

A black and white photograph of Sergei Fedorov standing on a beach. He is wearing a dark hockey jersey with the Anaheim Ducks logo on the front. He is holding a hockey puck in his right hand. The background shows waves crashing on the shore.

# Ready for His Closeup

After waving good-  
bye to the Red Army  
and the Red Wings,  
**SERGEI FEDOROV**  
headed west to join  
the **Mighty Ducks**.  
Will his story have a  
**Hollywood ending?**

By **Nicholas J. Cotsonika**

**O**n a sunny California day last summer, Sergei Fedorov stood on a beach for a photo shoot. He hadn't yet put on the jersey of his new team, the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim, but some kids recognized him anyway. They started to shout: "Hey, you're Sergei Fedorov! This is Sergei Fedorov!" It was a movie-star moment, and that was fitting. After 13 seasons as one of many stars for the Detroit Red Wings, Fedorov has now stepped into the spotlight as the leading man for Anaheim.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHELLY CASTELLANO/ICON SMI

Stephen Davis  
Pittsburgh, Pa. Carolina Panthers

JIM RUS

Kennelly  
Surfer

Cheer  
more  
and  
Burton

Burton  
Expand  
Room To

"This guy, he's a marquee player," says Duck coach Mike Babcock. "We're thrilled to death to have him."

Fedorov is thrilled, too. This is the biggest role of the 34-year-old center's career. "Obviously, we want to make the playoffs and get another chance at winning the Stanley Cup," he says. "Personally, I want to score as many goals as I can and be successful in the things the coaches want me to do."

The coaches are asking him to do plenty: anchor the team's top line, win face-offs, power the power play, and pitch in on defense. The fans may demand even more. But Fedorov has the skill and drive to deliver, and that makes this show worth watching.

## Pure Talent

There's no room for debate: Sergei Fedorov is one of the NHL's best all-around players.

- He can skate. He has won the fastest-skater competition at the All-Star Game twice (1992, 1994). At 6' 2", he gobbles up ice in big, greedy strides, then stops on a dime, pivots, and takes off again in a blur.

- He can stickhandle. He weaves through opponents with the puck stuck to his stick. If he can't find an opening or a teammate to pass to, he doesn't just fire it on ahead, as many players do. He keeps it, cuts back, and starts over.

- He can shoot. He won the hardest-shot competition at the All-Star Game in 2002 with a 101.5-mile-per-hour blast. And he has been accurate enough to score more than 400 goals in his NHL career.

- He can play defense. In 1993-94 (the same season he won the Hart Trophy as the league MVP), he won the Selke Trophy as the league's best defensive forward. He won the Selke again in 1995-96.

- He knows how to win. He helped the Red Wings win the Stanley Cup three times.

Detroit center Steve Yzerman sums it all up: "He's too talented not to do well."

## Long Journey

Fedorov enjoyed it when those kids recognized him at the photo shoot. "It's always fun," he says, "because



Fedorov terrorizes goalies with a left-handed shot that can top 100 miles per hour.

NOBIRA FROBBER

I was one of those kids before. And I didn't have a chance to watch the top hockey players, because I was living so far away from a city with a team."

Fedorov grew up in Apatity, Russia, a town above the Arctic Circle, where sub-zero temperatures are not uncommon in the winter. Even in the summer, temperatures hover in the low 50s. As a kid, Fedorov practiced grueling hockey drills for four or five hours per day.

Inside, his father, Viktor, made him jump up the stairs to the family's fifth-floor apartment to build leg muscles. He became such a good hockey player that he played wing on an adult team — with his dad at center. At 13, he was sent to live and

train at a special sports school. From there, he joined the famous Red Army team.

This was serious business. The ruthlessly efficient Red Army team powered the Soviet Union to seven Olympic gold medals between 1955 and 1989. Its players were enlisted in the Soviet army, and elite players were pressured to become officers and commit to years of military service.

Fedorov was facing that pressure when Detroit chose him in the fourth round of the 1989 draft. He didn't want to become an army officer. He wanted to play in the NHL. But getting there wouldn't be easy.

**"[Fedorov] is too talented not to do well,"**  
says Detroit center Steve Yzerman.

# Big shot

## The Great Escape

Before the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the only way its people could leave was to defect, or sneak out.

It was like something out of a spy movie. The Wings helped Fedorov defect while he was playing at the 1990 Goodwill Games, in Portland, Oregon. The Soviet team was staying at a Holiday Inn on the outskirts of the city. According to Nick Polano, then the Wings' assistant general manager and one of the plan's masterminds, Fedorov secretly dropped his room key in the lobby. A Wings official entered the room once the team was at the rink and gathered Fedorov's belongings.

"He had a little bag with hardly anything in it," says Polano.

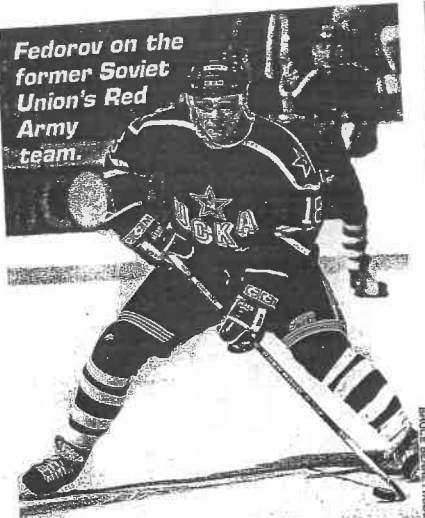
Later that day, Fedorov spotted a man reading a newspaper — it was a signal — and followed him out a back door. They ducked into a waiting limousine, drove to the airport, and dashed into Red Wing owner Mike Ilitch's private jet. "We were back in Detroit before [the Soviets] even knew he was gone," says Polano.

Fedorov can't believe how far he has come. "I'm afraid sometimes to think about it," he says. "I've got chills going down my spine."

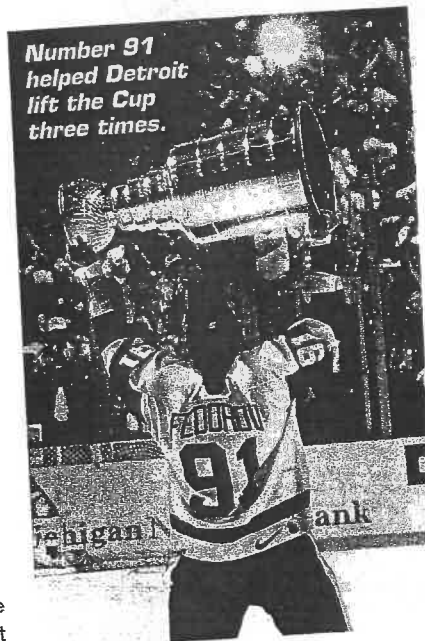
## Time for a Change

Fedorov was a star in Detroit. He had money, good looks, and all that talent. And he had the girl, too. He got a lot of attention for going out with tennis star Anna Kournikova, to whom he was briefly married. People wore his number 91 jersey all over the place.

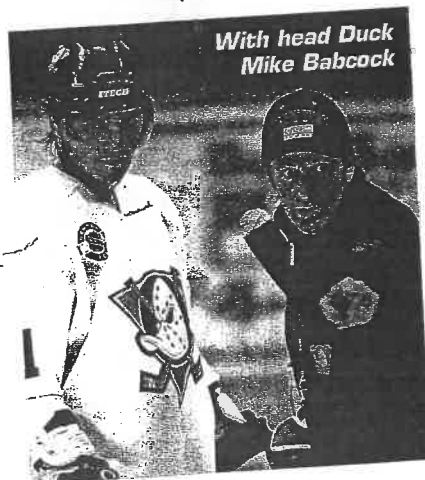
But he wasn't the star in Detroit. The Wings always had many other top players. When the team won the Cup in 2001-02, he was one of nine potential Hall of Famers. Fedorov had his picture up with other Detroit greats inside Joe Louis Arena. But it was Steve Yzerman, Hockeytown's beloved captain, who had his picture up on the side of a building in the heart of the city. It was Yzerman's Number 19 jersey



Fedorov on the former Soviet Union's Red Army team.



Number 91 helped Detroit lift the Cup three times.



With head Duck Mike Babcock

# FEDOROV'S FAVORITE STUFF

Sport to Watch (other than hockey)	Soccer
Sport to Play (other than hockey)	Softball
Video Game	Medal of Honor
Movie	The Matrix
Actor	Al Pacino
Actress	Andie MacDowell
Musical Artists	"I listen to everything."
Food	Mom's cooking
Pre-game Meal	Steak, vegetables, soup, and salad
Vacation Spot	Bahamas
Biggest Sports Thrill	Winning the Stanley Cup in 1996-97.
Car	Ferrari F355
Athlete I Admired Most When I Was a Kid	Hockey great Sergei Makarov of Russia

THE MATRIX BY SILVER PICTURES PHOTOGRAPHY; PACINO BY JIM JACOBSON; MACDOWELL BY JACOBSON; FOOD BY MICHAEL GOODMAN; STEAK BY JACOBSON; FERRARI BY JACOBSON; BABCOCK BY MICHAEL GOODMAN; YZERMAN BY JACOBSON; MAKAROV BY JACOBSON



Fedorov does the dirty work on D.



BRUCE BENNETT/REX

that was the team's top seller. It was Yzerman who was the team's number 1 center, bumping Fedorov to the second line.

Still, when his contract was up, the Wings offered Fedorov as much as \$50 million over five seasons to stay. In the end, Fedorov signed for \$10 million less to play for Anaheim, after they lost their captain, Paul Kariya, to the Colorado Avalanche.

"I think he wanted his own team," says St. Louis Blues' goalie Chris Osgood, a former Detroit teammate. "He's not going to tell anybody, but I think that's what he felt."

Fedorov is tight-lipped about why he left Detroit. "I realized that it was a change I had to make," he says simply, "and I was pretty excited to put the Mighty Ducks jersey on."

Putting the jersey on is one thing, but does he have what it takes to lead the team? Fedorov is a stealthy weapon on the ice: quiet and not overly emotional. He'll never be a vocal leader like Yzerman, but Fedorov can certainly lead by example. And when your biggest offensive star consistently hustles

back on D, it sets a pretty powerful example.

### Ready for Takeoff?

After 13 seasons of playing the same style for the same team with many of the same teammates, Fedorov now has to adjust to many new things. He had just one assist as the Ducks dropped their first four games this season. "He's put so much pressure on himself to be 'The Guy,'" says Coach Babcock. "I've told him, 'We're willing to be patient. You make sure you are as well. Give yourself some time.'"

Babcock believes it will happen, that this talented, determined star will make it happen. When it will all come together remains to be seen, but the coach got a pretty good

peek at what it will look like during the Ducks' 5-1 thrashing of the Toronto Maple Leafs on November 12. Fedorov had 2 goals and an assist in the game. On his first goal, he scooped up a Leaf turnover and beat Toronto goalie Ed Belfour high to the glove side with a wicked, rising shot from the right circle. In other words, he beat a future Hall of Famer glove side — from 25 feet out. By the end of the game, he had 14 points (5 goals, 9 assists) in 17 games.

The win pulled the Ducks within 1 point of first place in the Pacific Division. They'd capture the lead within a week.

Rising to the top of the Pacific is one thing, climbing all the way to the Stanley Cup championship is another. The pressure is on, and Fedorov is in the spotlight. After a lifetime of hard work and great escapes, that's right where he wants to be.

POSTER INSIDE!

## FEDOROV'S STATS

Season	Team	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	PPG	PPA	GWG
1990-91	Detroit	77	31	48	79	66	11	15	5
1991-92	Detroit	80	32	54	86	72	7	20	5
1992-93	Detroit	73	34	53	87	72	13	18	3
1993-94	Detroit	82	56	64	120	34	13	15	10
1994-95	Detroit	42	20	30	50	24	7	9	5
1995-96	Detroit	78	39	68	107	48	11	26	11
1996-97	Detroit	74	30	33	63	30	9	6	4
1997-98	Detroit	21	6	11	17	25	2	2	2
1998-99	Detroit	77	26	37	63	66	6	13	3
1999-00	Detroit	68	27	35	62	22	4	15	7
2000-01	Detroit	75	32	37	69	40	14	23	7
2001-02	Detroit	81	31	37	68	36	10	11	6
2002-03	Detroit	80	36	47	83	52	10	18	11
2003-04	Anaheim*	19	5	10	15	8	1	4	0
<b>TOTALS*</b>		<b>927</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>79</b>

\* Through November 18, 2003 GP: Games Played; G: Goals; A: Assists; PTS: Points; PIM: Penalty Minutes; PPG: Power Play Goals; PPA: Power Play Assists; GWG: Game-Winning Goals

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