



From Flames draft to international model, Tschupp's life is memorable

ERIC FRANCIS

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Chris Tschupp has obviously got The Look.

It's a look that attracted the attention of the Calgary Flames, who drafted the All-American prep school star 125th overall in the 1990 NHL Entry Draft.

It's a look that prompted fashion maven Calvin Klein to walk over to Tschupp's table in a New York City restaurant to ask if he'd be interested in modelling.

It's a look that landed him photo shoots and runway shows alongside Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington and made him the face of worldwide campaigns for Banana Republic, Versace, Gap, Armani and, most recently, Ralph Lauren.

Translating that look into an acting career that has seen him on *Sex and the City* and several movies, Tschupp is now poised to be the lead in an upcoming hockey movie he feels brings him full circle.

Even the most ardent of Flames fans can be forgiven for not being familiar with his name, which was called in the sixth round long ago by Cliff Fletcher.

But he thinks that's all about to change.

"I don't know how recognizable I am, but I think they'd know my face more than my name because it has been plastered on billboards, in magazines and on the side of busses all around the world," said Tschupp, 47, from his Los Angeles apartment.

"But I think they'll know my name after this movie."



As part of one of the most interesting life paths of any Flames draft pick, Tschupp's roots as a hockey player led him to *The Third Period*, a movie about an aging hockey star written by former Fox Sports Ohio hockey reporter Steph Greigor.

Retired Stanley Cup champion, Dan Hinote, is the executive producer of the film, which will put a premium on ensuring the hockey scenes are performed by actors who know the game.

"I'm sure some will say, 'Ah Christ, they cast a model to be a hockey player – some pretty boy,'" chuckled Schupp, a native of Toms River, NJ who starts filming next summer.

"I'm the furthest thing from a pretty boy."

The self-proclaimed mucker still vividly recalls the draft party he threw at his home with friends and family, hoping and praying the phone would ring from the non-televised draft with good news. Sure enough, it did.

"That was probably the most exciting day of my life," said Tschupp, who had had plenty of exciting moments outside the game since.

"Being considered the 125th best 18-year-old in the world is still mesmerizing. I will forever be grateful for that honour and cherish that day for the rest of my life."

So much so he wrote a film about it he hopes one day to have produced.

Both parties agreed he wasn't ready to make the jump from high school hockey, so he spent the next three seasons at the University of Notre Dame, where the left winger found goals were much harder to come by in the NCAA.

He left school in 1994 to chase his pro dreams, and his timing couldn't have been worse as an NHL lockout flooded the minors with top players, pushing him down to the East Coast League.

"I just wanted a shot – all I wanted was one day in Calgary to show them I was working my ass off and ready to go," said Tschupp, who left the sport after a four-team spin in the ECHL over two years.

"My agent couldn't get me there or any other camps in the NHL so I took time off. My goal wasn't to be a career minor leaguer. In hindsight, I should have grinded it out a little longer, but life took me on another path. The irony of where it took me I still can't figure out – I've been trying for 20 years, and then I just stopped.



In that story it will be revealed he never made it to a Flames camp to join the likes of Joe Nieuwendyk, Theoren Fleury, Al MacInnis, Mike Vernon and the lads.

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"How did I go from one of the most masculine sports in the world to modeling? I have no idea."



Here's how.

Two months after “retiring” and landing a gig as a bartender in Manhattan came his chance encounter with Klein.

“I was sitting in a restaurant with a few guys drinking beers at brunch and a guy walked up to me and asked if I did any modelling and was interested in a campaign with Kate Moss – I didn’t even know what a campaign was,” he said with a laugh, admitting he didn’t even look at the business card the stranger left until his friends pointed out his brush with greatness.

“He said, ‘if you change your mind give me a call.’ I put his card on the table and resumed talking to my pals when one of them asked, ‘Do you know who that was?’ I said, ‘probably some guy who works at Calvin Klein.’ Turns out it was Calvin Klein. I didn’t even know there was an actual person named Calvin Klein.”

He and Klein hit it off in a subsequent conversation, opening the doors for a 22-year modelling career that has taken him around the world.

Within months, he was the male face of a worldwide campaign alongside Moss for a fall/winter collection – the first of many he’s modelled in ever since.

“That was a big turning point in my life because it was something that came out of the blue,” he said.

“The next job I did was with Gianni Versace when he was still alive. I’ve modeled for a lot of the major brands. I was looking at it as a very short-lived thing so I just kept taking jobs. They kept hiring me. They’re still hiring me.”



His focus now is writing screenplays, as well as adding to his acting credits, which included a part in *Sex and the City* he fell into.

He never had acting aspirations until an agent saw him and urged him to try for the part.

Again, the look paid off.

While waiting to audition with 100 actors he fell asleep with his head on his duffle bag, leaving a horseshoe-shaped imprint on his face. Humoured by it, he rolled with it in front of the producers and got the part.

It's his life in a nutshell, with things always falling into place.

Except for hockey.

“It has been a journey – a crazy, weird one,” he said with a chuckle, summing up a path that includes being a rock band manager and the owner of a NYC nightclub that hosted a surprise 30th birthday by Jennifer Lopez thrown by then-boyfriend Sean ‘P. Diddy’ Combs.

“I talk to people about the things I’ve done, and they say, ‘How old are you? 80? How do you fit all that in?’”

Everything except an NHL shot.

“I can tell you not a day goes by that I don’t think of my days in professional hockey – there’s nothing I wouldn’t do to relive that life,” said Tschupp, who played a former hockey player in the second season of *October Road*.

“Nieuwendyk was the guy for me. The scouts would say, ‘You remind me of Nieuwendyk.’ I was 6-foot-1 and 180 lb. in high school. (He’s now a 6-foot-2, 200-lb. gym rat).

“I never met any of them, but I sure knew who they were. The fact that I got drafted by the Stanley Cup champs (one year later) ... I don’t think there was a higher honour at the time. Although, that meant they didn’t need anybody. Was it a curse or a blessing?”

Sometimes blessings come in strange forms.

efrancis@postmedia.com