

Vic Rauter - A National Treasure

Seldom does a broadcaster become better known than the athletes they cover. My father would have suggested that in his generation that broadcaster was Foster Hewitt, the voice synonymous with Hockey Night in Canada for over fifty years.

In my generation there is no Canadian broadcaster that has become more intimately entwined with their sport than Vic Rauter and curling.

Vic is a walking encyclopedia of Canadian and international sports, having covered auto racing, soccer, hockey, baseball, bowling, squash, cycling, rugby, equestrian, skiing and the Summer and Winter Olympics. Curling has allowed Vic to come to the forefront of Canadian sports broadcasting hosting TSN's Tournament of Champions from November to April every year, making the winter months more bearable for all who watch.

Vic, now 64, has worked both on radio and television. In 1985 Vic was asked by then-TSN President Jim Taylor if he wanted to call curling. Don Chevrier was making a transition to baseball, and a new voice for curling broadcasts was required. Vic was told that Ray Turnbull, a curling and broadcast legend in his own right, would be remaining on the games and Vic wisely said yes. The rest is television legend, with millions of satisfied curling fans longing to hear Vic describe with respect and awe the game they play weekly at local arenas across Canada.

One of the first things that sets Vic apart from other broadcasters is that Vic plays the game he so enjoys broadcasting. A competitive club curler, Vic understands from being on the ice as a player the athleticism and skill involved at the highest levels of curling in Canada. Vic also understands the huge sacrifices that Canadian curlers make trying to juggle their real jobs, families and bonspiels almost every weekend during the winter months. Vic is truly in awe of these people, who until very recently considered a good season on the “professional circuit” as one they didn’t lose money on. There are no millionaires in Canadian curling, and Vic makes these people and their sport a much bigger thing than anyone would have ever expected.

Because Vic is a committed curler, he understands the value of a good team. Vic shares the broadcast booth with World Champion and Olympic Gold Medalist Russ Howard from New Brunswick, and Olympic Silver medalist Cheryl Bernard from Alberta. Many feel they are the finest threesome to call any sport in Canada. Their knowledge and love of the game is obvious every minute they are on the air. The fun they have at each other’s expense during lulls in play is never forced or contrived, with Vic being the butt of almost all the jokes that he takes with the aplomb of the best of the Hollywood straight men of the Golden Age of Film.

Many of us who have watched Vic over the last three decades believe that the grace he shows in sharing the curling stage with others is what makes him truly special. He “sets the table”

beautifully for Russ and Cheryl rather than drone on incessantly, and often lets them answer questions, and paint the picture for fans that he could have easily done with his voluminous knowledge of the game. What impresses me daily is Vic's reverence and knowledge for the greats of the game long before curling was ever on television. Vic not only knows their rinks and what they did, but he seems to know them as people also, further humanizing the sport.

No Tournament of Champions event is ever complete without three signature expectations: two Vic Rauter broadcasting calls and the "thank you to the host vignette" that ends every bonspiel. You know the game is done when Vic says "Make the final..." and you know someone has had a huge end when Vic delights with "Count 'em up 1...2...3...4". When all the medals are handed out and the last interviews are done, Vic always narrates the closing 2-2 and a half minute video thanking the host city and the players for the weekend or week of play. They are often quite moving as Vic seldom tells you who won, rather he speaks about the curlers, people from the host arena and community, and some of the lesser teams who experienced firsts or performed well above expectations. I have always found them to be "must watch" television.

In 1999 Vic won the Gemini Award as Canada's best sports broadcaster, and in 2006 he was justifiably enshrined in the Canadian Curling Hall of Fame.

I have no idea how long Vic will remain behind the microphone calling curling, but I hope he has a few more good years left in what has been a glorious broadcast career so far. If you have never heard the man at work do so soon, because when Vic retires he will be all but impossible to replace. He is one of a kind, "Canada's voice of curling."