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I pray for Ray

Oh mighty Slapshoticus Maximus, supreme ruler of the Hockey Gods high above Canada, heed my prayer. It's me, Sal, your loyal follower since 1988. No, I'm not praying for Mark Messier's retirement again. And no, I am not praying for Chris Chelios to return to the Blackhawks—



Sal J. Barry
Webmaster

I figured you needed a break from hearing about that after two years. It is yet another that I pray for, a noble and loyal soul who has toiled for 22 years—22 years!—

and has yet failed to win what all hockey players dream of: the Stanley Cup. This noble soul that I speak of is no other than Colorado Avalanche defenseman Ray Bourque.

I know you are aware of who he is, because you've smiled upon him many times. You have gifted him with great playmaking ability, skating prowess, and one of the most accurate shots in the National Hockey League. And I know that Ray has made the Hockey Gods proud: winning Rookie of the Year in 1980, being named the League's top defenseman five times, and playing in every NHL All-Star Game for the past 22 years.

But Ray would gladly sacrifice all those personal accolades for a Stanley Cup victory. Ray is no stranger to sacrifice, nor is he a stranger to humility. He has been shown humility in the past, when the Boston Bruins advanced to the Stanley Cup finals in 1988 and 1990, only to lose both times to the Edmonton Oilers. Actually, the Oilers taught every team the meaning of the word humility back then.

Meanwhile, Ray would continue to toil in the League, winning personal awards as his team deteriorated around him, until they could no longer make the playoffs. When Ray was traded from the Boston Bruins to the Colorado Avalanche in 2000, to some heretics it may have appeared like a punishment handed down by you Hockey Gods; to uproot a man from the team that he loved for many years, where he was the team captain for a

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decade. But I knew that it was no punishment, for a true punishment would have been a trade to Carolina. No, in all your benevolence you saw to it that Ray was traded to one of the top contenders, so that he may indeed have his chance to win the Cup.

So I implore you, mighty one, hear my prayer. Ray Bourque is a man who should retire with a Stanley Cup ring on his finger. I know that you listen to me, great Slapshoticus. Sure, you don't answer every prayer of mine, but you did let Chris Osgood beat up

Patrick Roy a few years ago. And you did appear to Mario Lemieux in a vision, and ordain him to return from retirement in order to save the Penguins. As a fan and a worshiper of the sport of hockey, I thank you for those gifts. But before the season is through, I wish to see one last success bestowed upon someone who has done so much for the National Hockey League. That is why I pray for Ray.

In the name of the Gordie, and the Gretzky, and the Holy Zamboni. Amen.