Vocabulary

*Before reading, translate these words.*

Caught up to

In hot water

NHL

Drop out

Possessions

Minor league

Eccentric

Flamboyant

Feisty

Stanley Cup

Intermission

Rant

Collar

Politically incorrect

Backlash

biography

Don Cherry has always been controversial. As he got older, he became even more controversial. Eventually, his views caught up to him. He has been in a lot of hot water recently. Let’s take a look back at his legacy and how we got to this point.

Don Cherry was born in Kingston, Ontario on February 5, 1934. He was always passionate about hockey. He dropped out of high school to play for the Hersey Bears, an American Hockey League (AHL) team. He met his future wife there. Her name was Rose. Life was tough for the new couple. They moved 53 times and didn’t have many possessions because of Cherry’s hockey career. Often, he played during holidays and he even missed the birth of his daughter.

Cherry had a long career in the minor leagues, but he did not find enough success to make it in the majors. He only played in the NHL for one game (1955). He played in the minor leagues for 20 years. He retired in 1970. This is when his real career started.

He became the coach of the Rochester Americans (AHL) and by his third year, he was voted as the Coach of the Year. His success led to him being hired as an NHL coach for the Boston Bruins in 1974. Cherry developed a reputation as an eccentric and flamboyant coach. He promoted a tough style of hockey. Actually, he modeled the style of play after his dog.

Cherry had many bull terriers, all named Blue. His dogs were a big part of his life. Often you will see promotional photos with him and his dog. Bull terriers are known for their feisty attitude, but they are also playful and devoted to their owners. This is the attitude he wanted from his players. He coached them to be tough, hit hard, and always play with energy. Cherry valued hard hitting players. He was a very successful coach and even won the Coach of the Year in 1975. His teams never won the Stanley Cup, but they made it to the championship series twice in his time with the Bruins.

Following his coaching career, Cherry became a sports commentator. This is how he became famous in Canada. His show, Coach’s Corner, defined hockey for many years. It is a little difficult to explain what this show was. In a hockey game, there are three periods. Between the periods, there is an intermission. Players and coaches take a break before the next period starts. Coach’s Corner was a show that took place during the first intermission. It was only 5-7 minutes long. It has been described as “one of the most watched five minutes on Canadian TV. Coach’s Corner was also part of Hockey Night in Canada, a Saturday night hockey game broadcast. Coach’s Corner ran from 1982 to 2019.

During Coach’s Corner, Cherry would talk about the current game and show highlights from other hockey games during the week. He would also rant about any issues related to hockey. He had a very particular view of how hockey *should* be played. One popular segment of the show was the Hit of the Week. It was very popular. Eventually, this segment turned into a series of videos called, Rock’Em Sock’em Hockey. The videos were available for purchase and featured the best hits and fights. It fit Cherry’s idea of a physical style of play.

During his time on Coach’s Corner, Cherry would wear flamboyant suits. He became famous for the ridiculous patterns and high collar. Coach’s Corner was also a time where Cherry could take about what was on his mind. Some of his controversial political were also presented during this time. He was proud to be politically incorrect and he was respected for speaking from his heart. But, this is also where his controversies started.

Cherry did not like foreigners. He thought that they were not as tough as Canadians. Often, he would say rude things about people from other countries. He also criticized the Canadian government for not supporting the Americans in the Iraq War. He is a strong supporter of the military.

On November 9, 2019, Cherry was talking about Canadian immigrants. He said that they do not appreciate their life in Canada. He said that they need to be more respectful and thankful to the military and Canada. His opinions were hurtful to a lot of immigrants living in Canada. There was a lot of public backlash against his comments. Cherry was fired on November 11th, Canada’s Remembrance Day.

Questions

1. Who did he marry?
2. How many times did they move?
3. Describe his career as a player.
4. Which teams did Don Cherry coach?
5. Describe his coaching style.
6. Who is Blue?
7. What was his TV show?
8. How long was it?
9. When was it shown?
10. He also sold videos. What did the video show?
11. Search for pictures of Don Cherry. Would you agree that he is flamboyant? Which suit do you like the best?
12. Why was he fired?
13. The quote that got him fired is written below. Research Remembrance Day (Canada) and the words in bold.

 *“You people that come here… you love our way of life, you love our* ***milk and honey****, at least you can pay* ***a couple bucks*** *for a* ***poppy*** *or something like that… These guys paid for your way of life that you enjoy in Canada, these guys* ***paid the biggest price****.” – Don Cherry*