



## **Jack Valiquette**

For a time Jack Valiquette was referred to as the "next Jean Beliveau" or the "next Phil Esposito" and he was an outstanding junior with 135 points in his final junior season. There was just one problem, his skating lagged well behind his game. His vision on the ice was excellent but he had a tendency to fall down. Despite this problem he was selected by the Maple Leafs in the first round of the 1974 draft.

Valiquette tried to deal with his weakness by studying under a figure skating coach. Yet, when game time arrived, he forgot the lessons. The grace he showed with the instructor would turn leaden when the game arrived. It was sometimes joked that a Valiquette would go down before a check was thrown. As the regimes changed in Toronto, the new team managers quickly grew tired of waiting for him to develop and peddled him to the Colorado Rockies. It was with the Rockies that his game changed.

Coach Don Cherry decided what Valiquette needed was a change of skates. Whether the new blades were really the cause of Jack Valiquette's improvement can only be guessed at but he started to score again. Over two seasons with the Rockies, Valiquette racked up 107 points and he was staying on his feet. He returned to the Rockies for a third season but found that he was on the way out again.

When the Rockies tried to move him to the AHL he decided to retire. After seven NHL seasons he was ready to quit the game and begin a new career. At 25 he entered the business world through selling real estate, and later in business of his own. He had no regrets over his hockey career but does wish, on occasion, that he had done better.