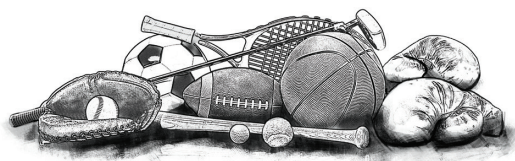


# UP FRONT



## WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SPORTS MUSEUM

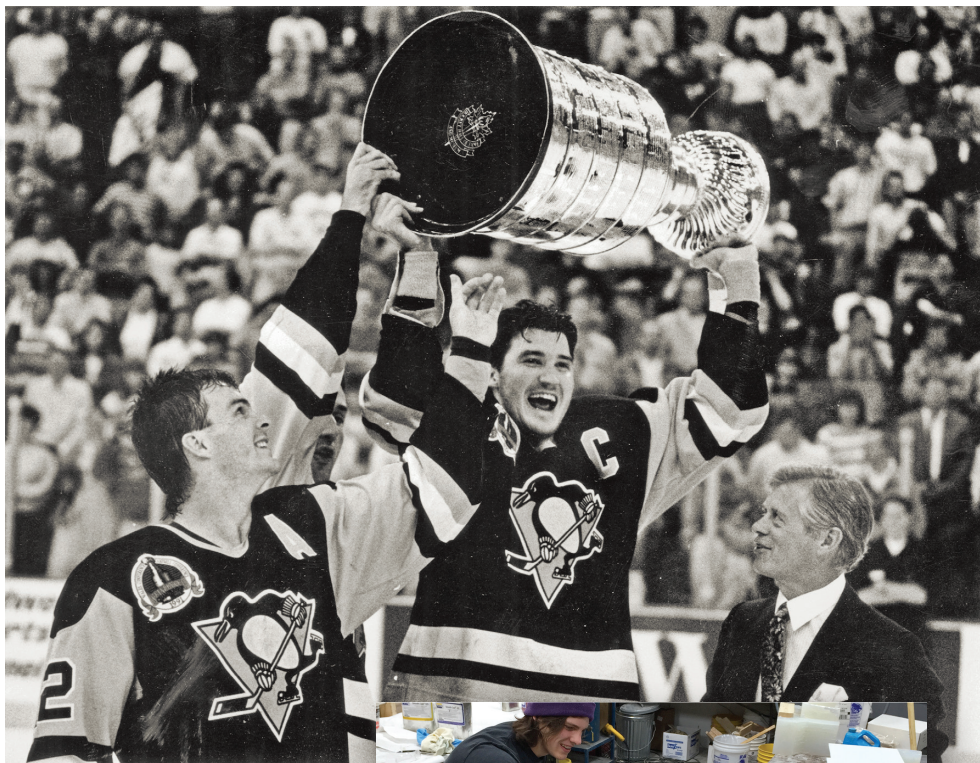
By Anne Madarasz, Director of the  
Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum

### The Making of Mario

The Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum recently debuted a new life figure of Mario Lemieux as the centerpiece of the exhibition, *50 Years of Hockey in Pittsburgh*. This figure of the six-foot-plus Mario on skates, hoisting the Stanley Cup overhead, proved to be one of the most challenging we have created to date.

Deciding what moment from Mario's storied career to interpret became the first step in the process. After considering several, including his first goal on the first shot of his first shift, staff agreed that we should capture Mario hoisting the Stanley Cup after the Penguins first championship win on May 25, 1991. A signature moment in the history of Pittsburgh hockey, the first Cup win also demonstrated the impact Lemieux has had on the sport of hockey. However, this choice meant that staff faced the additional challenge of creating a life-size Stanley Cup as part of the figure.

Staff began by getting approvals from Lemieux, the Penguins, and the Hockey Hall of Fame before starting the project research. After gathering photos of the post-game ceremony and celebration, we decided on the exact pose for the figure, determined the expression for Mario's face, researched his uniform and pads, and studied exactly how the Cup looked on that date. With each figure, we strive for accuracy in the overall look and



**Mario Lemieux hoisting the 1991 Stanley Cup. This photo was one of many that helped inform the pose of the life figure.**

HHIC Detre L&A.

**LifeFormations staff work to create the replica 1991 Stanley Cup.**

Photo by Exhibits.



the minute details of the person's features and clothing. After contracting the figure with LifeFormations (a company in Bowling Green, Ohio, that has created many of the History Center's figures), the sculpt began.

It took seven or eight rounds of staff reviewing photographs and suggesting modifications with the sculptor at LifeFormations who created a full 3D model of the head before the sculpt looked accurate. Lemieux's face proved difficult, as does any

figure of a living person. The man Mario is today looks different than the athlete he was at age 25. Athletes can prove particularly difficult to render as their face changes during the season—their weight fluctuates, injuries, especially a broken bone, change their looks, and the face is often contorted or changed by great effort, fatigue, or even equipment such as a mouth guard or helmet. After the fourth sculpt we shared images with the staff at the Penguins—their feedback proved helpful as



we moved forward. After completing the facial sculpt, LifeFormations artists painstakingly added individual strands of hair to the face and scalp to complete the head.

While this work progressed, staff began the almost six-month search for appropriate replica clothing. Mario's 6' 4" height, unusual for a hockey player at the time, made finding appropriate period uniform pieces challenging. Because Mario's jersey from the first Stanley Cup is displayed in the Sports Museum, staff knew the size and make and could verify that the patches and markings on the replica jersey were correct. The CCM Supra pants proved more difficult. In the end, they had to be pieced together from two pairs of pants and a hat. Staff bought pants, then LifeFormations took the piping on one pair and sewed it down the sides of the pair that fit the figure. The Penguins' logo came from the hat. Even what you can't see is accurate—staff at Perani's Hockey World advised on the padding and even suggested we add stitching to the fight strap that includes a small box with an X in it, to make it match Mario's. The skates were the most difficult, finding a size 11.5 or 11.75 pair of 1991-era Vakutack 652 skates took months of auction and eBay hunts by our staff and Penguins staff. Since we knew we had to drill through the skates to support the figure, they could not be authentic game-worn pieces.

At the same time, History Center staff worked with Phil Pritchard and the Keepers of the Cup at the Hockey Hall of Fame to begin crafting an authentic replica of the Stanley Cup. One of our curators visited the HOF to photograph and measure the Cup and confirm every name (with typos) that was engraved on the rings when Mario hoisted it overhead. Then LifeFormations began the detailed work to render the trophy in 3D and print it. Getting the sheen just right and making sure the engravings were in the correct spots necessitated some reworking. But it all came

together in the end.

This 50th anniversary season for the team provided the perfect opportunity to showcase the new figure. Make a trip to the History Center to get your picture with Mario—he will be featured in the fourth-floor Campbell Gallery through hockey season, before moving to the Sports Museum.

**Partial assembly of the Lemieux life figure with replica clothing.**  
Photo by Exhibits.



**The completed Mario Lemieux figure on display.**  
Photo by Nicole Lauletta.