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Gone but not forgotten

After tragic death, Davis remains big part of St. Clair hockey team

By RICK JAKACKI
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Andrew Davis wasn't with the St. Clair High School hockey team very long, but as far as the Saints are concerned, he remains a big part of them.

Andrew, a freshman, was killed by his stepfather late Nov. 14 or early Nov. 15, according to police. He was 14.

Andrew's mother and stepbrother also were killed by Philip Parsons, who also killed himself.

The Saints are honoring Andrew, who played with them for about two weeks, by hanging his jersey above their bench at every game. They also wear a patch with Andrew's initials on their jerseys and keep him listed on their roster.

"It's with us on a day-to-day basis," said Bobby McKillop, who, along with Scott Nichols, is a Saints coach.

Said senior captain Joe Lanzi: "(We're coping) all right. It's not like it's past us. We still miss him. He wasn't with us long, but we wish he was."

Andrew's father, Matt Davis, described the Saints' show of respect as "impressive."

"It's good," he said. "It's hard for those boys to go through what they're going through. I never went through it as a kid."

Davis -- with the help of the Shawn Burr Foundation -- also is doing his part by starting a scholarship fund in honor of Andrew and his stepbrother, Sean Parsons, who also was 14. The details haven't been finalized, but Davis said it will go to a senior male and female athlete annually, beginning this year.

The foundation also bought T-shirts with the inscription "Gone but never forgotten. Andrew Davis and Sean Parsons, class of 2013" for the ninth-grade class and the hockey team.

The tragic event came within 24 hours of Davis' lone game appearance with the Saints, who played North Farmington in a scrimmage Nov. 14.

Word of the incident had reached the players by the time of their next practice two days later. McKillop and Nichols called a team meeting beforehand and spoke with the players for about an hour.

"Coach said (Andrew) will always be with us," said Blake Smith, the Saints' only other freshman and the player perhaps closest to Andrew. "I still think he's with us."

The team traveled a few days later to Alpena for a tournament, but before it left, it stopped at the funeral home to say goodbye to Andrew.

McKillop said it was a very emotional day.

"That day is going to be with every one of us -- as a team and individuals -- for a long time," he said. "You don't go through that and not have it stay with you."

The Saints played -- and won -- two games that weekend. Before each, Andrew's jersey was hung on the bench.

The second opponent, Grand Rapids Kenowa Hills, had heard about the incident and paid tribute to Andrew by having their players wear his number (20) on their helmets. Before the opening faceoff, the teams gathered at center ice and had a moment of silence.

Lanzi said the Saints do a "breakdown" after each game, and that weekend dedicated both games to Andrew.

He said Andrew isn't brought up in conversation as much as he was, but Lanzi said he still thinks of him "a lot," especially when he sees his jersey hanging on the bench.

"It's just weird seeing a kid our age -- a friend -- (gone)," Lanzi said, "and you realize what we have and what we could lose."

Said McKillop: "Any time something like this happens, it's going to be an eye-opener, a reality check. We're very fortunate to play a sport -- and that's what it is, a sport -- and when something like this happens, it puts everything into perspective."

Matt Davis has attended a few games and said he plans to go to a few more, but it's not an easy thing to do.

"It's tough knowing your kid should be out there and he's not," Davis said.

Blake Smith, however, believes differently. Asked what he thinks of when he sees Andrew's jersey hanging on the bench, he said, "I still think he's there."

Additional Facts

SCHOLARSHIP FUND

n For more on the scholarship fund for Andrew Davis and Sean Parsons, contact the Shawn Burr Foundation at P.O. Box 610812, Port Huron, 48061.

Pictures found on next page

RIP: Andrew Davis died in a murder/suicide in Columbus Township (Courtesy photo)



PLAY ON: St. Clair hockey co-coach Bobby McKillop, center, talks Tuesday with his players at practice at McMorrان Pavilion.



RESPECT: The St. Clair and Grand Rapids Kenowa Hills teams gather around center ice at a November game in Alpena for a moment of silence to honor Andrew Davis.

PLAYING THROUGH: Chipper Gaus, left, waits as Joe Lanzi preps for a shot Tuesday during St. Clair's practice at McMorrان Pavilion in Port Huron.

