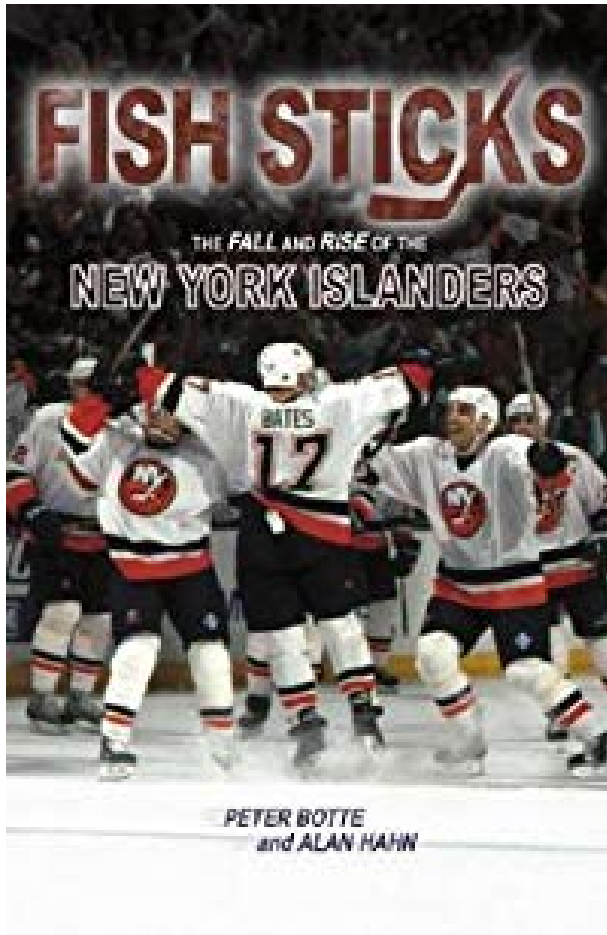


Fish Sticks: The Fall and Rise of the New York Islanders



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Once upon a time, the New York Islanders were the embodiment of greatness: four-time Stanley Cup champions and a model franchise in the National Hockey League during the early '80s.

The dynasty quickly crumbled, however, and the team found itself in a seemingly never-ending freefall.

One embarrassing episode after another befell the once-mighty Islanders: Kirk Muller balked at being traded to the team; the team's classic logo was replaced with one that was vehemently ridiculed, earning the team the nickname "Fish Sticks"; a slick con artist managed to buy the team with nothing more than his charm; the team failed to make the playoffs seven seasons in a row as miserly owners purged players salaries; Hall of Fame great Bryan Trottier feuded with the team and blocked the retirement of his jersey; embattled general manager "Mad Mike" Milbury couldn't do anything to get himself fired. Yet, having finally hit bottom after enduring count trials and near-unbelievable tribulations, the team has begun its climb to the top. New owner Charles Wang has brought not only a desire to return the Islanders to their place of pride, but also the money to do it. The team experienced a remarkable resurgence during the 2001-02 season. Ticket sales have

skyrocketed since that breakthrough success, with the team expecting to fight its way back into the playoffs for a second straight season.