

Coach Eaves stops in for a visit

SSM senior duo looks forward to becoming Badgers

By Bobby Hart

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FARIBAULT — As the Shattuck St. Mary's boys prep hockey team practiced Friday afternoon, they were being stalked by a Badger.

But all those in the SSM hockey community who know University of Wisconsin head coach Mike Eaves, know he's of little threat.

Eaves, who coached at SSM from 1995-97, was in town for a little bit of business and pleasure. He was in the Twin Cities to watch the WCHA Final Five and attend the awards banquet Thursday and stopped in to the SSM ice arena to shake some familiar hands and watch two of his future players, Jordan Murray and Derek Stepan.

Eaves, who was waiting to hear if his Badgers will be included in the NCAA Tournament, liked what he saw of the two senior forwards, who committed to the Badgers last year.

"It's fun because we know the environment they're in with (SSM coach) Tom Ward and the level of play that they're around," Eaves said, as he and his wife Beth overlooked practice in seats above the bleachers. "They learn how to do things right on and off the ice and those are the kind of kids that we want— talented kids that know how to do things in a proper fashion, so if they can bring those kinds of things to our program, it immediately makes our program better."

Eaves' roots at SSM dig deep. His brother, Murray, is head coach of the SSM Bantam Tier I team, his wife, Beth, was a dorm parent, and his sons Ben and Patrick, who both play professionally, both played for the Sabres.

"It's part of our history, part of our roots," Eaves said. "Ben graduated from here and Patrick was here from fifth grade to tenth grade. So a big part of their life is here and now the boys have a place here nearby, so they can come back in the summer time. We still have roots here, so it keeps us coming back."

Stepan and Murray were happy to greet their guest in Ward's office after practice.

"Any time a head coach comes in to watch you practice on a week day, randomly, that's always a good feeling to know that at least he knows you're on the radar," said Stepan.

Shattuck's senior duo followed the path of former teammate and friend Brock Montpetit, who played for SSM last year and committed to the Badgers.

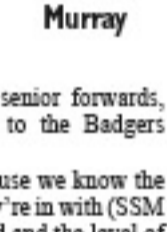
"(Montpetit) committed first and then we toured and loved the place and thought the whole set up with the coaching staff and everything worked out perfectly for us, too," said Murray. "It works out having your friends going there—it's the perfect situation."

Stepan and Murray are currently roommates at SSM and learned Thursday that tradition will carry on in Madison next season.

"It's going to be fun," Murray said. "I can't wait. I haven't played in front of a crowd anywhere near that size. It's going to be a complete culture shock I guess, going from Shattuck to a big school like that, but it's going to be fun."



Stepan



Murray