

Pete Muldoon

If there is a “Father of Seattle Hockey”, that man is Pete Muldoon. Born Linton Muldoon Tracy in 1881, the Ontario native played hockey in the local OHA in the early part of the century before coming out west to pursue a career as a boxer. He changed his name to Pete Muldoon and quickly established a reputation for himself, eventually holding regional titles in both the middleweight and light heavyweight divisions.

A consummate sportsman, Muldoon took advantage of his great athletic ability as well as his flair for promotion. In addition to his success in the ring he was also accomplished at lacrosse, playing for the Vancouver club in 1911, as well as being an excellent ice dancer who often astounded crowds with his ability to skate (and play hockey) while on stilts. He returned to hockey in 1914 taking over as the coach and manager of the Portland Rosebuds and leading them to a PCHA championship, making them the first U.S. based team to play for the Stanley Cup. The following season he relocated to Seattle to take over the management of the new league franchise there, the Metropolitans. It was there that Muldoon had his greatest success as a coach, piloting the club to a respectable 115-105-4 record over the course of eight seasons. The Mets played for the Stanley Cup three times under his leadership, becoming the first U.S. team to win the coveted chalice in 1917.

When the Metropolitans folded in the spring of 1924, Muldoon returned to Portland before moving on to the Chicago Black Hawks of the NHL in 1926-27. In Chicago he became part of hockey lore, reportedly placing a curse on the franchise following his dismissal at the end of the season and promising that the club would never finish in first place. While subsequent research has proven the story false, it carried on as a legend for decades until the Black Hawks finally managed a first place finish and broke the curse in 1967.

Following his brief stint in Chicago, Muldoon returned to Seattle and became involved in the efforts to bring hockey back to the city with the completion of the Civic Arena in 1928. He put together a group of investors and established the Seattle Ice Skating and Hockey Association, while at the same time playing an important role in establishing the new Pacific Coast Hockey League. The professional circuit began its

inaugural season in the fall of 1928, and the local franchise was dubbed the Eskimos. As the season began to wind down the following spring, Muldoon made a trip to Tacoma with co-owner and local boxing promoter Nate Druyman to look for a location to build a rink there with the intent on establishing a new team. While there on March 6, 1929 Muldoon was struck down by a fatal heart attack, leaving the Eskimos without their leader with four games remaining in the season. The team held it together long enough to knock off Portland in the first round of the playoffs, before dropping a best of five series to Vancouver in the league finals.

Muldoon was widely respected in the local sporting community, and writer Leo Lassen paid him a fitting tribute in the March 15, 1929 edition of the *Seattle Times*:

Hockey has lost a great organizer and a great manager. But, more important, athletics in Seattle has lost a man who put loyalty to his associates far above whatever financial gain he might have ahead.

The following season the Eskimos established the Pete Muldoon Trophy, presented to the player deemed most inspirational by his teammates. It was awarded for a number of seasons before finally disappearing into the mists of time, along with the memory of Seattle's hockey founding father.

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>.