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## Success ‘since recess’

### Stevenson hockey duo fill score sheet, net

By Brad D. Bates  
 C & G sports Writer

FRASER — Having the same linemate for four seasons may be an oddity in high school hockey, but for Utica Stevenson seniors Justin Zyvon and Drew DeMarti, it’s a way of life.

DeMarti and Zyvon have played ice hockey together for more than six years, and since joining the Titans’ varsity squad their sophomore seasons, they have been at the top of the varsity stat sheet — totaling 110 goals, 88 assists and 198 points in their junior and senior seasons at press time.



Photo by Patricia O’Blenes  
 Utica Stevenson seniors Drew DeMarti, left, and Justin Zyvon have fueled the Titans’ varsity offense for the past three seasons.

So, it’s should be little surprise to hear how long the duo has been working together.

“We’re next-door neighbors. Since recess, we’ve been together,” Zyvon said before practice Feb. 25 at Great Lakes Sports City in Fraser referring to their grade-school days.

“We got going together way back, and we’ve been brothers forever,” DeMarti added about the bond he’s forged with Zyvon. “We’ve played roller hockey since we were 8, so it’s not just ice hockey. We play baseball, too; everything on the same team.”

The familiarity they have learned from their lifetime of sports and seven years together on the same ice hockey team — dating back to youth pee-wee hockey — has allowed them to make the game look and feel easy.

“We know where each other is at all times on the ice,” Zyvon said. “There’s courses throughout the game where I make a play and he’s there, and I didn’t even realize it.”

“If I’m open, I know J. Z. is going to find me. If he’s open, he knows I’m going to find him,” DeMarti said. “If we’re out there, we’re going to score. I feel like we’re always going to score.”

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Even before they made their high school debut together as freshmen on the Titans' JV team, Stevenson coach Al Korolewicz knew he had two wingers coming into his program with a knack for scoring goals.

"I had an idea, but I didn't know they would be as good as they've been," Korolewicz said. "They played JV as freshmen and were right at the top of the team in points. Then they came to varsity as sophomores, and I'm pretty sure Drew led us in scoring."

Korolewicz said the success Zyvon and DeMarti have enjoyed goes beyond their experience together and has much to do with the way their styles complement one another.

"Drew likes to be the second guy in the offensive zone, and Justin likes to be the third guy in around the blue line," Korolewicz said.

"Drew likes to wait around the circles and try to pick off a pass, and create scoring chances, but if he doesn't get one, then it's a pretty safe bet Justin is going to get one behind him."

And rather than try to fit the duo into a scheme, Korolewicz decided early that he would let Zyvon and DeMarti play to their strengths while teaching them to supplement those strengths.

"They've both been able to really progress on their own," Korolewicz said. "What we wanted to do, though, is teach them other options, so they don't have to always shoot or pass the puck to Drew or always shoot or pass the puck to Justin."

"We've worked with Drew to make him more aggressive and attack the net more," Korolewicz added. "Zyvon, his freshman year, our JV coach put him at defense because they needed him there, and that's been invaluable to him."

"The last two years, on our power play, we used Justin as the quarterback because he's got a great shot."

Even though they have been two of the Titans' top players for the last three seasons, Korolewicz has resisted the temptation to use them on different lines.

"We've done it, but only when we had to if there was an injury," Korolewicz said. "They're such a natural fit together. (Splitting them up) is just not a smart thing to do. You'll hear them say, 'I work better with Drew with me,' or 'I work better with Justin with me.'"

Junior Logan Murray and senior Mitch Brinker are centering the duo's line this year. Korolewicz said both have done the necessary dirty work, which was epitomized by their former center, Nick Gregorich.

"Nick Gregorich, who graduated last year, was their center for two years, and he was perfect for it," Korolewicz said. "Nick was the first guy in the opponents' zone all the time, and he forced the other team out of hiding and made them turn the puck over."

While their run playing ice hockey together could be drawing to a close — the Titans opened the 2009-10 MHSAA postseason March 2, after press time — they're hoping someone will give them one more chance to take the ice on the same team and line.

"I've been telling some junior teams that have talked to me about J. Z.," DeMarti said.

“I told them it would be real good if I could play with him. It would be an advantage going into a season playing with him.”

“It wouldn’t even be like starting over,” Zyvon added.

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