



## **Jim Neilson**

Jim came from a personal background that would indicate that all odds were against him becoming an NHL star defenseman. Jim was born to a Danish father and a Cree mother who parted and Jim was raised in an orphanage.

Jim was a perfect blend of offensive ability and defensive grit. He debuted with the New York Rangers in 1962-63 and played in the Big Apple for a dozen years. Neilson looked solid as a rookie paired with Doug Harvey and became a fixture on the New York defence for a dozen seasons. In 1967-68 he played superior defence and scored 35 points, which earned him selection to the NHL second all-star team. "Chief" scored a career-high ten goals and 44 points the next year then helped the Blueshirts become one of the league's elite clubs. In 1968-69, he was paired with rookie Brad Park and was credited with making a huge difference in the youngster's game.

The only down side for Neilson during this period was a serious knee injury in February 1970, which prevented him from making sharp turns the rest of his career. Beginning in 1970-71 the Rangers recorded three straight 100-point seasons and reached the Stanley Cup finals in 1972. They also reached the semi-finals in 1973 before rebuilding in mid-decade. Jim averaged 25 points a season while playing in 2 all-star games (1967 and 1971) and being named a Second Team All Star in 1968.

The California Golden Seals picked Jim up in the 1974 intra-league draft and he played the next two seasons in California before moving to the Cleveland Barons for his last two NHL seasons. In 1978-79, Jim played one last pro season with the Edmonton Oilers of the WHA.

In all, Jim played over 1,000 NHL games and recorded 368 points. He was a key member of some great Ranger teams of the 1970's.