

HOCKEYS BEST KEPT SECRET

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Shattuck-St. Mary's

continues to pump out
some of the world's
elite hockey talents.

Jason Clark



At first glance, it looks like the tail end of any typical high school hockey practice in Minnesota, “The State of Hockey”. After an afternoon of sprinting up and down the ice, polishing power play units and discussing game plans, fatigued teenage boys take some extra shots on goal before filtering off the ice and into the locker room. Eventually only senior Jason Clark remains, working on some last-minute stick-handling as he glides through the neutral zone. But he’s not alone. The eyes of some of the best hockey players in the world are fixed on him. NHL stars Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews and Zach Parise are among the many Shattuck-St. Mary’s alumni immortalized on the school ice arena’s wall of fame, serving as a monument of evidence: There’s nothing “typical” about this place.

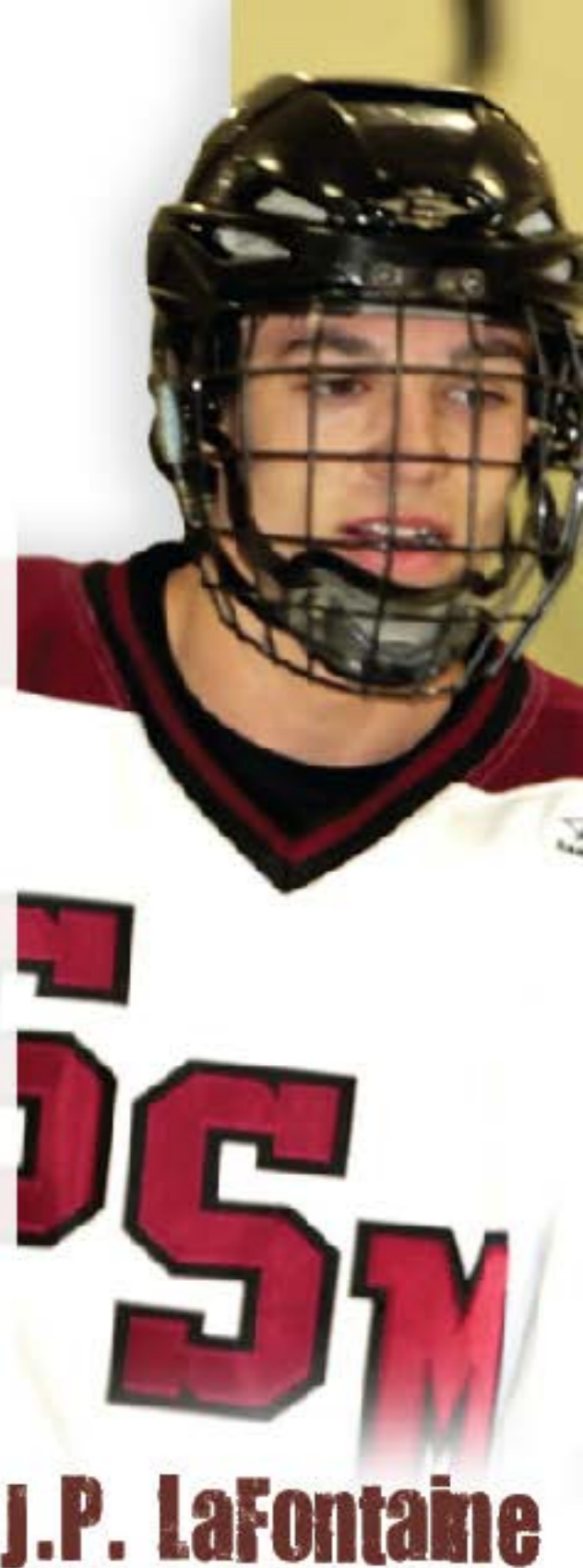
Shattuck-St. Mary’s, a co-ed Episcopal boarding/independent college preparatory school (grades 6-12) tucked away in the rural town of Faribault (population 25,000), was established in 1858 and organized its first high school hockey team in 1925. It’s more than a mash of syllables. Following the vision of former SSM hockey

director and retired NHL player Craig Norwich, SSM separated from the Minnesota State High School League in 1993 to include a full schedule of USA Hockey games and tournaments. The program picked up momentum three years later when it hired former NHL player, coach and Canadian Olympian, J.P. Parise (Zach’s father) as the new hockey director. The former Minnesota North Star then hired Andy Murray, who coached SSM to its first Tier I Boys U18 National Championship in 1999 before leaving to take the job as coach of the Los Angeles Kings. Current Director of Hockey and prep team Head Coach Tom Ward was hired by Parise as Murray’s replacement for the following season, and the Shattuck boys prep team has since added five more national banners. The SSM Sabres hockey program now has eight teams at various age levels—including a girls prep team with four national titles in the last five years—that play a seven-month schedule of 50 to 70 games per season.

Small Town, Big Names

Shattuck, which has an annual enrollment of about 400 students—almost half of whom play hockey—has been called many things: a hockey “factory”, “mecca” or “cult”. Larry Horstman, SSM’s hockey operations coordinator, has his own take: “We’re probably the best-guarded secret.” Come again? How can a program with so much national and worldwide success be a secret? “Maybe it’s a little by design,” explained Horstman. “I think that when you do have success, everybody kind of shoots for you, and that’s okay. But I think you have to kind of walk that very fine line of not flying it, and we don’t. I think we get enough accolades just simply going about our business. Really, the best salesmen in our program are the kids that go through here.”

Elite salesmen they are. Playing the name game with Shattuck alumni can quickly turn into Six Degrees of (insert your favorite NHL star here). To sum it up, seven former SSM players represented their country at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. Jack Johnson of the Los Angeles Kings and Ryan Malone of the Tampa Bay Lightning joined Parise on the silver-medal U.S. team, while Crosby and Toews each scored goals in the title game for the gold-



medal Canadian team. Monique and Jocelyne Lamoureux, who topped the nation in collegiate scoring in 2009, were on the silver-medal U.S. women's team.

The sales pitches appear to be working. Shattuck has even earned the trust of hockey royalty. Wayne Gretzky sent his son Ty to play there in 2006. Mario Lemieux's daughter, Stephanie, currently plays there, as does Martin Brodeur's net-minding son, Anthony. Sidney Crosby's younger sister, Taylor, is planning on joining her friend Lemieux and enrolling this year. NHL Hall-of-Famer Pat LaFontaine's brother John is SSM's athletic director. John's son (Pat's nephew) J.P. was a senior leader on the team this year. "The hockey world is not very big," Ward explained. "It's a small community. It's a very intertwined community. If you've got something that's unique and hopefully something that people think is good, people find out about it real quick."

And not only have prestigious pro hockey elite played at Shattuck; they keep coming back for more. It's not uncommon to see NHL stars return to Faribault over the summer or holiday breaks to work out and skate. "I think that speaks volumes to the experience they had at our school and in this city," Ward said. "People who are in the hockey community kind of take it for granted, but these guys are just normal Joe guys for the most part, and there's not big egos involved like some of the other sports. They can roll in here with a pair of jeans and a ball cap on and be just one of the guys, regardless if they're a superstar in the NHL or what have you."

For the past three summers, SSM has hosted a celebrity hockey game to raise money for the Faribault Hockey Association. Shattuck alumni return home and often bring friends. For example, Parise recruited Devils linemate and Team USA captain Jamie Langenbrunner, while SSM alum Drew Stafford brought along Buffalo Sabres teammate and leading goal scorer Thomas Vanek. "You start name dropping some guys and you'd be naming off a few pretty good NHL players," said Stafford, the 13th draft pick in 2004. "It just shows you the connection that you have once you leave there.

Some of my best friends that I'm going to have for the rest of my life are guys I went to high school with and played with."

The Shattuck Connection

Stafford, whose father Gordie coaches the SSM prep girl's team, was joined by Parise and a large core of SSM players that also played college hockey for the University of North Dakota (UND) Fighting Sioux. It's not rare to see a recruiting pipeline attached to Shattuck, as Division I college and NHL scouts flock to observe the newest crop of talent each year. Whereas UND used to almost exclusively benefit from Shattuck's spoils, lately the University of Wisconsin and Badger head coach Mike Eaves has got in on the action, with three ex-Shattuck players on his roster in 2010 and four in 2009. And why shouldn't he? Eaves coached the SSM prep team from 1994-96, his sons Ben and Patrick (Detroit Red Wing) both played there, and his brother, Murray, is head coach of the SSM Midget AAA boys team. "I think that good schools know what Shattuck can bring, and they want to get in there early," said Eaves, whose boys have a home in Faribault. "When they come out of that school with Tommy Ward, not only do they play hard, they're asked to play intelligently and they're part of the team, so they bring that with them. They come from that culture, and that's a good culture to come from. It's one that we try to emulate (at Wisconsin)."

One of Eaves' stars at Wisconsin, sophomore Derek Stepan, may be the newest poster child for Shattuck's secret to success. Along with current Badger teammate Jordy Murray (Andy's son) and UND sophomore David Toews (Jonathan's brother), he helped the SSM Sabres win their first ever back-to-back national titles in 2007 and 2008. Stepan followed that up by captaining the U.S. National Junior Team to a gold medal at the 2010 IIHF World Junior Championship, finishing as the tournament's leading point-getter and following in the footsteps of Parise, who led the U.S. to its first World Junior Championship as the tournament MVP in 2004. Parise's coach

Tom Ward



in that memorable win over Canada: Mike Eaves. Stepan's assistant coach six years later: Tommy Ward. "It's the environment," Stepan, the New York Rangers' 51st pick of the 2008 NHL entry draft, said of what makes Shattuck so special. "You're always around hockey, and you get real close to the group of guys that you have. You have 20 buddies on the team that you're in class with every day. You live in the dorms with them. The environment is hockey, hockey, hockey."

Growing Good People

There's more to Shattuck than just hockey. "School is very difficult here, and the day is difficult for the kids," Ward said. "There are a lot of people that want the best out of them at every turn. And to come to our school and be successful as an athlete and a student, you have to have a lot of self-discipline and time management skills. And if you don't have those, you learn them real quickly." Because of Shattuck's busy national and global schedule, players are often studying and doing homework on the bus or in hotel rooms. "As a person, it forces you to kind of grow up a little bit and learn how to fend for yourself on your own," said Shattuck alum and Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Casey Borer. "It's one of those unique situations where you move away from home when you're 14-15 years old and you have to learn to make the right decisions and become a good person right away."

Stafford still carries with him a famous mantra that J.P. Parise—who moved on to become general manager of the Des Moines Buccaneers of the USHL in 2008—once shared with new Shattuck players: "If you can do one thing, be a good guy." Ward keeps it as a staple in the program today. "That can translate to many things: just being a good, hard-working guy," Stafford explained. "It's something that you can take with you wherever you go. You can go there and develop your skills and what not, but more importantly, it's more of the overall attitude when I was there that there's a lot of hard work involved as well. It's not just working on skills; it's developing your competitive spirit, as Tom Ward would say."

Developing a good, hard-working person is the SSM hockey program's number one priority, even before hockey. Horstman said that's because the chances of becoming the next NHL star out of the program are still slim. "It's not easy," said Horstman, who has

coached the Bantam Tier I team for nine years. "One of the first things that they're told is that this place does not have a magic wand that we tap you with and all of the sudden you're going to the NHL. The only thing that we can do is provide the structure and opportunity." Shattuck won't cut a player, Horstman added. But once a player is accepted into the program, there's no guarantee of what team—the boys have four midget teams and two bantams—he will play for. "When you enroll, you throw your hat in the ring just like Zach Parise and Sid Crosby did," Horstman said. "It's your work ethic and it's you that's going to bring success."

The Next Generation

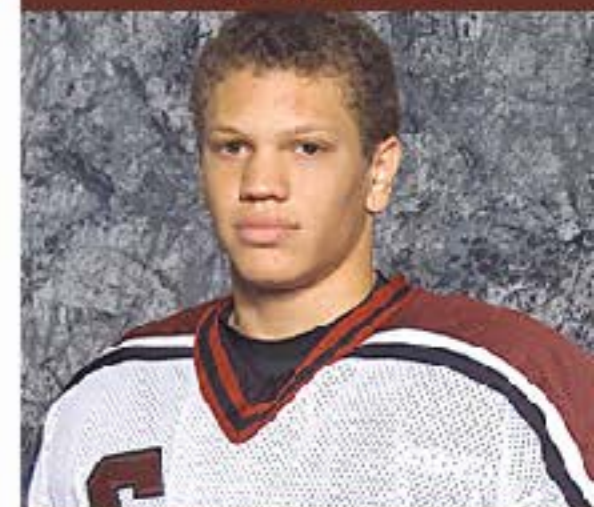
The last player off the ice following the Sabres' afternoon practice appears to have the makings of both a good, hard-working person and a talented hockey player. It is this combination that made Jason Clark the newest Shattuck recruit committed to Eaves and the University of Wisconsin, which lost to Boston College in the 2010 NCAA Championship. Clark, No. 81 in the NHL's Central Scouting Rankings, along with fellow senior leaders and future WCHA college players Joe Babarasa—No. 54, committed to the University of Minnesota Duluth—and J.P. Lafontaine—committed to Mankato State University—will soon be the newest crop of SSM alum to join the college hockey ranks.

Clark was able to get an inside look of what it takes to get to the next level when training with Stafford, Parise and New York Islanders forward/SSM alum Kyle Okposo last summer. "It was so fun to see them go through their typical day and watch how they handle themselves and what allows them to do it so well," Clark said. "It's relevant. They work so hard in the workout room; it's obvious why they're so good on the ice. They're always focused. They're always mentally passionate about it. They're always zoned in. That was the best experience I ever had, hockey-wise."

Clark appears destined for more memorable hockey experiences to come, beginning with his upcoming freshman year at Wisconsin. And thanks to coach Eaves and a couple players—Stepan and Murray—who share the Shattuck secret, he won't be alone.



SIDNEY CROSBY



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JON TOEWS