



Rod Gilbert

Rod is another of those medical miracles who defied the odds to earn himself a Hall of Fame career. In his final game in junior hockey, Rod slipped on some debris on the ice and fell into the boards breaking the fifth vertebra in his back. Doctors removed a small bone from his leg and used it to fuse the fourth, fifth and sixth vertebrae together. Complications in Rod's leg ensued and doctors were initially concerned that they would have to amputate Rod's left leg. But Rod healed.

Rod played only a single game for the Rangers in 1961 and again in 1962. The following season Rod began his long 16 year career in New York. In 1965-66, Rod needed more surgery on his back but Rod scored 25+ goals in each of the next 3 seasons. In 1970-71, Rod joined Jean Ratelle and Vic Hadfield to form the GAG line (Goal-A-Game). The following season, each of the 3 line members topped 40 goals with Rod popping in 43 goals to go with 54 assists for a total of 97 points, a total he would match in 1974-75.

In September of 1972, Rod played for Team Canada versus the Soviet Union in the Summit Series. He played in 6 of the 8 games and scored 4 points. In 1974, Rod became the first Ranger player to score 300 career goals and won the Bill Masterton Award for dedication to hockey.

Rod was voted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1982 in recognition of his great career. He was a First Team All Star in 1972 and a Second Team All Star in 1968. He played in the all-star game nine times and won the Lester Patrick Trophy in 1991 for service to hockey in the U.S. His 1,065 games, 1,021 points and 406 goals were all Ranger records at the time of his retirement. Not a bad career from a player who almost lost a leg and battled severe back pain his entire career.

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