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TWEETING AND FIGHTING

FORE

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Coyotes' brawler Paul Bissonnette hits center ice and center stage as an athlete and a social media phenomenon

BY WENDY RUBICAM EVANS

PHOTOS BY JAMES PATRICK, WWW.PATRICKPORTFOLIO.COM

The Coyotes are coming off of one of their best seasons in years, ending their 2009-2010 season in the Stanley Cup playoff quarterfinals, but there are still way too many empty seats in the house. After being signed to a two-year contract in March, left wing Paul Bissonnette seems to be making it his mission to turn Phoenix into a hockey town. "We're always looking to improve," he says. "That sounds cliché, but it's really the case, as well as keeping this team here, getting fans in the building, and turning this into a winning franchise."

Coming from Canada, where hockey reigns supreme, Bissonnette is hoping that the Coyotes' recent show of strength will build fan energy and pack the house in Glendale. "There's five million people in the area within an hour radius, I think," he calculates. "So, you're telling me we can't get 17,000 people to a game? That's hard to absorb." While Valley fans may not be as hockey-crazy as their neighbors to the north, Bissonnette is using his notoriety to put a spotlight on the Coyotes.

Better known in the world of social media as BizNasty2point0, Bissonnette says that his infamous Twitter feed has helped build awareness for the Coyotes franchise. He insists that he "tweets" whatever is on his mind and that the social media feed is just a way to have fun and be himself. "It's exactly who I am," he's quick to point out. "I don't have anyone at home here, so I just talk to the fans basically through Twitter and get a rise out of them and let them into the life of an NHL hockey player."



PAUL BISSONNETTE LEFT WING, PHOENIX COYOTES

AGE: 25

RELATIONSHIP STATUS: Single

STATS: 6'5", 220 lbs.

WORKOUTS: Dynamic warm-up of active stretching, followed by quick feet or sprints, 30-40 minutes of supersets followed by conditioning.

WHAT HE EATS: Used to eat a lot in the morning, but has cut back to a protein shake and banana before practice.

Healthy lunch like a deli sub.

Doesn't cook, so dinners are out on the town.

FOOD WEAKNESS: None. Nope, nothing. Next question.

PENALTY MINUTES: NHL total—154. This season: 15.

WHERE TO FIND HIM: www.twitter.com/biznasty2pointo

FAVORITE SPOTS: Mastro's and Fox Restaurants like Modern Steak, True Food Kitchen and Culinary Dropout.

Bissonnette was forced to shut down his original Twitter account last spring, but came back before this year's season as outspoken and out there as ever, attracting over 22,000 followers.

The Coyotes don't seem to mind the attention, encouraging homepage visitors to nominate BizNasty2pointo as the "Must Follow Personality" in this year's awards sponsored by social media giant, Mashable.com. And, two weeks after voting opened for this year's All Star Game, Bissonnette's larger than life presence online and on the ice has earned him more than twice as many votes as team captain Shane Doan.

Leading the team in penalty minutes, Bissonnette is an enforcer, one of what he calls a dying breed. He says he's not afraid to get punched in the face, and will gladly step up to take one for the team. An on-ice brawl can take a flat game and build some momentum, and Bissonnette is matter of fact about the role of fighting in the game. "I think it's good. It keeps guys honest; it keeps guys from taking cheap shots for the most part," he says.

His philosophy is simple. "Hockey is a man's sport. If you're having a disagreement with someone you just drop the mitts and have at it and that's it—problem's over." Although he has no problem protecting his teammates, he is careful not to put the team at a disadvantage. "I don't like taking minors—knock on wood I haven't taken one yet this year. I don't screw around taking penalties, being an idiot. You've got to control the anger," he explains.

Don't get the idea that the in-your-face Canadian is all brawn and no brains

though. Bissonnette made the switch from defense to offense recently and is working hard to improve his game this season.

"I know I'm in and out of the lineup as a fourth-liner, so it would definitely be good to establish myself as an every game kind of guy," he shares.

He takes his role as an athlete seriously, following a targeted training routine to prepare for his time on the ice. Bissonnette says hockey is one of the toughest sports to train for, because on-ice shifts are pure intensity that require speed and strength.

"You're reacting a lot—skating is a lot of workload on your legs and you need the core as well because you need those stabilizer muscles," he explains. "It's just crazy to think about how many things you need to work on in order to get your body ready for an NHL season."

Bissonnette returned to his hometown in Canada over the summer to work with his trainer. He started out training five days a week, but given the intensity of the workouts, cut back to four.

At 6'3" and 220 lbs., Bissonnette trains for explosive speed and strength, with active stretching, sprints and supersets. He says he's stricter about diet when training during the summer, but isn't fanatical about it during the season because he's burning so many calories.

He recently filmed a commercial for Taco Bell, and reports on his Twitter feed about eating arena hot dogs every now and then, but if you've seen BizNasty in his signature black speedo, there's no doubt that he takes good care of his body.

Bissonnette adds supplements and stresses the importance of water. "I think water's a huge thing as an athlete. Hydrating is huge—even more important than the food you're putting into your body," he says emphatically.

Bissonnette says his role off-ice is that of the clown, the guy who jokes around a lot and keeps things upbeat. And although his reputation and social media moniker paint a picture of a bad boy, he's among the first to reach out to the community and give back. He was one of a handful of Coyotes out visiting sick kids in the hospital last winter, and rounded up some of his single teammates to serve Thanksgiving dinner to the less fortunate at Society of St. Vincent De Paul this year.

Ask him what he most wants people to know about him and he will tell you, "On the ice I fight a lot and stuff like that, but off the ice I'm pretty down to earth...I just like to have fun and live life for today, and I do."

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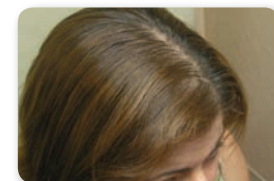
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