



## JIM GRIFFITHS The Fan

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If you are a regular attendee at London Knight's games you've probably seen John Harkins sporting a selection of eclectic hockey sweaters. He has quite a collection of sweaters, more than 300. I met John in Las Vegas a year ago; we shared a few laughs and told some stories. John is a partner at Selectpath Benefits and Financial, a pension and benefit consulting firm in London. He is also involved in many charitable events.

### 1. How long have you been collecting hockey jerseys?

I remember my dad buying me my first jersey at Doug Laurie Sports inside Maple Leaf Gardens after a Leafs game. It was a New York Rangers #19 jersey like the one Jean Ratelle wore. I didn't really like the Rangers but I always thought they had cool shirts. I outgrew that jersey long ago but I've been a serious collector for about 15 years.

### 2. This seems like a strange hobby. Is it very big?

Hard to say. There are a number of collector sites and trade shows scattered about but the actual hobby itself has a fair number of serious collectors. As with any hobby it spans generations with some of the older collectors adamant that the old stuff is still the best stuff and anything new is junk. I've sent jerseys to people in almost every country where hockey is played including a few that would surprise you.

### 3. Do you have any favourites?

At some point in time the last jersey I got would have been my favourite but only until I got a newer one. I do have a few that are favourites and they are usually players I know or a commemorative jersey for special nights (60s night tie dye, St. Patrick's Day) and these tend to be very off the wall.

### 4. How do you choose which jersey to wear to the Knights games?

Wow that sounds like one of those questions they ask on the red carpet before the Oscar's! Lately I been sticking to wearing ex-Knights jerseys. Given how many players have gone on to play pro since leaving the Knights there are a bunch of jerseys out there all the way from other OHL teams through the UHL, ECHL, AHL, NHL and even Europe.

### 5. What does your family think of your fashion sense?

I think my wife gave up on my fashion sense long long ago as I also love wild outfits for golf and crazy



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

John Harkins of London with a small part of his collection of hockey jerseys, each with a story to tell.

loud pants which I've even got the guys at work wearing on casual days. Both my wife and daughter are hockey fans and know this is something I really enjoy. My daughter goes to most games with me and she has a nice little collection of jerseys herself, thanks to dad.

### 6. Do you any special memories of tracking these down?

Yes and no. Sometimes these things fall into your lap. I collect HARKINS jerseys and many of the fellow collectors know this so when one pops up I usually get a few emails letting me that one is available. I recently got a HARKINS jersey from a chap in Finland who knew I collected these and he got one from the National team and sent it. Just last week a collector in Germany sent a jersey for my birthday which featured a Red Porsche convertible and a ton of advertising making it look like a billboard. I've also been able to get my hands a few jerseys for players' parents wanting their kid's jersey but not knowing how to go about getting it.

### 7. I understand you had something to do with the wild looking warm up jerseys the Knights wore last season. How so?

I pitched the idea to Knights about having a off-beat warm up jersey that would make a statement and also be something they could wear to public appearances. Mark Hunter loved the idea and last season the Selectpath warm up jersey was born. We also took this a step further and had an auction of the players actual shirts at the end of the season with the proceeds going to Investing in Children. Pat Kane's jersey alone sold for over \$600 which looks like a bargain given where he is today. As we speak we are selecting this season's jersey. This year we solicited the Beal art department and had their students design a number of different styles, all quite unique. The next step is to post the finalists on the Knights' website and we are going to let the fans vote on which one they like.

### 8. What do you see for the Knights this year?

I think the Knights are markedly improved and now have realized that this is the team and to forget about Gagner coming back. I went on record in the summer as saying Kane was gone and wouldn't be back. Chicago needs to build the team around him and Teows, besides he threw out the first pitch at a Cubs game, that made him a lock. I want the Knights to go to the Memorial Cup this year and think we will know better how they look once we get a few tough games against division rivals under our belts.

### 9. It is known that you are also a huge music fan, tell us more?

I love music and have it on in some room in my house all the time. I actually have a portable set up I use when I play golf sometimes. You should have seen the look on the faces of the guys at the PGA National in Florida when we showed up on the first tee listening to Ozzy Osborne's Crazy Train. I've seen the Grateful Dead almost 40 times and the Rolling Stones 29 times along with a million other acts and love the JLC. I've always liked Elvis and actually have two Elvis-themed hockey jerseys.

### 10. What other interests keep you busy?

I love to golf and still play hockey a couple of times a week. I also collect golf memorabilia, and have a bunch of Masters stuff. My dad just passed away a couple of weeks back and I was able to take him to Augusta in 2004. At his funeral, I had a picture I took of him looking down the 18th fairway from my golf collection sitting in the chapel beside his clubs. I had him sign it and say a few words while he was in the hospital and this is now my most precious piece, worth more than any hockey shirt or golf trinket will ever be. I enjoy doing nothing but laying around the pool with friends and family in the summer with the tunes cranked, the beer chillin' and the steaks sizzling.