

No free skates for Ice Bulls

by **MIKE MAHARREY**
contributing writer

Who Are We? It's 5:30 a.m. and I'm sitting in a damp, smelly locker room with a bunch of bleary-eyed guys. One has to wonder, what makes a college student get up at such an ungodly hour? Looking around me I see a graduate student, an engineering student, a U.S. Marine finishing up his degree, a finance major who aspires to be in the FBI, a guy planning to go to medical school and a freshman who is not quite sure what he is doing. Then there is me... a 39 year old going back for a second degree whose best hockey days are fast fading into the rearview mirror.

What brought us here? The football, basketball and baseball players get scholarships. They play on the big stage and have the potential to make multi-millions of dollars. They have trainers, equipment guys, managers and media people. They see their names in the papers and stories about their team on TV. The guys sitting around me don't get any of that. None of them is going to the NHL. None of them can hope to get big-time endorsements. They buy their own equipment and pay their own way on road trips. There are no airline flights; luxury is being able to ride a charter bus. They have a hard time even getting the USF campus paper to pay attention to them. They not only play hockey, they make posters, do paperwork, sell sponsorships and handle all of the administrative things it takes to make hockey club go.

Why are we here? We are here because we love the game. We love the feel of the ice under our skates and the stick in our hands. We love the sound of the puck against the boards. We love to hear the fans yell when we score. We love the big hit. We love being part of a team and the feeling we get when we pull on that sweater.

The Ice Bulls may not play on the big stage and we may never be famous... at least not for hockey, but you will not find a harder working more passionate bunch of guys. We're not playing because we have to or because we get paid to. We don't lace up the skates in hopes that it will someday be our meal ticket. It's much simpler than that. We play because we love to play.

Check it out... It's something to see!

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