships, employment and leadership opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Nolan already seems like part of the Capitals' family, as he joined his dad at the table for a post-game news conference this past season. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm National Press Club welcome to a coach, a father, and a community volunteer, the Washington Capitals' Barry Trotz.

[applause]

**BARRY TROTZ:** Thank you so much. I saw John's notes, and the print is about that big. And I got small print, so I'm going to have to put some glasses on here. [laughter] First of all, I just want to thank you, and I feel very blessed and honored to be here today to speak to such a great crowd. The history of this particular luncheon is phenomenal. I actually went online, and I was talking to Sergei, and I said, "I went online and I got intimidated by seeing all the speakers that they've had over the time. And hopefully I can reach some expectations. So I'm going to give it a try."

First and foremost, one of the things that I felt last year, you know, obviously, I was in Nashville for such a long time, there's a great transition that has to go through making a transition, being in a place for 15 years. And I can tell you a couple stories before I go into what I'm going to talk about today.

1982, a five foot-nine, undrafted free agent defenseman got an opportunity to attend a Washington Capitals training camp in Hershey, Pennsylvania. At that camp, this young free agent defenseman, who wasn't very big, I wouldn't say overly talented, saw the Director of Player Personnel Jack Button and new General Manager David Poile of the Washington Capitals sitting in the stands. And that young man went up to both of them and said, "Mr. Button, thank you, thank you for allowing me to come to the camp. I'm not going to disappoint you. I'm going to make it real hard for you to cut me."

And his response was pretty telling. You just turned 20 years old, you're trying to—All your life you want to be an NHL player. And the first thing that comes out of Mr. Button's mouth, and I'll try to keep it as PG as I can for this event. [laughter] Mr. Button says to me, "I know who you are. Who do you think brought you here? The only reason that you're here is you might be a good minor league leader or coach someday." [laughter] This is seconds before I'm going down to, you know, go on the ice for the first time to try to make the Washington Capitals. It's not really a good motivation speech that I wanted to hear. But I did want to thank him for giving me the opportunity.

And he was the guy that rehired me years later. Funny things that happen when you get into this business, a lot of people ask you how you get into coaching. It just happens sometimes. It's about loving the game. I had a back injury that prevented me from playing on. I went from the Caps camp to the University of Manitoba. And I played at the University of Manitoba for a gentleman who became my coaching mentor, is Wayne Fleming. And a couple things he told me. You know, he was one of those guys, you know, come out and help out, and just watch and move pucks and all that stock hockey. And then, I started getting these slips of paper to go to, like, the Roger Nielson Camp and the Team USA stuff and Hockey Canada stuff, and sort of take in, get to know—introduce me into a number of great hockey minds like Clare Drake and George Kingston and a lot of university coaches and professor people who were doing that for a full-time job.

And when I did take up coaching full-time in my hometown in my first job, I was 22 years old, and I was coach and general manager of a junior A team that was a lot of

money in the hole. And I was the cheap fix, because I could live with my mom and dad for a year. [laughter] And they could pay me nothing, virtually. So it gave me an opportunity. And I thank the Dolphin Kings organization, and particularly Wayne Fleming.

And ironically, as I went on the path, Jack Button rehired me when I was at the University of Manitoba when I went back to coach there, to scout, be an area scout. And then he asked me to become full-time. And one thing led to another. I became the head Western scout for the Washington Capitals. And I want to feel some responsibility, at least, within the group setting of our scouting. The first people we took out of my area were Olaf Kolzig in the first round. And Ovie still works with us and is a legend with the Caps. He was our first round pick. Our second round pick we took Byron Defoe, who has also had a pretty good career in the National Hockey League.

And the funny thing back then, sometimes when you get ridiculed a little bit when you do things, is that all the other teams and scouts were saying, “You’ve got two goalies. You took one in the first round and you took one in the second round. Well, didn’t you trust your first round pick?” You know. So you get ridiculed. But, at the same time, if you look back, those two guys had a terrific career, and probably better than probably, you know, any other team in the National Hockey League. So sometimes you have to go out of the box a little to be successful.

The other thing that Wayne Fleming taught me is, you know, be true to yourself. Have the right spirit. One piece of advice that he gave me that I thought was not quite right, but I know his intentions were, is he said, “If you get into coaching full-time, you’re going to get fired 100 times. And so you need to have a place that you can call home, because when you get let go, it’s really strange. And you’re going to need a place to go.

So I went out and ventured after, I think it was a year or two, in Nashville, Tennessee, when I could finally afford something. Went out to British Columbia, and we found a piece of land, built a house in British Columbia. And I ended up staying in Nashville for 16 years. So that I’ve had a house for 11 years, and I’ve probably spent four months in it in the last 11 years. [laughter]

So Wayne had good intentions at that point. Last year, obviously was a big change for me, being in one place for so long, that you know, you have friends, you have all those things. And then you get uprooted a little bit. And one of the great things that happened when there is this—it’s always an adventure—is that I think I left Nashville in a really good place. I had a good—I was blessed to have the run that I did. My kids started in grade one. They graduated college and are doing very well. That’s a coach’s dream, any professional sport, to be in one city as long as I was.

So, when I did get let go, it was quite emotional. But one of the great things, about an hour after I got let go, I got a call from Dick Patrick in the Washington Capitals and said, “We’d like you to be our next coach.” And then, a couple hours later, I got a couple calls from three other teams that said that, “We want to talk to you, and we’re

interested in your services.” I actually had set up some appointments. I set up one to come to Washington. And I talked to Mr. Leonsis, Brian MacLellan and Dick Patrick. And I never had to go through an interview for like 16 years, so I was a little bit rusty. [laughter] And you know, I asked different people who had gone through this, you know, they had had these books, and they’d have all these things. And I said, “Well, you know, I got experience. I don’t think they’re going to ask me about experience.” And I said, “You know, if they’re coming here, they want to—They didn’t make the plots. They want to get back in. How can I fix the problem?”

So I basically said to, you know, when I was asked, “What would you do?” And I said, “I know your problem. I can fix it. And this is how I would go about it.” And I thought about it. I asked a lot of questions, all that. But I knew, in my heart, that I wanted to be in Washington, for a couple things, right off the bat. It was very, very clear to me that (a) there was a good group of players. You know, as coach, you look at, do you have a good group of players? What is the ownership like? It’s very, very good.

I obviously, with my family situation, having a son—I have four children. My youngest is a 14 year old, Down’s Syndrome. He’s a real key member for our family. And you have to pick somewhere where the kids could get to. I looked at all the other teams. The big rumor was me going to Vancouver, because I have a place in BC, which I spent like four months in 11 years. [laughter] And it was pretty clear I wanted to come to Washington.

So I had set up some interviews. And, after I had come to Washington and talked to the ownership group here, I basically phoned the other teams and said, “I’m out. I’m going to make it work.” So I was very fortunate and blessed to get that opportunity. And you know, one of the thoughts, and people—I get this question from coaches, I get it from a lot of fans, you know, “What was the process to sort of changing the culture?” You heard me talking about that a lot, you know, changing the culture. And it’s not an indictment on anybody who was here before, because there are some great people that have been here before. But they just stalled out. There was something missing. There wasn’t that—you know, the brand had lost its energy a little bit.

So first thing, you know, when we talk about—I want to talk about trusting the process a little bit. And one of the things that I first did was evaluate the situation, which I have just talked about a little bit, family, options, who you’re going to work with, why. What’s the vision. You know, what are the problems. And one of the things I did right away, when I got the job, was to start listening. And I think this applies to the business world. It applies to sports. We always want to be in control.

And one of the truths of everything, that I find, is that you think you can control everything, but you really can’t. You think you’re in control. A lot of it is luck. A lot of it is picking the right people. There’s a lot of things. And I think what experience does, and this is me personally, is when I was younger, I wanted to control everything, everybody, so that I could say it’s doing it my way. But what I found is that experience is a filter. You only have to worry about five or six things. You correct those five or six main

things, and it sort of falls in the order for you. And I think that's what experience has allowed me to do.

So I went around, talking to every player. If I could see them personally, I would do that. I phoned them. We talked. I made this trip to Vegas, to see Ovie, obviously, one of the greatest goal scorers of our decade. And talked to him about the problems, and listened a lot. That was my first thing.

And once I listened, I formulated what I thought was a game plan. The game plan obviously, from a standpoint as a vision based on core values. And when you talk about core values, you know, what does that mean? And it's a little bit different for everybody. And my core values I started thinking about is, you know, the Washington Capitals are a team that sort of lost their way. Maybe they're not as close. They've always been pretty talented. As a coach in Nashville, Tennessee, playing against the Washington Capitals, it never felt like, when we came out of the game, we went, "Man, they were a tough team to play. They were talented." But they weren't really tough to play against. They could be—They could beat you 5-1, but you could beat them 5-1. And it was—it was a little bit of—I didn't know what their identity was.

And so, I wanted a little bit of an identity, but I went to the core values. I tried to do the core values on almost everything that we do as an organization. And some of the core values—I'm going to try to keep it PG because when I talk in the dressing room, it's probably a little different than I talk to people with all their teeth and dressed really well and having a tie on and all that. [laughter] So I'll try to keep it as PG as I can.

The first thing is, I wanted to make sure that we were humbled by not making the playoffs as an organization. To me, we would have to be humbled by that. And I think the players were when I talked to them. So sometimes you got to sweep the shed—I changed that word on the end. [laughter] It's sort of—And everybody's got to be willing to do it, you know, from your star player to your role player. And I really believe it keeps your feet firmly on the ground. It's one of the things I really do, I think you can really have success.

The other thing is, we've tried to create a great environment. But at the end, we wanted to create a championship environment where the individuals, the champions, if you want to be a champion, you do extra. It's continual improvement. It's learning. It's a learning environment. And we try to create that.

So we changed everything from a rookie camp, which is going on right now, to a teaching environment, where we are going to get better, not only physically, mentally, spiritually, all those things, we need it to be whole, as a group. Changing that culture, having a culture where the group, the unit was willing to spill blood, and you're looking for that committed person, and put value on commitment. A little more of a family atmosphere, extended family if you will, keeping a cool head, be very task-oriented.

So we want to create a family environment. We did everything from, you know, one of the first things that we did last year is, when we picked our team, we did a picture in front of the Marine Monument, Iwo Jima. And the first thing I said, we took a team picture in our jerseys. And, if you understand the monument I'm talking about, they're raising that flag. And I told our player, our team, "It is very important for us to understand that we need to raise our flag. It has been 40 years. And this is a hard trophy to win. There's great organizations. There's teams like St. Louis Blues, Vancouver Canucks—and I'm going to miss a whole bunch—that have been at this for 40-some years and haven't been able to do it. Toronto Maple Leafs have been trying to do it since '67. And it's a team that's unlimited resources. So it's not an easy, easy trophy to win. But it'd have to have a little bit of meaning to that."

And then, at the end, leave the jersey in a better place, on and off the ice. So we're looking for good people. We're looking for people that are professional. We're looking for people who get it, who have a little higher cause than getting a paycheck. We want it to be a team that wants to win. And it starts with your core players. So those are the things that we talked about. Obviously, correcting some of the problem areas.

One of the first things that you want to do is—and I always tried to do that—is hire the best people. And I stole some guys from Nashville, like all good coaches do. You take the best people with you. I brought goal-tending coach Mitch Korn, who has been—he's coached some of the best in the world. You saw the results with Braden Holtby this last year, how he's gone from probably an average goaltender who had some holes in his game, to a pretty good goaltender. I hired defense coach from Pittsburgh, I don't want to raid those guys, because I know how much you guys hate them. [laughter] So we did it in a big way, we went and got Todd Reardon. And I think Todd is going to be a head coach in the National Hockey League. I think Todd is one of the best individual defensemen coaches in the National Hockey League. What he does is taking what Mitch Korn has done to goaltending and turned that sort of concept to the next level with defensemen, done an excellent job.

And we weren't done raiding the Penguins. We got Orpik and we got Niskanen. And Todd was a big part of that. So good on us. And we got another defenseman from Pittsburgh, Chorney[?], this year, in free agency. So we're going after those guys. [laughter] [applause]

From there, obviously, we hired the best people. I brought also Lane Lambert, to be remiss. And I kept the—who's done a really great job with us in Nashville, and then coming to Washington. And also, I kept Blaine Forsythe, who has been in charge of the power play in Washington for the last couple years, and been excellent at that. So I wanted a couple people from the East, a couple people from the West, and people from different backgrounds and environments, so we can grow as a group. And I think that was where we went from there.

Identify and communicate. After we got that sort of process started, I really tried to identify and communicate the game plan to the leaders. Because if the leaders don't

buy in, then nothing happens. But you also want to include a guy who has won a championship, a guy like Brooks Orpik, some of the new members, was really important to get their buy-in. Without their buy-in, without your leaders, you're not going to be very successful. And they had the buy-in. Even if they don't believe it, you've got to sell it.

And the most important thing that I found with the leadership group, especially when there's a lot of new people, they want to do the best, and they want to—they want to, you know, please you, is the word I'm looking for. And, at the same time, they have questions. They're not sure. They don't trust you.

So we spent a lot of the time developing trust. And I was very good at communicating every thought, what I was thinking, so that they become an extension of what I was seeing as a vision. And even having a small thing like the picture, and just telling them, "We need to raise our own flag," is sort of something that they can visualize. So I always tried to give them something that they can visualize and do that.

We talk about, and I think it applies in business, I think it applies in sport, you know, we have 23 guys on the team. But you really, really coach seven or eight. And if you really coach your seven or eight key people, it all—everything falls underneath. You know, your leadership can really help that, and it helps create your culture, the expectations, the accountability, all that.

I always say, you know, the more you can communicate to your leadership, and the more they understand, the more they buy in, the less that you will have the assumption of what you're doing. And as we all know, and I'm cleaning this one up too [laughter], um, assumption is the mother of all mess-ups. [laughter] So I'm trying my best at those. [laughter]

And then really, after that, once you have the leadership, it's identifying everybody's role. You got to be honest, bluntly honest. I've had some conversations. I've had some veteran players who haven't been sat out for four or five years, and I'm sitting them out. And those are hard conversations. But, at the same time, there has to be accountability. And believe it or not, people, they want accountability as long as they're not accountable. [laughter] You know, they want accountability for, like John right here, he's got to be accountable. I want him accountable. I don't want to be accountable. So you have to go through that.

But, when they see that you're treating everybody fairly, it's really important. I think coaching, the one thing I know about coaching, is coaching is not about equality, it's about inequality. No one gets the same ice time. Everybody rushes to interview Ovie versus a fourth line player. But the one thing that has to be, and it's a sport, and it's in also business, is that you treat everybody with equal respect and give them a role, define their role, and make them feel that they are part of something bigger.

Then you start building culture. And that's really important to me. You know, be honest with the vision. And you got to have the vision, not only for the group, but the



vision for the player, short-term, long-term. A good example of that might be—I can go to Braden Holtby. I mean he was a very busy goalie for a number of years, a couple of years here. And then, all of a sudden, he wasn't a busy goalie, because we were better defensively, we were a better rounded team. And it was very difficult for him to stand there for 10 minutes at a time and not get a shot. Then, all of a sudden, there's a shot, and his save percentage wasn't very good, I mean because it's very—you talk to any goaltender, it's very difficult to play those games. But he had to grow in that area, and he was willing and open-minded to do that.

You look at a guy like Kuznetsov, who I think is going to be a terrific player. Here is a top player from Russia, coming from a different league. And, in fact, he had a situation where he had to trust the coach. The coach was not always playing him as much, many minutes, sitting him out sometimes, and helping his game. But he trusted the coaching staff and what we were doing with him. We were very up front with him. And he grew as a player. And then now, I think he's going to be a terrific player for us.

So it's getting that trust, giving opportunity, and then being patient, and knowing that the process will hold up. As I said, holding people accountable. Coaching is not about equality. I sort of—you shouldn't—This is one of my pet peeves. Soccer moms, any soccer moms here? Soccer dads? I don't care, okay. [laughter] I got a pet peeves. One of my pet peeves, you shouldn't get a trophy for sitting, just showing up. [applause] You shouldn't do that. [applause] If you're expected to show up, you should show up. You have a job to do. Get your job done. If you go above and beyond, you get a trophy. If you don't, you don't get a trophy. That's—Okay, that's all I'm going to say about that. [laughter]

Okay. You shouldn't. I think you trust the process, it's not always about going smoothly. I'll give you a quick—I know I'm going to be a little bit long, because I always am. The first 20 games, you saw the Washington Capitals, I think we played very, very well. But, you know, Braden was trying to find himself. Ovie was hitting every post in the world and not scoring for five games. The stats that the Washington Capitals couldn't win games, when they only scored two goals, was ridiculous. If Ovie or Bache[?] didn't get points, to me it was ridiculous. But we played very well. But we were only 500 for the first 20.

And then, what it is, is a little bit of a tipping point. And I thought it was really great, it showed great leadership. I called the leadership in one day, and I said, “Okay, I've given you direction. You know what to do, all right. You have to buy in and finish this off. You guys”—I sort of gave ownership to them and put it on them. And I said, “You fix this. You have to take it to the next level.” And they did. And we started growing.

You saw, I think about the first week in November, or sorry, first week in December, you saw the Washington Capitals start going like this. I know that for a fact, because I was sort of jealous that I got kicked out of Nashville, and they got off to the hottest start in probably their history. [laughter] And we were about 30 points behind

them, and we were 20 games into it. And, by the end of the year, we caught them. So I felt a little bit better about that. [laughter]

You know, honesty was really, I think, a key factor in building trust. One of the things that I've learned, also, is that it's coming to the society. And it goes back to my soccer trophy thing. You know, everybody goes by and says, "Good job." And it came clear to me, I was flipping through the channels, since I'm a bachelor the last few weeks, being at development camp and the draft and that. And you don't really go to sleep.

And I was flipping through the channels, and there's this show *Whiplash* about the jazz drummer. And there was a clip in there, and I'm going to pull it out for our team one day. And it was about—Really, it's about the guy says, "I hate the word 'Good job' when you're expected, when something is expected of you. Why tell a person, 'Hey, great job,' when that is his job? That's what I expect." So it really takes away from the greatness. I think "Good job" should be when you do something, you recognize that when they go above and beyond.

And one of the symbols for that, and it's really great, I know that sometimes you can pull it up on Monumental Sports, is we give after the game the hat and beer, you know, type of thing. And you'll be amazed. A guy will score two goals, and Ovie will score two goals and play well. And that award will go to a guy that, you know, blocked a shot or did something just above and beyond, because Ovie is expected to score, or Bache is expected to get four assists.

It'll be someone who went out of their—You know, Ovie probably gets the award for blocking a shot, than scoring goals, you know. [laughter] So it's sort of weird, when they give it out sometimes, because people will say, "Well, you know, I thought Ovie got a hat trick, and he was the best player on the ice." And that's expected, because he is a dynamic player. And it would go to someone that, you know, I didn't even notice him, other than he blocked that shot, you know, got in for a teammate who was maybe over-matched in a physical confrontation. Those are the great things that you love in that. So that's a little other pet peeve and good job. If you're expected to do it, just do it. And we've got that.

Also, I have learned, that being a coach is, if you're in charge, at some point you're going to have to give ownership to the people under you. And if you've picked good people and made them accountable in a group, they'll do a great job for you. And I've learned that.

And then, probably the thing that I'll just finish up, because I know I'm running late, we ended up with a little bit of a theme last year. We had a lot of themes. Here, if you follow us, they get so much coverage on us. We said, "Feed the right wolf," and that's "Feed the right attitude" with our team. But really, what it came down to, when we tried to create a culture, was the will to win culture.

And it really came down to four things. It was know your why, fulfill your role, fight with confidence, and overcome the uncertainty. And that will continue with us, going forward. Last year was a foundational year for us. The challenges that we recognize that there's certain foundations and certain identities that we have to live up, expectations. As you know, I'm pushing them higher. I'm not—We're not afraid of game sevens. I need to change the attitudes of, not only the environment in the Washington, D.C. area. We got great sports teams. We need your positive energy, not your negative energy. [applause] And we're going to do that. We're going to do that in D.C. If it's not us, it's going to be the Nationals. If it's not us, it's going to be the Wizards. If it's not us, hopefully it'll be the Redskins. [laughter] I was going to get in trouble with that one, I know. [laughter]

But we have a great—I think we're moving in the right direction. We have great ownership. We have the commitment of the ownership. And thank you so much for allowing me to speak. Thank you for your support of the Washington Capitals. You're great fans. And love coming to work every day. We want to win some games, and we want a big—we want to have a parade down one of these great streets one of these days. And thank you.

[applause]

**JOHN HUGHES:** So we got a lot of hockey questions. Surprise, surprise. Capitals have made many off-season moves. How will the 2016 or next year's team look different from this team when you take all these moves together?

**BARRY TROTZ:** I guess I'm not reading. I don't need glasses. One of the things, obviously, the reality of the solid[?] Cap area, you know, you fall in love with Julio, Mike Green, who's been a big part, Joel Ward is a favorite, Troy Brouwer. You're going to have to move some pieces. And I think what we did with the Oshi[?] deal is we've added a player for two years who is a, what we call a top six forward in that area. Justin Williams has won and is a top six forward. He's won three Cups. He's that big game seven guy that has a great—Maybe he can give us some mojo. We are not as scared of game seven. We're one and one. We're not, I don't know, one and 36, or whatever everybody tells me. We're one and one with this group. You ask a player about their history, about the Patloff [?] Fontaine goal, I will guarantee you that Burakovsky, Kuznetsov, those guys have no idea what you're talking about. [laughter]

**JOHN HUGHES:** By replacing Joel Ward and Troy Brouwer with T.J. Oshi and Justin Williams, have the Caps sacrificed some of the grit and muscle that enabled them to play a heavier game compared with your now team?

**BARRY TROTZ:** I think we might be a little bit lighter, just in pure size. I mean Joel is one of the best at puck protection. Troy is a big body as well. We might be a little bit. But I can tell you this about T.J. Oshi, he's probably a little more dynamic player. But he is very competitive. He will put his nose in there. And same with Justin Williams.

So one of the things that Justin Williams said, “I want to come to Washington because you are just like the LA Kings.” And I love that. And he says, “Your defense is strong. You had good goaltending. And you got some dynamic players up front.” And the emergence of our young guys is going to be key.

**JOHN HUGHES:** With Green and Gleason going to free agency, who do you see filling out the bottom six?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Oh, really, Orloff, who missed a whole year with a hand injury, he’s really a good player. He’s a high skilled player. Hopefully he can, you know, lessen the gap of a Mike Green. Mike is such a talented player. But Orloff can, he can produce there, who we’re going to have to pick up there. Nate Schmidt, who you saw a little bit last year. We got young Chorney from Pittsburgh, again, steal from those guys. [laughter] Also young Connor Carrick is going to be a good young prospect. So we’ve got people coming up down the pipe there, that I think we can fill those holes. Can you replace Mike Green? Probably not fully. But collectively, I think we can shorten that gap.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Which of the rookies do you expect to be on the team or to spend time with the team next year?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Rookies, rookies—Well, one was Stan Galiev, I think came in at the end of the year. I think he’ll be challenging for a spot. Joseph Verona, who was our first round pick last year, came at Hershey at the end of the year, and did a really good job. We had a great story last year in Liam O’Brien, who came to development camp as a total free agent. And usually, those total free agents just are trying to get an American League contract. And Hersey and he ended up making our hockey team at the start of the year. He might be another possibility. And we’ve got Brown down there. So we’ve got some people that, I think, could fill some of those voids.

And to me, in this Cap era, everything is about developing people. And it’s going to be about developing our own people. So that’s going to be the lifeline. So you’re going to see some young kids. We got some good ones coming.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Alex Ovechkin probably had his best overall season last year. What did you do as a coach to turn him into more of a two-way player, meaning playing some defense as well as offense?

**BARRY TROTZ:** All right, who was that? Put your hand up. [laughter] All right. You know, it was really—It was really simple. I told Alex, when I met with him back in Vegas, I said, “I’d like to put you back on left wing. I think you’re more dynamic here. I want to play to your strengths.” And we talked about different things, but really, to make a long story short, at the end of the day I said, “When you have the puck, I want you to do what you do. When you don’t have the puck, I want you to do what I want you to do.” [laughter] For one reason. And Alex is—I love his personality because he’s very direct.

And I said—I always have to say, “I want you to do what I want you to do, so we can get you the puck more. So we have to have a plan.” We wanted to have a plan to get the puck back, so we can go on the offense. And that’s all it is. And he bought in. And he’s been great that way.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Ovechkin is going to be turning 30. Of course Gretsky had a 20-goal season at age 37. But really, the time is getting shorter in his career. How much of a sense of urgency does Ovie’s age lend to the Capitals organization?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Well, I think it lends some urgency. I think he’s still in the prime of his career. I think, as much as it is to the organization, there’s an urgency level for us. But I think there’s an urgency level for Ovie. I mean he’s been here 10 years. He wants to win a cup. You know, he’s been the lightning rod, good and bad. I mean he was the first overall pick. So you weren’t very good when you got him. And he’s made this to a top level team. They won a President’s Trophy. But, you know, you talk to Ovie, he’s won every award possible individually in the National Hockey League, that he can for his position, other than Most Sportsmanlike, I think, right. [laughter]

So, but he’s not that type of player. So he can’t win that. [applause] And, if you talk to Ovie, there’s only one trophy that he wants. And we all know what it is. It’s the same one you fans want, and the same one I want. I’m not getting any older—or any younger. I started, and Pete knows this. When I started in Nashville, I had black hair, sort of semi-mullet. [laughter] And just, yeah, I say coaching hockey is like dog years. So you know, how I’m probably about 150 years old right now. [laughter]

**JOHN HUGHES:** You mentioned Braden Holtby earlier. This questioner notes that Holtby seemed to move his game up a notch last year. What changed with him? How did that happen?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Well, I think it’s Mitch Korn, that’s what happened. And I give a lot of credit to Braden because he—he was having good success. He had good numbers. And what Mitch is so great at, is that he doesn’t change the goaltender. He says, “This is what you do. This is what you do best, okay. So let’s enhance that. Let’s clean up your holes. How do you clean up the things that you’re not maybe capable of doing, be it physically or, you know, in terms of tracking pucks or anything?” He builds the player, and he finds a way, like a little mad scientist that he is, of finding ways to clean up those holes. And what happened is, Braden cleaned up those holes.

If you remember, the year before, I thought, “Man, this guy is a dynamic goaltender.” But every save, he was like—it looked like it was the outstanding save. And now it’s everything seems to be slower and in control. Am I right or wrong? And what he’s done is made him very efficient, a lot more patient, and a lot more in control, using his great athletic ability, and also his competitive spirit that he has. He’s a fighter. He’s a blue collar kid from Saskatchewan who, as Mitch said—It was funny, Mitch said he wanted a little more blue collar in the kid from Saskatchewan, and Braden responded.

But it doesn't happen unless the player buys into what you are, as sees some success. And you're going to have those tipping points, individually or as a team. So a lot of credit goes to Mitch, but a lot of credit goes to Braden.

**JOHN HUGHES:** A couple questions related to Nick Backstrom. Why did Backstrom wait so long to have his surgery? And how much of a problem will that be in October? And then separately, somebody wants to know, is Backstrom going to be an all-star? And how do you counter the attention the opponents place on shutting down that first line?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Wow, there's like five questions there. That's pretty good. [laughter] That was a media guy. [laughter] He just hit the boom, boom, boom. First, the first one was what? Backstrom.

**JOHN HUGHES:** His surgery.

**BARRY TROTZ:** Surgery. Well, he's had a—It wasn't with his surgery, you know, we're like horses. You know, you're good, you're good, you're good. And then you get to a point where it started affecting him. It affected him way too late in the season. You know, it wasn't a problem, probably, until about February, where Nick was having a little more problem, and we had to monitor it a little bit, a little bit more. And we knew, at the end of the season, he was probably going to have something—have to have it cleaned out a little bit. And, you know, how much problem is it going forward? He'll be better. It's like getting your tires retreaded. So he's going to have 40,000 more miles. [laughter]

But, at the same time, hips are different than breaking your leg. You know, you break your leg, your six-seven weeks, you're skating. Eight weeks, you get cleared, you're good to go. Hips are a little different. They're individual. We saw that with Peckerini[?] in Nashville. I think with Nick, if he's on schedule, which he is right now, he will be skating at training camp. Will he be in the exhibition games and that? We don't know where he'll fit in there. But we're hoping that that will be the case.

But we're also preparing for, you know, if Nick is not ready to start the season, who fills that role? We're still looking at another center man. If not, then we can put Brooks Light there. We signed Jay Beagle, who is, to me, a real good signing for us. And then, we have young Burakovsky, who I played a little bit at center, knowing that these good young players that we have, they may have to fill those roles. And so someone will have to step up.

And we talked about dealing with the uncertainty is one of our cultural things. Well, if that's one of the uncertainties, then we'll be ready for it. We'll—You'll see guys ready for that challenge. And I won't be scared, and we won't have an excuse. If Nick Backstrom is not there, we still got to win hockey games. If he's there, we're going to win hockey games or sure. Obviously, he's such a great player.

And is he going to be an all-star? I was working that hard last year, big time. I was shocked that he had never played in an all-star game. I was shocked that he is never mentioned as a Selke finalist. So you will hear that at the fan voting. Let's get on that. Let's get him there. He deserves to. He's one of the best all-around players in the National Hockey League.

**JOHN HUGHES:** What is the biggest difference that you've found between coaching in Nashville and coaching in Washington?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Oh, the biggest—Hockey is hockey. I think it's more—is the people that you're with. You know, obviously, the biggest challenges I had, you know, you've got to think, when I got there, I got there in '97. So I was Buck Sherwaller[?], I was there, I was actually a pro scout. I didn't have a team. I used to come into the Verizon Center, and I'd say, "I'm Barry Trotz, the coach of the Nashville Predators," and they'd go, "What league are they in?" [laughter] And I said, "Well, they're going to be in the National Hockey League." I said, "We got jerseys and everything. It's really swell." [laughter] Security guy doesn't know when I'm being a smart—

So anyways, I started from the ground up. I ordered carpet, I designed dress rooms, I figured where everybody is going to park. So I got to—It was great for me learning the—Basically, I went to Hockey University for the last 30 years, working for David Poile and now Brian. And the biggest changes, I came in and David Poile—I've known the way David Poile has done things, because I was with David in Washington. Then I went to Nashville. So I only knew one way. And he's very, very meticulous.

So he took me to the Washington Capital University, and he took me to the Nashville Predator University, his expansion team. And so I think I got a good skill set for how the organization runs. And I see the big picture a little bit better. And then, when I came here, it's different, because it's run differently. It's not run worse or better, it's just differently. So it was a big change for me to know who is in charge of what, where in Nashville, I knew everything about everybody, and what they did. And it was really easy. So that was the biggest change for me. But hockey is hockey. I've dealt with top players in the past. And it's just when we move, you have to make new friends, a new adventure. And it was a great adventure last year.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Well we are the National Press Club, so no surprise we got a question about the Black Hawks as well.

**BARRY TROTZ:** Oh yeah.

**JOHN HUGHES:** The Black Hawks used four defensemen for their Cup run. Can you comment on the strategic effects of that, and just on the Black Hawks in general. Now, that's three Stanley Cups in six years for them. What are they doing right?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Winning Cups. That's what they're doing. That's pretty simple. [laughter] When I started, and I was telling someone who was a Black Hawk fan, this must be your question, right. One of the things that the Chicago Black Hawks, obviously, when we came into the league in '98 with the National Predators, I mean we used to go into that big building, and there was 3,000 people, 4,000 people. And we finished ahead. We were an expansion team, we finished way ahead of the Black Hawks. That's why they got Patrick Kane and the National Predators didn't.

They built from there. I think what Rocky Wirtz has done, by taking over the team, he brought the pride back into Chicago. They filled that building, brought that great fan base in there. They drafted very well, were patient. They spent at free agency very well. And they got a little bit of luck, a little bit of strategic planning, good hockey decisions, I guess, is what I'm saying. And they built a really good core. And that core has grown up to be very good.

That team runs with Jonathan Toews, Brent Seabrook is a very core member of that team that makes it run the right way. Hossa is a big, big part of that. And every team's core is about eight guys. And if you can get those eight guys to set the tone, be the players that can elevate the game when the game is on the line, those guys go to a level that players can't play at. And they drag everybody along. And they're not scared of those moments. And they've got that. That's what Chicago has developed. They are the standard of the National Hockey League, not only on the ice with the Stanley Cups that they're winning, off the ice the way how efficiently they are run, how professionally they are in the community. And that's why they win Stanley Cups.

And that's what ownership here, Brian, myself, we're about. We want to be the gold standard in National Hockey League. We have all the pieces to do that. We're getting closer. And the commitment is there. And I think, you know, it's tough to win, and it's tough to emulate. But you look at the best in the business, we want to be best at scouting, best at developing, just as every team is. And it's a commitment. And it's a commitment by all involved. And it's, you have to be willing to have that vision, and you have to, as I said, trust that process, that you keep doing it and keep doing it, and it's going to work.

A lot of things that are very successful in business and hockey don't really succeed the first time. And anybody who's very, very successful will tell you that, that they've had to go through a lot more failures than you had successes. So I think with every failure that we've had this year, every game that we've lost, we tried to learn something from every game. We learned something the first series against the Islanders. We started in the hole, Braden Holtby was sick before game one, wasn't very good. We lost game one. Game two, he wasn't even available, and we had to go right to our, at that time, Drew Bower was our minor league goalie. And we had to fight through some adversities.

So you're going to have some failures. You're going to have some successes. But those successes keep building, as long as you learn from failures.



**JOHN HUGHES:** Do you support NHL players participating in the Olympics?

**BARRY TROTZ:** I do. I wish they were in North America all the time, because at five in the morning, trying to watch the game is a little tough. But I think yes I am. It's a doubled-edged sword, because the players are so proud of where they come from. And the Olympic games is such a big stage. And I think it's a big forum for—it's really the marquee event probably at the Olympics, when you think about it.

But, at the same time, you have players—Alex Ovechkin, we want to see him at the Olympics, absolutely. But if Alex Ovechkin, like at the World Championships, and we lose him for a year like we did Orloff, is it worth the owner's hundred million dollars that Ovie makes or whatever? And also, you as a fan. So I think the owners struggle with that. The Players Union still pushes that they want to do it, because the players are so proud. It's unique. It's one of those bucket list things that most guys want to do. And so yes, I'm for it, but I understand the business side, because it gets dangerous over there, that you could lose your top player for a year. And all your blood, sweat and tears as an organization can go out the window in one hit, one stray puck.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Could you comment on some of the recent rule changes and pending rule changes for the NHL? Are there some that you are excited about, some that are really working well? Are there any that you don't think are working well? And what about a three-on-three overtime? Would that add an exciting and new element to the game?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Well, a couple of changes. I'm going to bring one up this year, the coaches challenge. A good example, in game five of the Washington Capitals this year against the New York Rangers, when we were up three games to one. We were up one-nothing. Joel Ward scores a goal. Gets called off for goaltender interference. I can tell you, at the coaches' meetings at the draft, Gary Bettman talked about the new rules and the challenges and showed us the clip. And he asked for a show of hands after showing the clip. Is it a goal or no goal? It was 100 percent unanimous that it was a goal.

The general managers after general managers meeting—and I don't know if I have this number quite right, but it was very distinct, like 26 to 4 that it was a goal. So we would have been up 2-nothing. Probably win the series. There was one later on. We talked—Where is the Chicago Black Hawk guy? Where are you? [laughter] Okay, you're getting this one.

The Chicago Black Hawk game, and I think they were down 2-1 in the series, maybe 3-1 in the series, I can't remember what it was. It was in Tampa. It was Marian Hossa went to the net really hard. It was a game where they were not playing really well, and they stole the game in the last period, scored two quick goals, won 2-1. That second goal, Gary—Mr. Bettman asked for a show of hands. It was unanimous by the coaches that it was not a goal, by the general managers a very similar that 26-4 that it was not a goal. That was counted as a goal. And they went on to win the Stanley Cup.

So that's how close winning a Stanley Cup is. And so that is where next year—I don't know what—I guess I'll send my captain over. I don't think I'll be throwing anything. [laughter] But I think it'll be a good change or an opportunity. But, at the same time, you're not going to see it very often, because the referees get it right most of the time. But there might be a time, like in those situations, where you throw the flag or send your captain over. I think it'll be good.

Three-on-three overtime, I think it'll be great. I think we'll love that, three-on-three, from our standpoint, talking to our coaches in the American Hockey League, who use three-on-three, they said it was entertaining. And you're going to get a chance. Someone is going to go for a chance, because there's lots of room. But, if you don't score on that chance, it's coming back probably as, you know, two-on-O the other way. So they said it gets really sort of, you know, you'll go, "Oh, we missed it." And then, all of a sudden, there's a two-on-O going the other way. Your goalie is going to have to be really good and make a save for you, or you lose the game.

So your hearts are probably going to go in your throat, and then, you know, then you'll either be jumping up and down, or you'll be like, "Oh, they lost." And so I think it's about bringing out—You know, we're in the entertainment business. So we always talk about roles that are entertaining for fans, you know, just as we talk about it's got to be entertaining to the building for you, come in and give you a great experience.

I know the staff upstairs wants to give you a great experience when you walk in the door. The coaching staff and our organization want to give you a great experience, because you've got a good team in front of you that's giving you everything you got every night. I know every fan base that I've ever been involved in, in every city, no one—it's not always about the wins and losses, but you'd better have the effort. If you have the effort, I think that's acceptable. If you do not have the effort, it is not acceptable. I don't think that should be in sports. And so we want to be a team that's consistently trying to give our best, you know.

Some nights you're going to wonder why we're not very good. You try coming back from Edmonton, Alberta with the time change, at leaving Edmonton at about one in the morning, a 45-minute ride to the airport, going through regular customs, and they're patting you down, the whole nine yards. And then, you know, flying. And they do the paperwork, and they do—you know, de-ice. If you've ever been in Edmonton, they do a lot of de-icing. [laughter] And then fly back and get home at 6:30 in the morning, you got that day off. But then you're playing the next day or even the day after that. Your sleep habits are all over the place. And therefore, you're sort of not as sharp some nights. And so please, if we have some of those nights, please forgive us for that.

I will let you know if it was just that. [laughter] But, if it's something more, you will hear that from me as well. But there is that in the National Hockey League, those back-to-backs are really tough, and especially coming from—crossing the border, and time zones, it is a lot tougher than people tend to think.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Before I ask the last question, I have some housekeeping. The National Press Club is the world's leading professional organization for journalists. And we fight for a free press worldwide. To learn more about the Club visit our website, [press.org](http://press.org). Or, to donate to our nonprofit Journalism Institute, visit [press.org/institute](http://press.org/institute). I would also like to remind you about a few upcoming programs. On Friday, Luxemburg Ambassador Jean-Louis Wolzfeld will discuss European Union priorities. On Tuesday, Tom Young, who served as a National Guard Flight Engineer in Afghanistan, will discuss his book *The Hunters*. And on August 5<sup>th</sup>, the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, Admiral Paul Zukunft will address a National Press Club Luncheon.

Now this is not the cup you're looking for, but I'd like to present you, Barry— [laughter] with a very special cup. It's the National Press Club mug. [applause]

**BARRY TROTZ:** Thank you. Thank you.

[applause]

**JOHN HUGHES:** We hope that you value and treasure that cup, not as much as you will as the one you're going to get some day. And the last question, it's really about famous hockey ritual superstitions, which hockey players are known for being superstitious. What's the strangest player superstition you've seen on the Caps since you've been here? And has a superstition ever conflicted with your plans for the team?

**BARRY TROTZ:** Well, I might have the strangest, I don't know. I'll go to a couple areas. We all have superstitions, coaching side, Lane Lambert, if we win, he's wearing the same stuff. Yeah, he's changing underwear and shirt, but the tie is the same. From a standpoint of players, I think the strangest is probably Holtz, the goaltender. He goes through a whole ritual. And it is timed to the second, you know, of he has his—he does his mental stuff. He does all those things. He does a thing right before he puts on his sort of pads on his chest and all that, is he'll go through stuff. And he's making saves in the hallway. And I'm like, "Okay." [laughter] And he's like, "Boom, boom." And then he sort of all of a sudden, he's like Superman. He goes in the locker room, and then three seconds later, he's out, and he's dressed. [laughter] So he is our Superman, and that's the strangest one I've got.

[applause]

**JOHN HUGHES:** Can we give a hand for our speaker. [applause] I want to thank Melinda Cook and the Press Club staff, as well as the Journalism Institute staff for helping us arrange today's lunch. And I also want to invite our speaker to come back with the Cup after it's won. This would be a great place to show it off.

[applause]

**JOHN HUGHES:** Ladies and gentlemen, we are adjourned. (gavel)

END