

THE BLADE

Winner of the
2004 Pulitzer
for Investigative
Reporting

One of America's Great Newspapers

TOLEDO, OHIO SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2011

MY FAVORITE WALLEYE

FANS SELECT EMMERSON



THE BLADE/JETTA FRASER

Walleye forward Riley Emmerson was a midseason acquisition, but became a fan favorite with his tenacious play.

BY MARK MONROE
BLADE SPORTS WRITER

At 6-foot-8 and 255 pounds, Walleye forward Riley Emmerson instantly added size and toughness to the Toledo lineup but he also brought character and veteran leadership to the team.

Emmerson was acquired in a mid-season trade and brought an edge into the Walleye lineup. At age 26, Emmerson also brought six years of pro experience to the young team.

"I definitely bring physicality. I finish checks," Emmerson said. "I bring toughness when it is needed. I'm an older guy, so I try to bring some leadership and keep guys motivated. I'm a pretty loud and vocal guy, too."

Emmerson also quickly became a favorite among a fan base that respects a tenacious hitter who isn't afraid to drop the gloves.

Emmerson was the top vote-getter, garnering more than 67 percent of the

more than 6,400 votes in The Blade's "My Favorite Walleye" online poll.

"He can bring energy," Walleye coach Nick Vitucci said. "He can get things going with a big hit."

Vitucci, the team's director of player personnel, acquired Emmerson in a trade with Utah on Jan. 18. Vitucci gave up the rights to Evan Rankin, another fan favorite, in the deal.

"We are excited to add a big, tough forward in Riley to our team," Vitucci said at the time.

In 32 games with the Walleye, Emmerson has racked up 115 penalty minutes. He also has scored two goals and has dished out two assists.

"I love Toledo," Emmerson said. "I love playing in front of a good, loud crowd. The facilities here are amazing and they take care of you well here."

Emmerson brought a lunch pail mentality to the team, giving an honest, blue-collar effort.

The native of Vancouver spent half of this season with Utah. He had 66

penalty minutes and four points (two goals and two assists) in 32 games with the Grizzlies.

Emmerson was a seventh-round pick of the Minnesota Wild in 2005 and made his pro debut in 2006.

He has played for four other ECHL teams: the Texas Wildcatters, Florida Everblades, Stockton Thunder, and Utah.

Emmerson also has appeared in 46 games in the American Hockey League.

In 296 pro games, Emmerson has compiled 788 penalty minutes.

"With the new [style in the] game, you have to be smart," Emmerson said. "You can't just be a big dummy out there. You have to be able to play the game and play the systems."

Although the Walleye did not qualify for the postseason, Emmerson said he appreciated the large crowds that still showed up to support the team.

"It's a great place to play," Emmerson said. "It would be great to see the city get a good winning team in here."



THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH

Riley Emmerson creates havoc in front of the net.