

# Crawford comes back home

## Former star with Bobcats back to help coach OHL Bulls

By Paul Svoboda  
The Intelligencer

Hard work pays off. That's the message Lou Crawford brings to the Belleville Bulls in his first year as an Ontario Hockey League assistant coach.

And Crawford ought to know. He beat the bushes in hockey's minor pro leagues for several seasons before getting a shot in the NHL.

"I spent seven years in the minors before I got my cup of coffee," says Crawford, 31. "I learned a lot from (former Bruin coaches) Mike Milbury and Rick Bowness, they were both hardworking plumbers. It was a good payoff. It was definitely worth the wait."

Crawford, a left winger, enjoyed a 19-game stint with the Boston Bruins in the 1991-92 season, scoring twice and picking up one assist while playing the grinding style typical of the lunch bucket Bruins.

"My first goal was against Edmonton, Peter Ing was the goalie," recalls Crawford. "Chris Nilan and Ken Hodge Jr. assisted. I think I hit the rafters."

While Crawford's work ethic was never questioned in his 11-year pro career, he also possesses another intangible quality that should prove invaluable to the Bulls. He knows how to win.

The Belleville native has one Memorial Cup and two Calder Cup rings (plus a Sutherland Cup as a member of the Trenton Bobcats when they captured the provincial Junior B championship). He graduated from the Memorial Cup champion Kitchener Rangers in 1982, a club that included current NHL stars like Scott Stevens, Al MacInnis and Scott Bellows.

"We were loaded," he says.

In the American League, Crawford was a part of two Calder Cup championship teams in Rochester and Adirondack.

Now, he'll try to pass on that kind of experience.

"I felt I wanted to get into coaching in the OHL," he says of his decision to hang up the blades after the 1992-93 season. "I was offered a job in the minors but I wanted to be



closer to home. My wife Sherry has a good job here and she hung on for my career so I decided it's my turn."

The chance to spend more time with his five-year old son, Corbin, was another factor in Crawford's desire to return to Belleville.

"I caught up with Mav (Bulls general manager and head coach Larry Mavety) last summer and presented it to him," he says. "Fortunately, it worked out."

Crawford believes the new partnership will be a good one. He compares Mavety's style to that of his father Floyd, a former OHL coach who captained Belleville's legendary McFarlands senior "A" hockey club to the Canadian and World championships in 1958 and 1959, respectively.

"They're from the old school," says Crawford. "I'm not far from the game and I can relate to the players. We both work hard."

So far, it's been an eye-opening venture for Crawford who says the Major Junior game has changed immensely since he left Kitchener over 10 years ago.

"It's changed totally," he says. "I don't know if it's because guys are bigger, but there's not much hitting on this ice. When I played, there was more hitting and it was tighter checking. Now, there's more stick-checking, which I can't understand, but it's something we'll work on."

"The kids believe there's more opportunity for them to get noticed if they score 30 or 40 goals. But they'll get noticed if they hit too."

Meanwhile, Crawford says the 1994-95 Bulls have plenty of potential.

"There are good quality kids here," he says. "If they keep the right attitude, we should do well. We have good defence and some big scorers like Richard Park and Radim Bicanek. Craig Mills adds toughness."

"Conditioning will be a big part of it, especially with the big ice (at the Sports Centre). You've got to build on it day after day. That's something I'll try to teach these guys."

And what about the Bulls' first visit to Crawford's old junior barn in Kitchener in February?

Crawford laughs. "I'll probably get a few boos."

*"They'll get noticed if they hit too," says Crawford*

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