



## British Columbia Inline Hockey Association

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### BC Inline Hockey Association (BCIHA) Interview with **Thomas Woods, Team Canada**

**BCIHA:** First off, we'd like to say Congratulations on being a member of Team Canada for the past 2 years at the IIHF Inline Hockey World Championships.

**Thomas Woods:** Thank you, it means a lot to have had those great opportunities. The last two tournaments have been incredible experiences and I am looking forward to the tryouts in 2011.

**BCIHA:** Can you give us a summary of your ice hockey experience from the time you first started playing up until now? Do you still play ice hockey?



**TW:** I started skating in Tiny Tots hockey at the age of 3. I played throughout the minor hockey program in AA and AAA from Cookie Monsters at the North Shore Winter Club (NSWC) to Juvenile at NVMHA (North Vancouver Minor Hockey Association). I spent my summers playing spring hockey with the Super Series and Vipers hockey clubs. I currently focus more on inline hockey but I still play on Division 1 men's teams in and around Vancouver.

**BCIHA:** When did you start playing inline hockey?

**TW:** I started playing inline hockey in 2000. I played half a year in the North Shore Inline Hockey League (NSIHL). I fell in love with the game and have been playing ever since.

**BCIHA:** Why did you get involved in inline hockey?

**TW:** It's a funny story actually; a friend of mine was playing on a team in the NSIHL that kept losing. He knew I played a high level of ice hockey and asked me to join to help the team win some games. I had never played before but I ended up loving it, and begged my dad to buy me inline skates. Our team ended up winning that season.

**BCIHA:** In addition to playing for Team Canada, what is your current involvement in inline hockey? Where are you playing now?

**TW:** Normally you can find me playing in various men's Platinum leagues at home in North Vancouver, or in Langley BC. I also travel to both Winternational and Summer NARCH events. Currently, I have had the opportunity to take a study abroad semester in my business degree program so I am living in Normandy,



France until December. While I am here I am playing for the city's inline team, the Caen Conquerants, in the French Elite league.

**BCIHA:** What is your biggest ice hockey memory/accomplishment?

**TW:** My biggest ice hockey memory was playing in Peewee AAA with the North Shore Winter Club. We went to the Quebec International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament. This was my first experience playing in front of a large crowd and staying with a billet family. Even as kids we were treated like professionals on and off the ice. I will never forget the warmth and enthusiasm of the Quebecois culture that I experienced during this tournament.

**BCIHA:** What is your most memorable inline hockey moment?

**TW:** My most memorable moment in inline hockey would have to be suiting up for Team Canada in 2009 in Germany. When we played the game against Germany we had about 5,000 fans screaming and whistling every time we touched the puck. I scored in that game and it was an awesome feeling. A close second memorable moment would be putting on the Tour Mudcats jersey in Pro. I remember the first time watching them as a kid when I went to NARCH in 2005 and telling myself that I would play for them one day.

**BCIHA:** What would you say to a kid who is thinking of trying inline hockey for the first time?

**TW:** I would tell them that choosing to play inline hockey was one of the best decisions of my life. I have made so many friends and connections through inline hockey and have seen so many places all over the world. You shouldn't be scared to try inline hockey; it can open up an array of new doors that ice hockey cannot. Inline allows for a different perspective of the game because there is a more balanced division of time with the puck, which is a confidence builder and allows a player to grow.

**BCIHA:** What can you tell us about your experience playing NARCH Pro?

**TW:** Playing NARCH Pro has been a dream come true. It is the next best thing to playing for your country. Bigger audiences, sponsorships, and traveling opportunities makes becoming a Pro player something worth aspiring towards.

**BCIHA:** How did you get involved in coaching?

**TW:** Three years ago I started assisting with tryouts for NSIHL. After that, I was approached with the opportunity to become assistant coach for both the Peewee and Bantam North Shore Zulu A teams. I really enjoyed these experiences and moved on to helping coach a team at the BC Summer Games this year. I plan to keep coaching in my future, there are some great young talented players and it is a pleasure to work with them.



**BCIHA:** What can you tell us about your experience at the BC Summer Games.

**TW:** Our team had an incredible time at the BC Summer Games, and I think that speaks for itself. As assistant coach I found the tournament very well run with everything provided, including lunches, accommodation, and fun events. It was a great bonding experience for the team and a definite confidence booster going into NARCH.

**BCIHA:** Who have been some of the most influential people in your inline career?

**TW:** I'm so glad you asked me that question. By far the most influential person in my inline career has been my dad. Since I started the game he has been my main sponsor, coach, supporter, teammate, and fan. I am certain I would have never achieved this level without him and his unwavering commitment to my success. I'd also like to thank Jimmy Ghuman for introducing me to competitive inline hockey and coaching, Chad Siebel of Tour Hockey for pushing me to the next level, Ron Knight for the support and encouragement and I can't forget my trainer, Jens Kieling of JK Fitness, for kicking my butt 3 times a week. I am also very thankful for my sponsors, Bladetape and Chris Grey of Perimeter Drainage. Without their sponsorship support I could not participate in these world class events.

**BCIHA:** You've recently had an opportunity come up to play inline hockey in Europe. Can you tell us about this? How did this opportunity come about and how you're enjoying it? How have you been treated by the players and spectators over there?

**TW:** Yes, as mentioned earlier I am currently playing for the Caen Conquerants in France. The opportunity came up when I was accepted to do a study abroad semester in France as part of my business degree program. I spoke to players on Team France at the FIRS World Championships this year and gained some valuable contacts. I was approached by a few teams but decided to play for Caen because of the proximity to my school and the chance to compete for and hopefully win the European Cup.

The players in Caen have been wonderful; I have been treated like family. They have helped me with every aspect of living in France. The spectators over here are also incredible. We get about 200 people to our home games but in some places in France, like Grenoble, they have about 900 people to each game! It's quite different to playing inline hockey in Canada. Over here we are giving interviews for the newspaper, signing autographs for kids and getting recognized on the street.

**BCIHA:** Do you feel it is important for guys like yourself, who have been to the highest levels of inline hockey, to give back to the sport and help it grow?

**TW:** Absolutely, the sustainability of the sport depends on guys like me to recognize the impact of giving back and helping out. Inline hockey is still a growing sport in Canada, and most people are unaware of all the places it can take you or the caliber of teams you can play for. Inline opens doors and creates opportunities and a lot of this depends on 'who you know'. Helping out gives guys a chance to expand their network in the inline hockey community.



**BCIHA:** What does it mean to you to be part of your National Team?

**TW:** Wearing your country's jersey is an amazing feeling, being part of the national team is another dream come true. You get a chance to meet some fantastic people and to make lifelong friends. It is an honor to represent your country both on and off the floor.

**BCIHA:** What is the IIHF tournament like both on and off the rink?

**TW:** The IIHF Tournament is run so professionally, both times that I have participated have been remarkable experiences; you are treated like absolute royalty. The level of hockey is the highest in the world. The experience off the floor is just as good as on the floor, the countries you get to travel to and the opportunity to meet people from all over the globe is unforgettable.

**BCIHA:** What are your thoughts on Team Canada's result at the 2010 IIHF Inline Hockey World Championships in Sweden?



**TW:** Going into the tournament I knew we had a great chance of doing well. We ended up coming 4<sup>th</sup>, which is the best that Team Canada has done since being brought back into the IIHF tournament in 2008. The team has become progressively better and has placed higher each year. We still have a little way to go to reach gold but I think this was a great stepping stone. I have a really good feeling about the potential of the 2011 Team Canada.

**BCIHA:** Some ice hockey people (mainly coaches) believe that playing inline hockey actually ruins an ice hockey player's ability to excel on the ice. Would you agree with this feeling?

**TW:** I know that some people feel that playing inline hockey is not good for ice hockey players' skills but there is plenty of evidence against this. Just look at some of the top players in the NHL that play or have played inline, they include: Tomas Plekanec, Ales Hemsky, Henrik Lundqvist, Bobby Ryan, Sam Gagner, just to name a few. Inline hockey has so many positive aspects that can be directly transferred to the game on ice.

**BCIHA:** What are your future goals in this sport?

**TW:** My biggest goal right now is to win gold at the IIHF 2011 Tournament with Team Canada. I believe that this is by far the most prized and difficult tournament to win in inline hockey. I would also like to return to Europe after I have finished my business degree and play Pro for a team in France, Spain, or Italy. In the distant future I can see myself using my business skills in sales and development working for an inline hockey company or perhaps running an inline hockey facility or camps.

**BCIHA:** Thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak with you. We wish you continued success with your inline hockey career!

**TW:** No problem, Thank you!

