

Howard Baldwin Unveils Plans for Bringing Whalers Tradition Back to Connecticut

Outdoor Hockey Fest and Summer Reunion Highlight Baldwin's Initiative

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Howard Baldwin has had a love affair with the Whalers and the city of Hartford for nearly four decades.

Now, after a 22-year absence from the Connecticut hockey scene, the founder and former managing general partner of the National Hockey League's Hartford Whalers is back.

Baldwin, wife Karen and his Whalers Sports and Entertainment enterprise hope re-establish the Whalers legacy in the Nutmeg State.

To accomplish that goal, Baldwin is committed to rebuilding the Whalers brand with a celebration of hockey in Connecticut at all levels while trying to put Hartford back on the major-league hockey map.

Among the highlights of Baldwin's ambitious program:

* A 10-day **Whalers Hockey Fest** in February 2111 that could include as many as 20 outdoor games between pro, college prep school and high school teams at Rentschler Field in East Hartford. It will be reminiscent of the NHL's "Winter Classic" at Fenway Park.

* The **Whalers Summer Fan Fest and Reunion**, a three-day (August 12-14) charitable endeavor that includes a golf tournament, an Arthritis Foundation Dinner and a public Whalers Reunion and Fan Fest event at Rentschler Field.

* A series of fan-oriented ventures, including a social media web site (WhalerNation.TV), an online Whalers retail store, a series of historical Whalers books and DVDs and television programming.

"It's great to be back," Baldwin said Wednesday during a press conference at Rentschler Field.

“When my wife Karen and I returned to Connecticut, we were determined to bring the Whalers name to the forefront of the hockey world again, not only here in Hartford but throughout Connecticut and New England as well.

Karen and I and our organization look forward to again becoming a vital part of this community and for the two events and others to become permanent for years to come.

But, nobody can do this alone. There are some wonderful people in this city and this state who have already committed to making this dream a reality. The positive response from our former players, business leaders, fans and government leaders has been heartwarming.

Remember, together we can do it.”

The Whalers Hockey Fest, February 11-20, 2111

The Whalers Hockey Fest will begin with a “The Whalers Hall of Fame Gala” on Friday night, Feb. 11, in which there will a ceremony to induct the newest members into the reinstated Whalers Hockey Hall of Fame.

The first of the outdoor hockey games will be played at Rentschler Field the next day, February 12th on “Whalers Pride Day.” For the first time in 13 years the Whalers Alumni Team will take the ice and square off against the rival Boston Bruins Alumni. That game will include the Whalers Hall of Fame Ceremony when four individuals will be inducted into the Whalers Hall in a ceremony at center ice.

The Whalers Alumni team will be announced in the days ahead and many of the Whalers all-time greats are expected to participate.

The Alumni game will be followed by an NCAA game and a high-profile high school match-up.

The following week will feature an exiting array of quality amateur hockey events, coordinated by Whalers Sports and Entertainment consultants Bobby Crawford (former Whaler and USA Hockey Regional Director) and Paul Stewart (NHL veteran and ECAC Hockey director of officiating).

Several teams and universities have expressed a strong interest in participating and specific match-ups will be announced soon.

On Saturday February 20th a team of hockey legends square off against the Mystery Alaska Hollywood team. Among the movies produced by Baldwin’s company is

“Mystery Alaska.” The theme of the game will be the same as the film --- perseverance and a town convincing the hockey world of the greatness of their hockey roots, much like Baldwin is trying to do now.

“The whole week is designed to be very affordable as you will see from the pricing,” Baldwin said. “Most importantly, this is meant to be fun and meant to be a way to put the Whalers name back on the icescape.

“We want to make this an annual event and build this market back to what it once was and will be again.”

Festival Tickets for the entire can be purchased online at WhalersSports.com. Information on phone orders and individual game tickets will be forthcoming.

Whalers Reunion and Fan Fest - August 12-14 (information at WhalersSports.com)

Thursday, August 12:

First Annual Whalers Celebrity Golf Classic at Tunxis Plantation.

Estimated start time is 11:00 a.m.—registration prior to tee-off. Format is a 4-person (scramble)(shotgun) with a casual lunch on-the-go. Foursomes will include a sponsor and his/her invited guests. There will be a silent auction at the reception and dinner to benefit the Whalers Foundation for Whalers Alumni in need.

Friday August 13 :

The First Annual Whalers Arthritis Foundation Dinner at the Marriott Downtown Hartford. A VIP cocktail reception for players and sponsors opens this event.

Players will be seated at sponsored tables during the dinner. There will be both a silent and live auction during the dinner. All proceeds will benefit the Arthritis Foundation. After dinner, players will take the stage to share their memories of Hartford and their playing days, plus update guests as to their current careers.

Saturday, August 14 :

Whalers Fanfest and Reunion 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. at Rentschler Field, East Hartford
This is a memorabilia/collectibles show, plus much more! Fans have the opportunity to connect and reconnect with the players; get autographs and photos with their favorite players and purchase collectibles from top memorabilia dealers.

New Whalers merchandise will be available for sale. Interactive games will be set up. Live bands will play and radio station remote broadcasts will fill the day.

100% of Gate proceeds go to the Whalers Wives Foundation to assist Whalers Alumni in need.

According to Baldwin, “The Whalers Reunion will mark the first time the fans have had a chance to interact with to the special group of Whalers who played here in the 1980s. It will be great to see the Alumni again and the fact that all three events benefit worthy charities make its even more special.”

More information can be found at www.WhalersSports.com.

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