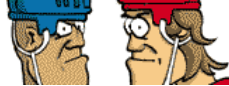


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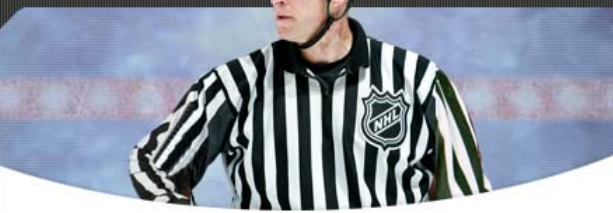
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**NHLOA News**

**Minnesota Visit**

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

NHL Officials meet with Kids in Minneapolis



**NHLOA FEATURES**

Question of the Week

**MISSION**

MISSION HOCKEY

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The two NHL hockey teams who played a game in Minnesota on Friday January 18th featured many stars, but none bigger than the three who walked into our NHL Officials dressing room in the basement of the Xcel Energy Center approximately an hour before game time.



7 year old Chase Latvala 12 year old Jessica and her 2 year old brother Ryan Moore. You see Chase and Jessica belong to a team as well, their team is called Hopekids [ [www.hopekids.org](http://www.hopekids.org) ] It's a group nationwide with local chapters that grant a " Never Ending Wish", providing children and their families with monthly fun and exciting events to help restore their hope for the future." Simply put, they provide the child with another reason to fight, another reason to live while the medicine and treatments they are given, are allowed the time needed to heal what is making them sick".

Dan Marouelli, Kevin Pollock, Ryan Galloway and myself were humbled to meet these incredible young kids. These two brought a whole new meaning to the words strong, tough and fighter. These kids standing before us that evening made us all realize, that those words so often used to describe the measure of a great athlete, should be saved and used on individuals worthy of such admiration THEM.

Young Jessica was diagnosed with a disease named Hurler Syndrome, which means in short, her body cannot breakdown long chains of sugar molecules, without this process in

your body, glycosaminoglycans build up, and they cause great damage to your internal organs. Little Jessica received a bone marrow transplant and is continuing her battle to fully recover.

Chase was diagnosed with Undifferentiated Embryonal Sarcoma, that is a cancerous tumor found attached to his liver.

We were introduced to these wonderful kids through the "Zebra's Care Program". A program that originated last year and has been extremely successful. More than half the teams involved in the NHL are on board. The Minnesota Wild as well are a part of this program and they were represented by their Manager of Community Relations Amy Woog Patnode, who generously donated some gifts to the kids and then took them out to the ice surface to watch warm ups. As well as Amy, the children and their parents, we also received the pleasure of meeting Josh Taylor. Josh and his wife run the Minnesota Chapter of Hopekids and just by spending a little of his time with us, we could see clearly that these children and this charity are in great hands, theirs.

As the group of us gathered in our room, visiting, listening and getting to know one another, one thing struck us all, if we had not been informed that these children were sick, we never would have known. The attitude these children had was unreal, they were happy, excited, a true pleasure to be around.

As Officials, I believe we have a very difficult job with plenty of issues. Every decision we make in a split second is and can be broken down frame by frame to see if it was correct. These players are in tremendous condition, and this game is played at breakneck speeds. Our job is to show up each and every night and uphold the integrity of this great game. The roads trips are long and the time away from our families can never be replaced. Since the 18th in Minnesota, I have worked three hockey games, not a game has gone by or will ever again, that I won't think of Chase and Jessica and their situations, and realize what real issues are, and how ours pale in comparison to theirs and all the other children involved on their TEAM who battle everyday, not just to play a game, but to survive.

I know I speak for all of us that night Chase and Jessica, when I say Thanks, Thanks for showing us grown ups the real meaning of toughness, strength, and being a fighter, and please understand that you guys gave us more than your time that evening, you gave us the opportunity to meet two true heroes, and a memory we will all cherish for the rest of our lives, to quote our young friend Chase that night " It's over, I'm healed" his cancer is in full remission.

That's right everyone, his game is over, and The Best Team won.

Congratulations our friend.

Sincerely, Vaughan Rody NHLOA



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