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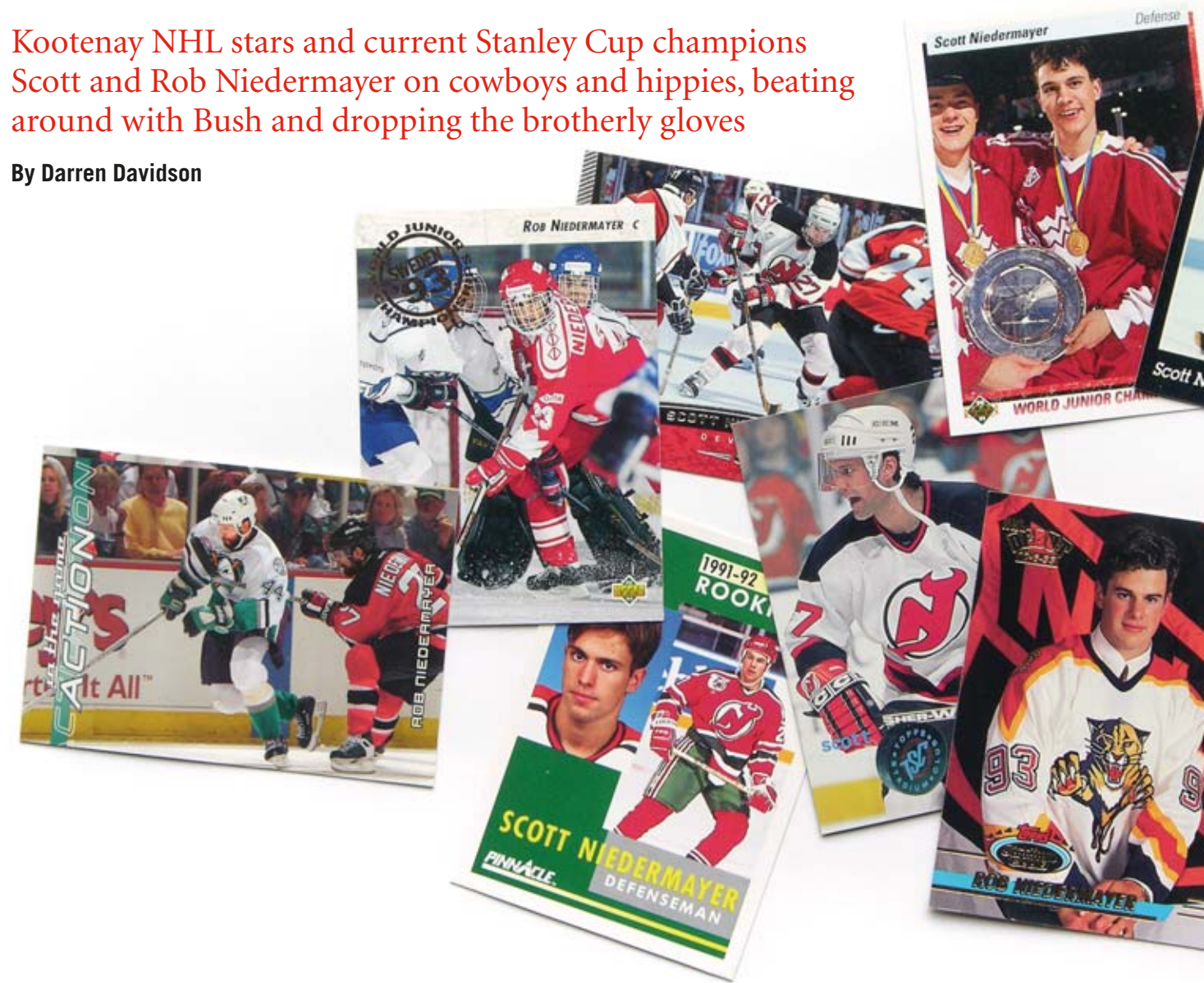


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Brothers in Ice

Kootenay NHL stars and current Stanley Cup champions Scott and Rob Niedermayer on cowboys and hippies, beating around with Bush and dropping the brotherly gloves

By Darren Davidson



While lesser known in the winter-time world of mountain culture, Scott and Rob Niedermayer will likely be judged by history as legends in a rugged and frozen world of a different sort.

The brothers, who as kids grew up skiing, fishing and fort-building in the Kootenay wilds that surround their hometown of Cranbrook, BC, have logged between them 2,200 games in the National Hockey League. In 14 seasons, Rob, 34, has played with the Florida Panthers, Calgary Flames and Anaheim Ducks. Scott, 35, spent 12 seasons with the New Jersey Devils, before signing a \$6.75 million contract in 2005 to play with the Ducks and for the first time, on the same team as his kid brother. Loaded with talent, the Ducks won the Stanley Cup this past

June. It was the first time for Rob and the fourth for Scott, now the only player in the world to have won all six of hockey's most coveted championships, including Olympic gold, the Memorial Cup and the World Cup of Hockey.

The brothers are both skiers-turned-snowboarders who travel back home every off-season; Rob heads to his East Kootenay ranch and Scott to his home on Kootenay Lake. KMC's Darren Davidson spoke to the brothers this past summer, a few weeks before they brought the Stanley Cup to their hometown — together.

KMC: What's it like being the two most famous guys in town?

Scott Niedermayer: Are we? (Laughing) It's

changed here. When we grew up we knew everybody. But new people have moved in, and friends have moved out.

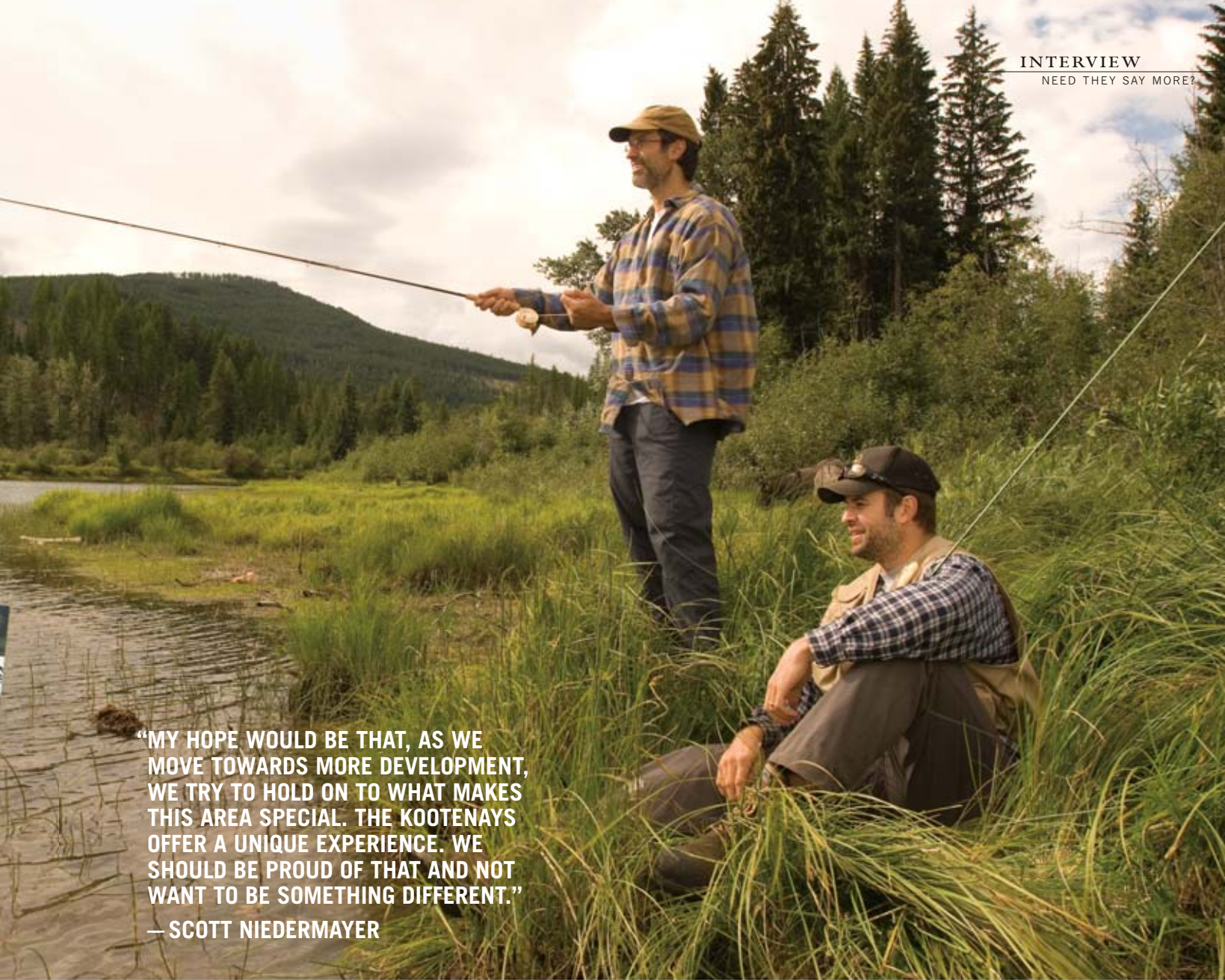
Rob Niedermayer: When we go back home to Cranbrook, everyone treats us well. They give us our privacy.

So, you're not getting mobbed at the Tamarack Mall?

Scott: Naw. But you hear whispers once in a while.

What's a bigger rush: scoring a regular-season goal or knee-deep first tracks?

Scott: They're different. Both are great. But the excitement and adrenaline of scoring a goal on a big play... On the other hand, if you're out skiing the backcountry, it's quiet,



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— SCOTT NIEDERMAYER

NHL superstars Rob and Scott Niedermayer fly-fish near their hometown of Cranbrook, BC. Photo: Patrice Halley

there’s the scenery, you’re with friends. That’s a pretty darn good place to be too.

There are all sorts of colourful characters out here. Where do you two fit in: loggers, cowboys, hippies?

Rob: (Laughing). That’s pretty good. I don’t know what other people would say, but I’d go with cowboy.

Scott: I’m a wannabe hippie. But I don’t know if I’d qualify for any one of those; they’d all kick me out.

Seeing as you guys spent some of your impressionable younger years growing up in rural BC, we’ll put this in a Bill Clinton kind-of-way, did you ever inhale?

Scott: Naw. Not a once. I’ve stayed on the

straight and narrow pretty well.

Rob: Oh geez, yeah right (smiling) ... no, no, no.

So, that’s three “noes”?

Rob: Yup. Especially if it’s got anything to do with Bill Clinton.

Speaking of politics, how many pro athletes in the US speak publicly, and frankly, about the war in Iraq and the Bush administration?

Rob: To be honest, we’re paid to be athletes, and unless you’re someone who really wants to be outspoken on something you really believe in, I don’t think many athletes share their thoughts. And I don’t think anyone needs to hear it... But I’d probably be an Al

Gore guy, because he’s so pro-environment.

Scott: Did he really say Al Gore? (Laughing) I must be rubbin’ off on him.

Your politics lean a little left Scott?

Scott: I’d probably prefer not to have a label.

But you’ve spoken out about the Jumbo Glacier Resort proposal, you drive a hybrid part-time — and a Ferrari — you’re an outdoor enthusiast. What percentage of the players in the NHL do you think publicly share concerns for the state of the environment and the planet in general?

Scott: I’d say hockey players are no different than most people. A lot of people live hectic lives, which makes it hard to slow down and consider things from a wider perspective,

like how are our actions going to affect our water, air and food? And what are they going to mean for future generations?

Rob: I think people are starting to pay more attention to the environment, and I’m glad we’re doing that. We need to. Hopefully it’s not too late. It’s like we’ve got to lose things before people start paying attention

Scott, you visited the White House with the Devils, after your Stanley Cup win with them, and President Bush had just been elected. What was he like?

Scott: He brought us back into the Oval Office, showed us around. He’s actually a fun-loving guy. He was joking around a lot — he’s really into sports. We saw him in a different light than when he’s on TV reading

speeches that have been combed over a hundred times.

The Devils drafted you in 1991. Moving from the interior of British Columbia to New Jersey; that’s like moving from Earth to Mars.

Scott: You got that right. It was a big shock. It was very tough. New Jersey was a drastically different place. I missed a lot of the things I did back here. You can find some pretty tough areas. It’s basically suburb after suburb. But there are some nice places. You can head up to Vermont, New Hampshire, places like that.

Rob, you were drafted by the Florida Panthers two years later, in 1993. What’s

it like playing a Canadian game in such an un-Canadian setting?

Rob: It was a shock to the system. But you know, when I got down there, I found some great wild spots. I used to scuba dive in the Florida Keys—and fish.

Speaking of sprawl, development is becoming a major issue throughout the region. There’s an estimated 12,000 new homes slated for the Columbia Valley in the next decade, over a thousand of them in and around your hometown. What are your thoughts on the way things are changing?

Rob: We’ve known the secret of the place for a long time, and nobody really wanted to let the cat out of the bag. I think the

development is going to be great for the communities. But at the same time, you hope it doesn't ruin all the wild spaces. **Scott:** It's hard to see things change and get busier. So many of the great things that the Kootenays offer have to do with the undeveloped land and all the different ways to enjoy it. My hope would be that, as we move towards more development, we try to hold on to what makes this area special. The Kootenays offer a unique experience. We should be proud of that and not want to be something different.

There's pretty, then there's pugilistic. Cranbrook or Trail: which town's tougher?

Scott: I've to go with my hometown.

Rob: They're both pretty tough.

What tunes get you stoked for a game or training session?

Rob: AC/DC. Anything from Back in Black.

Scott: I'm a huge AC/DC fan too. But I listen to some country now and again. Lemme see what's on my iPod... there's some Rise Against and Tool.

There seems to be at least one NHL player from almost every town in the East and

West Kootenay who's currently playing or has played in the past decade. Off the top of your head, who are some that come to mind?

Rob: Steve Yzerman (Cranbrook) and Scott would be two of the biggest guys. Jason Weimer (Kimberley), Jason Marshall (Cranbrook), Corey Spring (Cranbrook), Adam Deadmarsh (Fruitvale), Jon Klemm (Cranbrook), Greg Adams (Nelson).

Scott: Travis Green (Castlegar), Barrett Jackman (Fruitvale), Dallas Drake (Rossland), Ray Ferraro (Trail) and Rob.

There's Shawn Horcoff (Castlegar) and Steve McCarthy (Trail) too. A few of the Kootenay's NHLers are pretty tough dudes. In fact, Jackman's digital character is featured on the front of the Ultimate Xbox Encyclopedia, chucking the knuckles. If you had to put your money on any of the Kootenay's hockey enforcers, who'd it be?

Rob: I'd say Weimer. Or Jason Marshall. Jackman's another guy. He's fearless.

Scott: Not me.

You two ever drop the gloves as kids?

Rob: (Laughing). I had my fair share of beatings from him when I was younger.

Scott: We had plenty of disagreements. But as we got older, Rob got bigger than me. So I figured that was a good time to stop.

Rob, Scott took a reported pay cut of over \$1 million to play in Anaheim. One of the reasons was so that you two could play together. What'd it mean to you to win the Stanley Cup with your brother?

Rob: I couldn't put it into words. I don't think a lot of people realize he took that cut to play with me. That moment when he passed me the Stanley Cup, I could never top that feeling. Nothing will come close. I'm blessed to have him as my brother.

Scott: When I decided to leave New Jersey to go to Anaheim, it worked out better than we both would have ever expected. We've been getting to know each other again. We were apart for so many years, for eight or ten months a year. But to have been part of Rob's first championship and everyone else on the team—I was the only guy to have won one before—[it] was pretty amazing. But to come back to Cranbrook with the Cup, that's the right way to do it. □

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