



From
the Hart

Bobby Hart

A game for the ages

Shattuck alumni reunite to share unique bond

FARIBAULT — It was clear from the drop of the puck Saturday at the Shattuck-St. Mary's Ice Arena that this wasn't your typical hockey game.

Bill Leech, class of 1947, dropped the ceremonial first puck to start the annual SSM alumni hockey game. New Jersey Devils star Zach Parise, class of 2002, took the draw.

This was a game where a school, tradition, memories and passion for hockey was enough to connect senior citizens and NHL players. This was a game for the ages—all ages.

"It's a great feeling," said Terry McDonough, SSM class of 1958, as he awaited his next shift on the bench Saturday. "I just thought I better come back and accept this invitation to play in the alumni tournament while I'm still young enough to make it here on my own."

McDonough, who turns 70 in July, made the trip all the way from Calgary. Now, he was sitting within a few feet of teammate Kyle Okposo, a New York Islanders forward who played his final year at SSM in 2005.

Only at Shattuck is it possible for a man as old as McDonough to play alongside an NHL star without flinching.

"It's awesome," Okposo said of the experience. "It was such a diverse group that we had out there today; all great guys. It's just interesting to learn about the traditions and the way things used to be."

The ice was littered with both current and former pros and Division I college hockey players, who treated a packed crowd of SSM alumni to plenty of moments worthy of some 'oohs and ahhs.' But the highlights of this game went way past a pretty goal or a clutch save. This was about fun.

"It's more of a social outing than it is a hockey game," Okposo said. "It's kind of a family almost. After you leave, when you come back, it's like seeing your brothers and sisters again. It's really neat."

Parise, who was reunited with former University of North Dakota teammates Brady Murray and Chris Porter, said he was happiest sharing stories with old friends.

"We never get to play together anymore so it's a lot of fun," said the Devils' leading scorer. "I wouldn't miss this."

He hasn't in the last four years.

Although the game lacked the seriousness and high intensity many of the players are accustomed to, flashes of their nature showed at times.

See ALUMNI on B2



NHL players Kyle Okposo, left, and Zach Parise, right, battle for position Saturday during the Shattuck-St. Mary's alumni hockey game. (Bobby Hart/Daily News)



Terry McDonough, a Shattuck St. Mary's alumnus from the class of 1958, enjoys a laugh with some teammates on the bench during the SSM alumni hockey game Saturday at the SSM Ice Arena. (Bobby Hart/Daily News)

▶ ALUMNI/from Page B1

With about two minutes left in the high-scoring pond hockey-style game, Parise hooked Murray down to the ice and skated off as the two chirped back and forth.

That was the highlight of the day for Okposo, who was on Murray's team.

"We were trying to make it tight and Zach hooked him all the way down the ice," Okposo said. "That was pretty good."

"You can see, we were kind of floating around all game, but it starts to get intense towards the end," Parise said with a smile, revealing the gap left after his two top teeth were knocked

out in the NHL playoffs against the New York Rangers in April. "The competitiveness comes out in us."

Parise's team ended up beating Okposo and McDonough's team 11-8. But as all the players loitered around the rink to mingle with lifelong classmates and friends, it was clear nobody wanted this game to be over.

"Just being back here and seeing everybody," McDonough said as he tried to take it all in. "Shattuck was a great part of my life."

— Sports Editor Bobby Hart may be reached at 333-3129.