

# Players to start using heated blades Gretzky says invention could 'revolutionize the game'

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**TORONTO (AP)** - Some NHL players are about to find out if heated skate blades will make the cut.

Six to 10 players will try them first. If there are no glitches, the blades then would begin appearing in NHL games.

"The NHL is very interested in confirming the data provided by Therma Blade Inc. to establish the safety and reliability of the blade under NHL game conditions and we have agreed to allow a small group of players to test these blades in practices over the next few weeks," said Kris King, the NHL's senior manager of hockey operations.

King said once he receives from the company a list of players who want to participate, he and Stu Grimson of the NHL players union will review it and decide who'll be asked to wear the blades.

The NHLPA welcomes trials for the heated blades.

"There is a lot of interest among players throughout the NHL right now to see how Thermablade performs under game conditions," said Grimson, the union's associate counsel.

Thermablades use a rechargeable battery and a microprocessor within each skate blade to maintain a temperature of 41 degrees. The warm blade increases the thickness of the water layer between the blade and the ice surface, and the company said its tests have shown this reduces gliding friction and starting resistance for skaters.

The charged battery in each blade will last for about two games. Fingers placed on sensors on either side of the rear of the plastic blade holder for three seconds activates the battery to warm the blade. The system automatically turns off when a player is idle on the bench, and the energy of returning to the ice reactivates the system. The system is turned off by repeating the process used to turn it on.

Wayne Gretzky was so impressed with Thermablades when he tried them more than three years ago that he invested in the company.

"I should still be playing," a smiling Gretzky said while skating on the blades for a video shown during the product launch at the Hockey Hall of Fame on Tuesday.

The [Phoenix Coyotes](#) coach said he wishes his players could get them first because Thermablades will "revolutionize the game of hockey."

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