

Lifting them up

Raising of Ryan Clowe's jersey boosts spirits at tournament opening

By Craig Westcott
The Irish Loop Post

Organizers with the Southern Shore Minor Hockey Association found a special way to mark the opening of the Midget D Easter tournament, which they hosted this year: They used the occasion to raise the jersey of former Breaker and Fermeuse native Ryan Clowe to the rafters of the arena in Mobile.

On hand for the ceremony, in addition to Ferryland MHA Keith Hutchings and other special guests, were Clowe's parents Jen and Tony Clowe and even his grandmother, Alice Clowe.

Arena manger and long time senior hockey volunteer Kenny Williams told the dozens of players on the ice and the hundred or so people in the stands that Clowe is an inspiration to all hockey players.

"Ryan is proof that if you want something bad enough, you go after it and you don't stop until that job is completed," Williams said.

Williams encouraged the players to not lose sight of the real purpose of the game, which is to have fun and show respect for one another

and their coaches.

Also on hand to offer his thoughts on Clowe was legendary Southern Shore Breaker Andy Sullivan, who actually coached Clowe a number of times during his early days playing hockey in the Southern Shore minor hockey system.

"He loved the game from a very young age and he played every chance he could," recalled Sullivan. "Whether it was ice hockey or ball hockey, he always seemed to have a hockey stick in his hands."

Sullivan said Clowe's parents were very supportive, which was important to his success. Clowe himself was always a very skilled player who worked hard, giving it his best effort, Sullivan added.

After peewee, Clowe starting playing in the Mount Pearl system, then Triple A with the St. John's Maple Leafs.

"I remember watching Ryan at the Atlantic Triple A midget championships in Mount Pearl," said Sullivan. "I was sitting with Bill Rielly, who was coaching Moncton in the Maritime Junior League and I asked him who he was scouting. He

quickly answered Ryan Clowe, whom he thought was the best midget player in the country."

Rielly was hoping to draft Clowe before other hockey interests realized just how good he was.

Clowe ended up playing half a season in Moncton before moving on to the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League for two and a half years, averaging over a point a game. He was then drafted in the sixth round by the San Jose Sharks. The Sharks sent him to their farm affiliate in Cleveland for two years where he eventually earned a permanent spot on the NHL club's roster back in San Jose.

"He has been a very effective and consistent player over the past few seasons," said Sullivan. "He brings a rare combination of skill and toughness, which is very hard to find in players today. He has brought a lot of pride to the Southern Shore and when you watch him on the San Jose power play with Joe Thornton, Patrick Marlowe and Rob Blake, you can't help but be proud that he's from the Southern Shore. You can see the confidence that he has in his ability and



Southern Shore Minor Hockey vice president Mike Ryan, left, helps Ryan Clowe's parents Tony and Jen Clowe raise their son's jersey to the rafters at the arena in Mobile. The San Jose Shark grew up in Fermeuse and while his team faced early elimination in the play-offs this season, he is expected to get a warm reception when he returns to the Shore this summer.

the determination he has in his play."

Sullivan said the work ethic that Clowe inherited from his parents, and especially his grandfather Os Clowe, sets him apart. His fitness level and strength is in the top 10 percent of all athletes.

"But most importantly, Ryan had a dream which he followed and after years of dedication and hard work he is living that dream today," Sullivan added. "The story that Ryan Clowe is writing should be an inspiration to every hockey player in this province. I have a feeling

that this honour being bestowed on Ryan tonight is just the beginning of what will be a long list of accomplishments during a successful and rewarding NHL career."

After Sullivan's speech, the players and fans watched a video presentation taped in San Jose where Clowe was preparing for the first round of the NHL playoffs against the Anaheim Ducks.

Clowe thanked the people of the Southern Shore for "the honour and privilege" of having his jersey lifted to the rafters in Mobile.

Clowe said he can't de-

scribe how important it has been to have the support of the people he grew up with on the Southern Shore.

"You are such great people," said Clowe. "Every time I step on the ice I know I have extra support from you guys back there."

Like Williams. Clowe encouraged the players at the tournament to have fun and work hard.

Clowe said he is looking forward to returning home this summer and seeing the jersey.

"Thank you very much. I can't express how much this means to me."

Breakers dominate at midget tournament

They were the dominant team throughout the Midget D All Newfoundland Minor Hockey tournament, but exceptional goaltending by a squad from CBR robbed the Southern Shore Breakers of a championship win on home ice.

The Breakers went into the championship game with five wins and no losses under their belts, having beaten the CBR team earlier 6 - 1.

But this time, goaltender Tyler Hennessey wasn't letting anything in, staving off round after round of shots and helping CBR eke out a 2-1 victory.

"He robbed us," allowed tournament organizer Mike Ryan. "They had about 13 or 14 shots and we had about 65 shots on them. He stood on his head. He got player of the game, you've got to give him credit, he was the difference."

Despite the final score, Breakers' organizers, players and parents were delighted with the tournament.

"It was a great game and a great tournament," Ryan said.

Other teams in the tournament included the CeeBees, Goulds, and St. John's.

Ryan said there was a lot of positive feedback on the new, enlarged hospitality room and the great food provided by the Breakers' parents.

"We got really good reviews on our Southern Shore hospitality, they were amazed at how good it was," said Ryan.

On a personal note, Ryan said the tournament was a great way to wind up nine years on the executive of the Breakers' minor hockey executive. He intends to stick with just coaching next year.

Everything about the tournament went smoothly, he said, and the Breakers even managed to make a few dollars to go towards next season.

"It's a plug for minor hockey because a lot of the time all you hear is the bad news," Ryan observed.



Deidre Williams sings the Ode to Newfoundland to open the 2008-09 Midget D All Newfoundland hockey tournament held at the Southern Shore Arena in Mobile during Easter.