

JOHNSON'S JERSEYS COLLECTOR NEWSLETTER

THE OPENING FACEOFF...

NEW ARRIVALS FROM MTU, MSU AND FERRIS STATE 2.0

As a Michigan Tech alum, I am always on the lookout for new Huskies jerseys. Many end up in my collection thanks to leads provided by other collectors. Those are always appreciated! If you have a Huskies jersey, or know of someone who does, please reach out and let me know.

This month I was fortunate to add two new Huskies to the collection. The first was a special one-game jersey which was worn by Devin Kero as part of a fundraiser for the victims of the Copper Country area Father's Day flooding in 2018. Twelve-year-old Thatcher Markham lost his life shortly after the flood and all the Huskies honored him on the back of these jerseys. This event and jersey had special meaning for Kero who was Thatcher's cousin.



The second jersey goes back more than 25 years and was part of the first set of road "Paino Dog" Huskies jerseys worn by Michigan Tech. This one was worn by Andy Sutton in 1994-95 and he went on to have a long career in the NHL. Sutton was also co-named WCHA Defensive Player of the Year his senior season when he netted 40 points from the blue line including 10 PPG.



Another dozen Ferris State WCHA era jerseys have been added to the website along with a CCHA era Michigan State practice jersey.

TIMEOUT FOR COACHING...

WILL "NIL" IMPACT COLLEGE GAME WORN JERSEYS?

If you've been following college sports recently, you have no doubt heard a lot of talk about NIL which stands for Name, Image and Likeness. This has been a highly discussed subject over the years in college athletics and it has to do with "amateur" athletes in collegiate sports being able to receive money by using their NIL to promote themselves or products for a company. Just within the last few months, the NCAA has opened the floodgates to allow student athletes to generate income with their NIL. As with any new NCAA policy, there has been plenty of speculation and rumor and very little factual discussion. Are we about to see hundreds or thousands of collegiate athletes become "NIL-ionares" by cashing in on their campus fame, or is this going to be something that funnels money to 1% of the athletes while the rest getting nothing, or even less than they had before?

My take is that after an initial period of several years where most smaller schools panic and pull back on their sales in fear of the NCAA, there will eventually be a watershed moment where teams realize selling the jerseys is no big deal, even with names attached. I've already seen and heard a couple high profile programs selling them as if nothing changed. In the end, the teams paid for the jerseys and own the rights to their logos. So is the player's name on the back really adding that much value to the jersey? Paraphrasing a great coach: *The name on the front is a heck of a lot more important than the one on the back.* Time will tell...

AT THE END OF REGULATION...

THE PASSING OF TONY ESPOSITO

Many hockey fans take a somber pause when one of their favorite players passes away. Tony Esposito was certainly a favorite of many NHL fans (especially in Chicago and Montreal) as well as around the campus of Michigan Technological University. Tony passed away August 10th after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer. You would be hard pressed to find a more noteworthy player in Michigan Tech's 100+ year hockey history. Esposito went on to have equally stunning success in the NHL.

- Three-time NCAA All-American in 1965, 66, 67
- Three-time WCHA goaltending champion
- NCAA All-Tournament honors in 1965
- NCAA champion in 1965
- Two-time Huskies Hall of Fame Inductee
- Calder Memorial Trophy (top NHL Rookie) in 1970
- Three-time Vezina Trophy (best goalie) in 1970, 72, 74
- Member of Montreal's 1969 Stanley Cup
- Record of 423-306-151 (17 seasons), 10th in NHL history
- Named one of the NHL's 100 Greatest Players in 2017

My connection to Tony Esposito is of course via a jersey. Almost a decade ago now, a fellow jersey collector reached out to me about a "Huskies" jersey that had been posted for sale on Ebay. The jersey was listed as "1950s or 1960s Western Michigan Huskies Hockey Jersey" and the seller was a vintage clothing dealer who had acquired it as part of an estate sale in Chicago. At the time of the purchase, I was equally in the dark as to what the jersey might be, but given the wear and repairs, I figured there was a good chance it was a game worn Michigan Tech jersey.

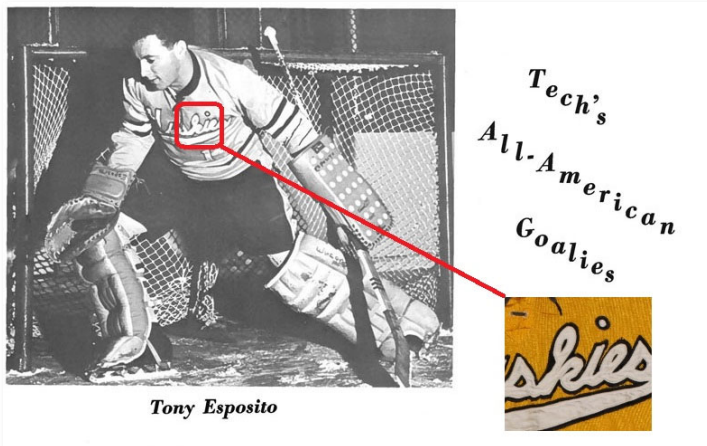
One feature that caught my eye was the crest and the way the "H" was standing off from the rest of the crest. This quickly helped to narrow down the era. There was no manufacturer's name tagging left in the jersey. The only remaining tag was a "48" which was beginning to come apart and the "8" only partially present.



The big research break on this jersey came in the form of two images submitted by fellow MTU alumni. The first was a 1967 Michigan Tech yearbook photo showing Tony Esposito wearing a jersey with a similar cresting. This photo showed a defect in the Huskies black outline on the left side of the letter "k". A second photo of a

similar #19 gold jersey confirmed the cresting defect was unique to the #1 jersey. Having the jersey surface in Chicago also made sense given Esposito's long career with the Blackhawks and his continued work with the team.

As a Michigan Tech alum having any jersey of this vintage in my collection is amazing. But to have it turn out to be one that was worn by one of the greatest players to ever pull on a Huskies sweater, certainly gives this jersey what we in the game worn hobby refer to as "grail" status.



ALWAYS A HUSKY... TONY ESPOSITO (1943-2021)