

Guyle Fielder

Frank Dotten, owner and manager of the Seattle Bombers, pulled off a coup in the fall of 1953 when he picked up a young, promising center who was quickly becoming the talk of the hockey world. The small forward mesmerized his teammates and the press during training camp with his incredible puck handling skills and amazing passes. While it was apparent that the 22-year-old had skill, no one could have predicted the impact he would have on hockey in Seattle and the WHL as a whole. His name: Guyle Abner Fielder.

Born in Potlatch, Idaho, Fielder was raised in Saskatchewan and played his junior hockey in Prince Albert and Lethbridge. He was quickly noticed by the scouts and signed his first professional contract with Chicago at the age of fifteen. He made his professional debut with the Black Hawks five years later, appearing in three games during the 1950-51 season. Following a season in the PCHL with New Westminster in 1951-52, his rights were traded to the Detroit Red Wings and he was transferred to St. Louis of the AHL for additional seasoning. Fielder didn't like life in the AHL, especially the long bus travel, and turned to his uncle for help. Fortunately his uncle was none other than Al Leader, the president of the WHL. Leader arranged for his nephew to be transferred to Seattle in 1953-54, and the rest is history.

Fielder quickly became a superstar in Seattle. Over the course of 15 seasons in the city he earned six league MVP awards, including four in a row between 1956-60. He also led the league in assists 13 times and total points nine times. In 1956-57 he broke the then the all-time, single season professional records for assists (89) and points (122), establishing himself as one of the greatest players in the game. In addition to the individual honors Fielder also led his team to success, the sign of a true champion. During his tenure in Seattle the Totems made it to the league finals five times, winning the WHL Championship in 1959, 1967 and 1968.

Despite his success in the minors, Fielder never got a good shot at playing in the NHL. His longest appearance in the big leagues came in 1957-58 when he opened the

season with Detroit. After playing in six games without a point, Guyle asked to be sent back to Seattle where he promptly took over the scoring lead en route to the league MVP award. His entire NHL career consisted of only 15 games (nine regular season, six playoffs) and ironically, the man who became the all-time minor league scoring leader never scored a point in the NHL.

His statistical record is impressive. During his 15 seasons in Seattle he played in 1,036 games, scoring 323 goals, 1,099 assists and 1,422 total points, the most all-time among Seattle players. He is also the city's all-time leader in the playoffs with 91 games played, 70 assists and 94 total points. Over the course of a 22-year professional hockey career he amassed 2,037 points, an average of over 92 points per season.

Fielder is fondly remembered by an entire generation of hockey fans, skating down the ice wearing number "7", making an incredible pass through traffic to an open man to set up a goal. He remains Seattle's greatest hockey hero.

Jeff Obermeyer is a 13-year season ticket holder with the Thunderbirds. His new book, "Hockey in Seattle", chronicles the history of hockey in Seattle from 1915 to the present day. It is available at the souvenir stands or through his website at <http://www.seattlehockey.net>.