

# CIGAR & SPIRITS

THE GENTLEMAN'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

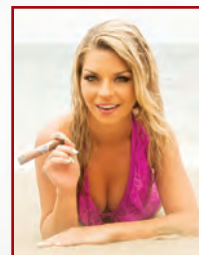
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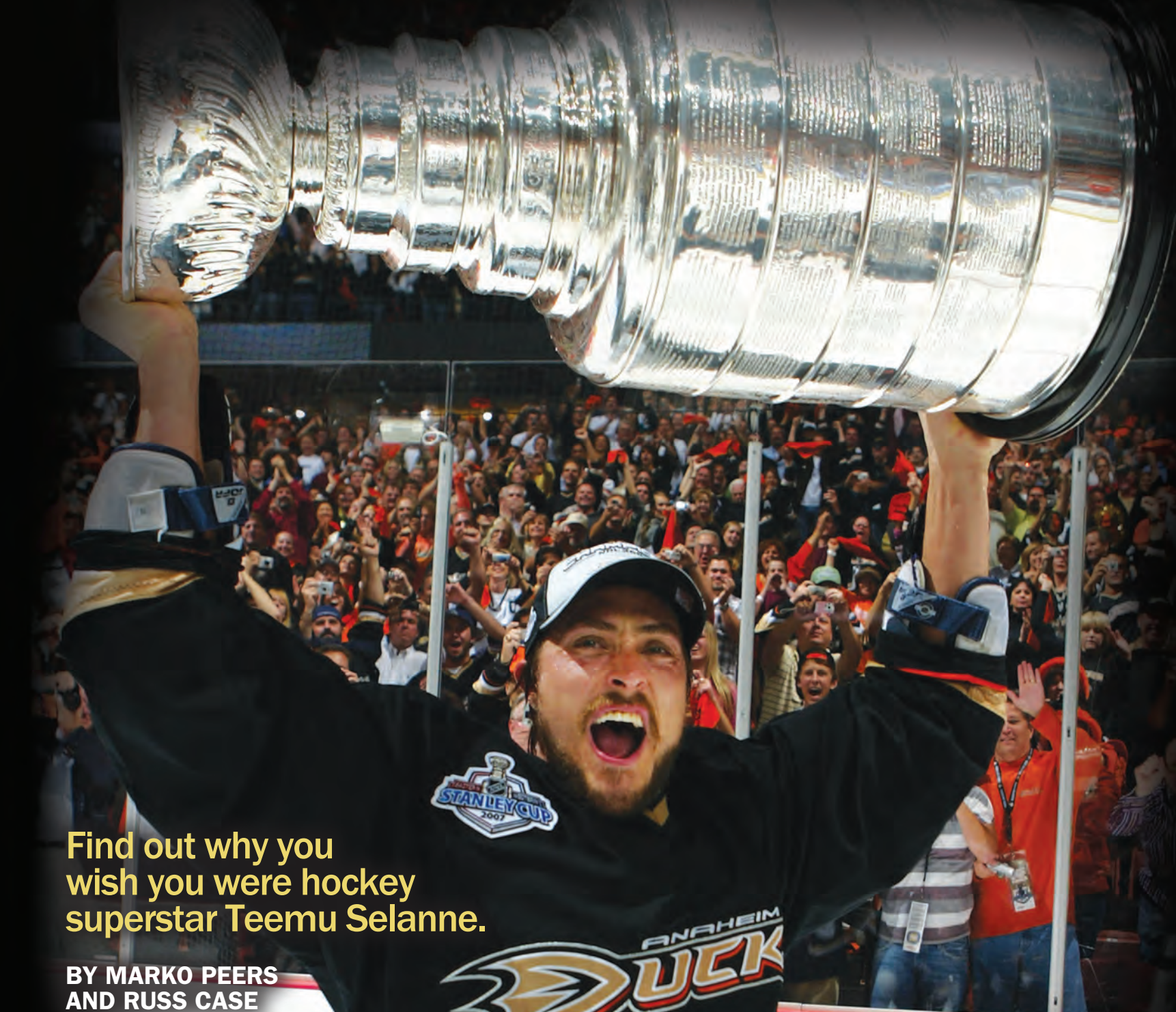
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Find out why you wish you were hockey superstar Teemu Selanne.

BY MARKO PEERS  
AND RUSS CASE

# SUCH AN ICE GUY

Teemu Selanne, also known as The Finnish Flash, is one of the greatest hockey players of our time. He began playing professionally with Jokerit, his hometown team in Finland, during the 1989 season. He went on to be drafted by the Winnipeg Jets of the National Hockey League (NHL) and moved to Canada in 1992. During his 21-year NHL career, he also played for the San Jose Sharks, Colorado Avalanche and, most memorably, the Anaheim Ducks, before retiring from the game last year.

He is the highest-scoring player from Finland in NHL history. During his rookie season with the Jets, he scored an astounding 76 goals—still the rookie record and one reason why he won the NHL's Calder Trophy in 1993, given to the best first-year player. He eventually scored 50 goals in a season three times, and four times scored more than 100 points, both benchmarks of excellence.

The achievements don't stop there. Selanne played in 10 NHL All-Star games and has been awarded the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy for perseverance and dedication to the game. Finally, he achieved the pinnacle of NHL success by winning the Stanley Cup in 2007 with the Anaheim Ducks. Eventually, in January of this year, the Ducks would retire Selanne's famous number 8 jersey.

Selanne also achieved great success representing Finland while playing international hockey, including playing in five World Championships and three Canada Cup/World Cup of Hockey tournaments. He has also played in the Olympics six times and is the all-time leading scorer with 43 points.

Impressive as Teemu Selanne's hockey accomplishments are, there is much more to the man, who currently lives in Southern California with his wife and four children. Selanne has a long history of charitable work benefiting children. He is also a successful restaurant owner, most recently with the upscale Selanne Steak Tavern located in Laguna Beach, Calif. Other passions of Selanne's include auto racing and cars—he owns an impressive fleet of about 20—and golf (he even caddied for Finnish golfer Mikko Ilonen at the prestigious Masters Golf Tournament earlier this year).

Teemu Selanne is enjoying an amazing life, and perhaps most amazing of all is that even with his long list of accomplishments, Selanne remains a humble gentleman—someone with whom it would be a pleasure to visit while enjoying a fine cigar and exemplary spirit. Here we present the next best thing: *Cigar & Spirits'* exclusive interview with the NHL legend and successful restaurateur.

**C&S: What was it like growing up in Helsinki?**

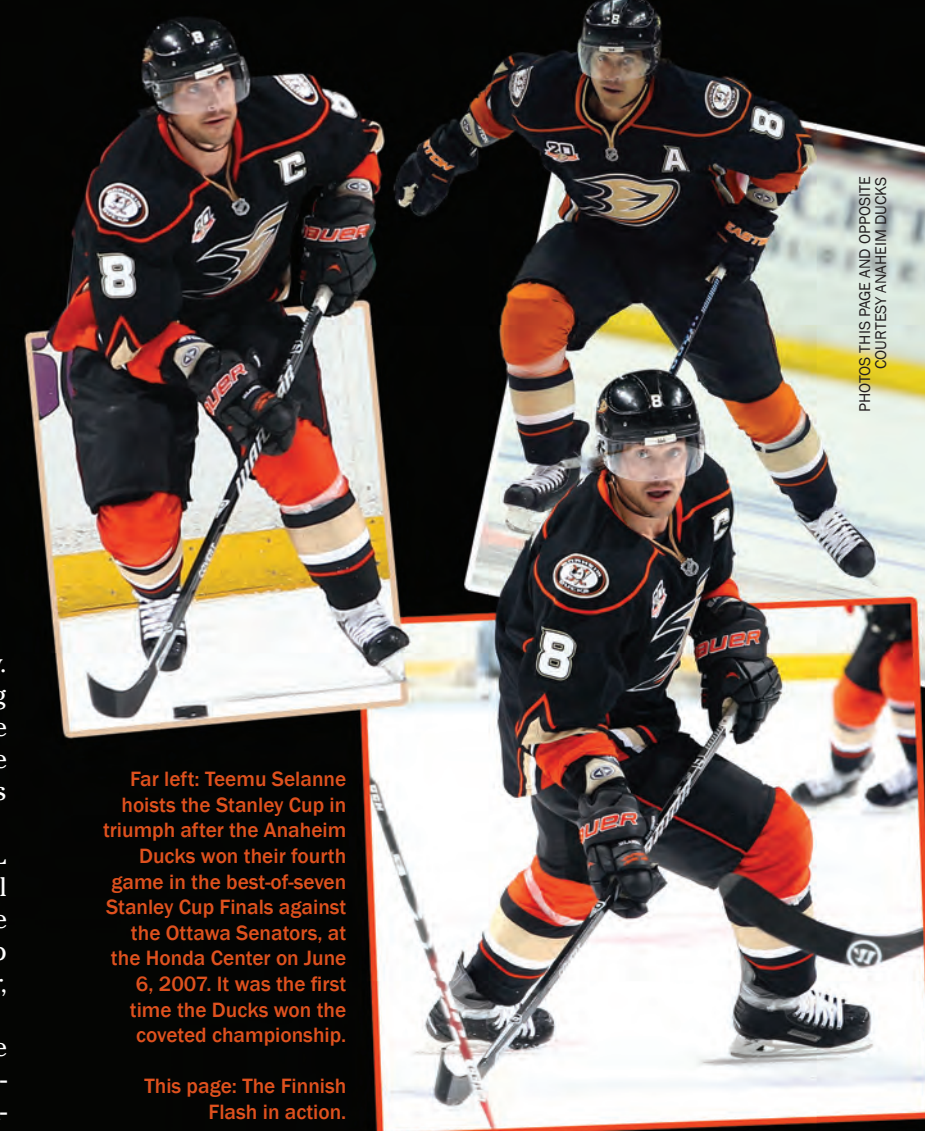
**Teemu Selanne:** Fun and easy-going. Finland is a beautiful country and a healthy environment. People are well-taken care of with free healthcare and education.

**Do you have brothers and sisters? Was your family always a hockey family?**

I have a twin brother and a brother who is 4 years older than me. My brothers and dad have all played hockey so, yes, we have always been a hockey family.

**Did you meet your wife Sirpa in Helsinki?**

Yes. Our parents were friends even before we were born!



Far left: Teemu Selanne hoists the Stanley Cup in triumph after the Anaheim Ducks won their fourth game in the best-of-seven Stanley Cup Finals against the Ottawa Senators, at the Honda Center on June 6, 2007. It was the first time the Ducks won the coveted championship.

This page: The Finnish Flash in action.

**What was it like when you made the hometown Jokerit professional team?**

It was a great experience to play for Jokerit. When I made the top league, it was very special, and also the first time I started making money. Hockey was a hobby, and when I started getting paid for playing it felt almost unreal.

**Did you dream of playing professionally in Finland only, or were you always planning for the NHL?**

As a young boy, my goal was to play in the top league in Finland, and my dream was to play on the Finnish national team. At the same time, I fantasized about playing for the NHL. I knew it was a possibility if everything went well, but when I was young it didn't feel like it would really happen. It all worked out so well!

Coming to Canada from Finland—the language, the culture, the hockey style—was a big change. I was 22 at the time, and there were so many adjustments to make, first in Canada and later in California. Yet I enjoyed the challenges and the differences.

**It has been more than 20 years since you scored 76 goals in 84 games with the Jets in your rookie year. Looking back, what is your perspective now on that season?**

That was in 1992. At the time I was much more focused on offense, and later it became more about defense. It was fun to be a part of that change and to see how things would go. I had a great 21 years in the NHL and am very thankful for that.

**The NHL game evolved greatly during your career. What do you consider the most significant differences in the game today?**



The guys are bigger, stronger and faster. The competition is hard, and the salary cap makes sure that teams have fairly equal chances to compete and win. I think hockey is doing great right now.

**After your last career game with the Ducks against the L.A. Kings all the Kings players stayed on the ice to honor you, a very unusual act, especially for a primary rival. What was that like for you?**

Of course, it meant a lot to me. How the fans, as well as the Ducks and Kings players, reacted during my last game against the Kings was a big honor, especially in the way the Kings guys stayed on the ice to show their appreciation.

I always tried to play the game the fair way, and with style, and when guys I played against showed that kind of appreciation, it meant so much. It confirms to me that I have done some things right. It was a great moment—even though we lost that game!

**You must have many standout memories from your long NHL career.**

My entire first year was especially memorable for me, but the single standout moment was winning the Stanley Cup. I had to wait 15 years to even have a chance to win it—that's why it was so special.

Looking back, the most impressive thing is that I was able to play for so many years. I am proud and thankful for that. I made so many friends with great people in the hockey world. It's wonderful to be part of the NHL and the hockey family.

**After the Colorado experience, why did you choose to sign with Anaheim?**

It was a disappointing year in Colorado, when my knee was injured and I had to undergo surgery. After that, I really rediscovered my passion for hockey, but I wanted to go somewhere that I knew I was going to be happy. And that was Anaheim. It was a very easy decision.

It was nice to come home—we had kept our home in California during the time when I was out. I'm very happy to live in Southern California.

**How did it feel to win the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy in 2006 for perseverance and dedication to the game?**

Winning that trophy was a tremendous honor, especially because it was after I had renewed my passion and love of the game after coming back from a tough year due to my knee injury.

**In a few years you will likely be a first ballot Hall of Fame inductee.**

It would be a huge honor if in a couple of years the first ballot for the Hall of Fame comes and I make it, but it's too early to start thinking about. We'll see what happens.

**Is there a coach to whom you feel particularly indebted for your stellar hockey career?**

I am lucky to have had so many good coaches over the years. My junior coach, Leo Äikäs, influenced me the most, though. I am also thankful for NHL coach Randy Carlyle, because when I came back from knee surgery he gave me the chance to show what I could do and to play well again.

**Do you think you will ever get back into the game in some capacity?**

Absolutely, but it's still too early to think about. I don't think I will be a coach, although I would like to be a part of a team that



GINA COLLI/1.5 STUDIO

builds a team because I have a good vision of what kinds of players fit together. Right now, though, I am enjoying the free time and being with my family.

**Your three sons play hockey; do you encourage them to pursue professional hockey careers?**

So far, they are pretty serious about it. I'm just happy they are doing what they enjoy. It's especially fun for me to be a part of that part of their lives.

**Did you celebrate with a cigar after winning the Stanley Cup?**

Yes. After winning, my buddy gave me a cigar—it was a Gurkha Status—and I had the cigar in my mouth while at a table hosting the Stanley Cup. It was a very special time and a lot of fun.

**Do you consider yourself a cigar enthusiast?**

I like to smoke a cigar once in a while, usually when I am playing golf or just relaxing, sometimes after a nice dinner. I enjoy fairly mild cigars. My favorite brands are Davidoff, Padrón and Rocky Patel.

**Do you have a favorite cigar and spirit pairing?**

A cigar with either port wine or Scotch—both are satisfying.

**The Selanne Manhattan and Selanne Moscow Mule are featured on the drink menu at Selanne Steak Tavern. Are these your go-to cocktails?**



The Moscow Mule is probably my favorite drink in the restaurant, but I also am a fine wine fan. We have an extensive hand-picked selection to choose from.

We have also started making our own tequila and bourbon in-house, which is an interesting process, and they taste so good. Hopefully, people are going to like these special spirits that we are creating.

**Aside from Selanne Steak Tavern's own, Pappy Van Winkle is the only other bourbon on the tavern's menu.**

That's because Pappy Van Winkle has a stellar reputation, and we have a close relationship with the Buffalo Trace Distillery.

**Your love of cars and racing is well known.**

I've always liked cars and speed. I love Ferraris, but my biggest passion is old American muscle cars. I started racing with rally cars and was also racing in the track. A couple times I did the Nürburgring 24-hour race, and three times I raced in the world championships rally in Finland. I've raced a lot of cars.

**What's the fastest you've driven?**

I've gone 220 miles per hour on a race track.

**Is there a car you would like to add to your collection?**

The new LaFerrari. It's the newest Ferrari out there—replaced the old Ferrari Enzo, and that's probably the best car ever built.

**What were the biggest challenges on the way to opening Selanne Steak Tavern?**

It took almost a year to rebuild the existing restaurant before we opened. The former place was in pretty bad shape, and we wanted to open a restaurant that was almost perfect. It took a long time and was very challenging to get all the needed permits in order to accomplish our building and operating goals. I'm very proud of the resulting Selanne Steak Tavern.

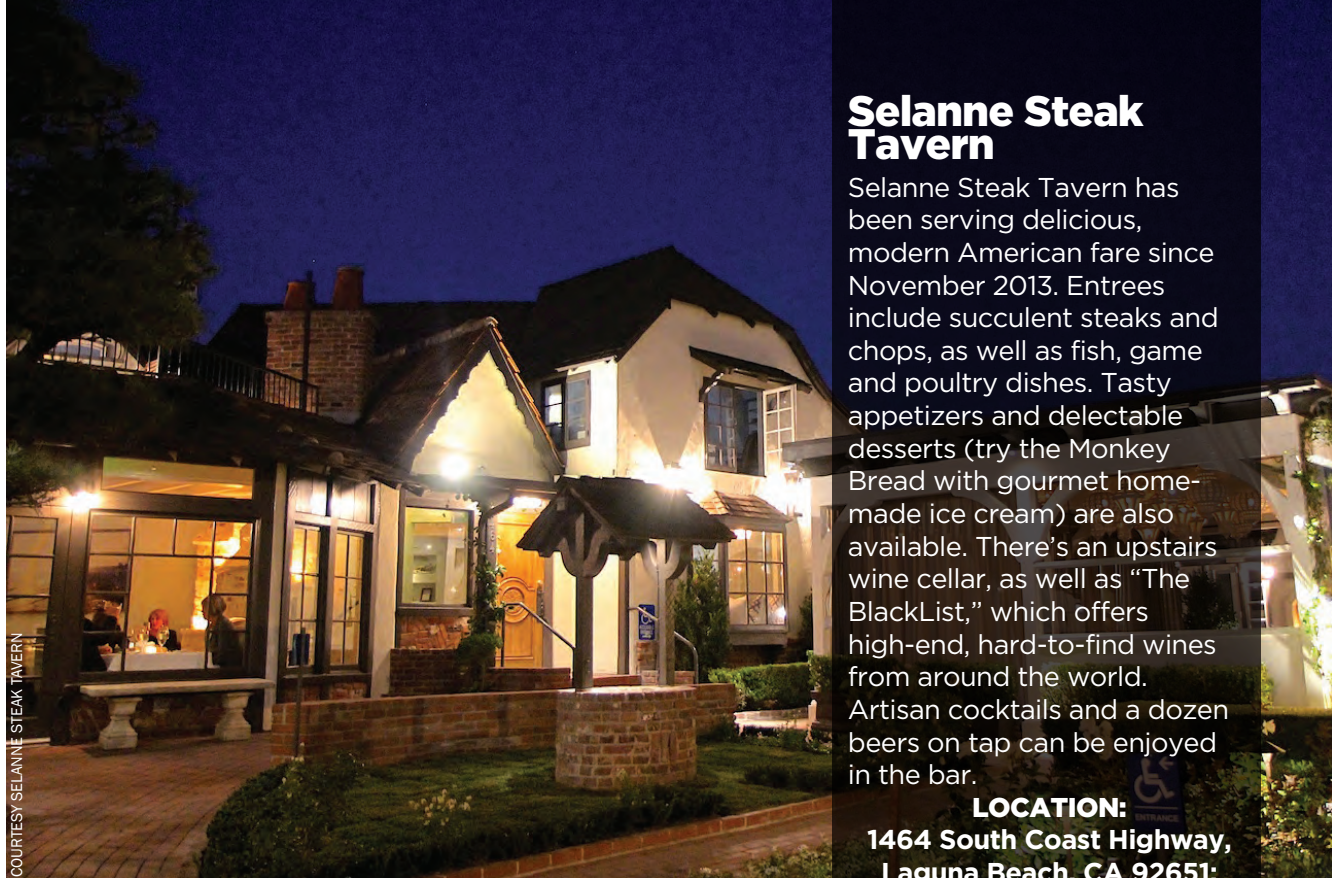
**Do many Ducks frequent the restaurant? Any notable regulars?**

I'm happy to say that we have many regular customers and some of them are Ducks players, including François Beauchemin, Corey Perry, Sami Vatanen and Freddy Anderson. It's great to have them enjoy our food and hospitality.

**In terms of personal achievement, how does the success of the restaurant compare with your hockey career?**

I'm very proud of my professional hockey accomplishments and equally satisfied with the ongoing success of the restaurant. Selanne Steak Tavern has become a fine dining destination restaurant, and we're delighted with how Laguna Beach and the surrounding communities have welcomed us.

**Beginning with Godfathers Foundation in Helsinki, Goals for Kids in Winnipeg, and now the Teemu Selanne Youth Sports Foundation, you have a long and consistent history of char-**



## Selanne Steak Tavern

Selanne Steak Tavern has been serving delicious, modern American fare since November 2013. Entrees include succulent steaks and chops, as well as fish, game and poultry dishes. Tasty appetizers and delectable desserts (try the Monkey Bread with gourmet home-made ice cream) are also available. There's an upstairs wine cellar, as well as "The BlackList," which offers high-end, hard-to-find wines from around the world. Artisan cocktails and a dozen beers on tap can be enjoyed in the bar.

### LOCATION:

**1464 South Coast Highway,  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651;  
(949) 715-9881;  
[selannesteaktavern.com](http://selannesteaktavern.com)**

ity work, with a specific emphasis on children.


We started the children's foundation in Finland in 1989, and cause-related activities have always been very important to me wherever I am. The Ducks organization has always been involved with giving back, as well.

The goal of the Teemu Selanne Youth Sports Foundation (<http://tsysf.org>) is to lend support to families so that they are able to buy hockey gear for their kids. We want kids to enjoy the sport and be able to fulfill their hockey dreams. It's been fun and feels good when we can help. One of my favorite things to do is to bring smiles to a child's face!

**Are there any charitable events coming up that we should know about?**

On October 4, 2015, Selanne Steak Tavern will participate in the Newport Beach Wine & Food Festival, the proceeds of which benefit Project Hope Alliance. A fundraiser for the Teemu Selanne Youth Sports Foundation will also be held at the restaurant later this fall.

**You are widely recognized as being an all-around good guy. In closing, please provide some Selanne wisdom, some of your personal philosophy of life. What's important?**

There are two things I always try to remember. The first is to treat people the way that you want to be treated. Do so, and you won't have many problems. The second is to try and stay hungry. Being overly self-satisfied is your worst enemy because it doesn't leave room for self improvement and moving forward. You always have to keep pushing and go after your dreams and goals to succeed in life. 

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*Marko Peers is a life-long hockey freak, an obsessive fan of the L.A. Kings, hockey fights, the movie Goon, has traveled North America to watch hockey at all levels and spent 10 years coaching youth roller hockey. Currently he is one of the oldest active players in the SoCal Street Hockey league.*

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*Russ Case is the editor of Cigar & Spirits magazine (CigarandSpirits.com).*