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Q&A from NJP

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Covering New Jersey Ice Hockey

PLAYER PROFILE

This edition features

“FORMER” ST. AUGUSTINE PREP and “CURRENT” USHL CHICAGO STEEL FORWARD

DOM MORRONE

Tell us about yourself? What are your hobbies or interests?

I grew up in Washington Twp. and have lived there my whole life. I spend my off season in Sea Isle City at the beach. Some hobbies are lifting, open hockey with my buddies, reading and running (I don't enjoy this hobby ha)

How long have you been playing ice hockey? Tell us what youth teams and levels you played?

I started playing hockey around 6 or 7. I started off playing AA with the Gladiators and Hollydell Hurricanes. Then I moved on to AAA in 8th grade with Jr. Flyers out of West Chester, PA. I played there until I graduated.

Who was your greatest hockey influence as you grew up

Eric Lindros. The guy was a stud.

Who was your favorite coach on youth teams prior to High School and why?

I would have to say Gerry Marks. He was my coach bantam minor and major year. He was all about having fun and developing our skating. Younger guys don't want to work on systems and break-outs, we just want to play games and have fun and that's what we did.

What was the most exciting game you have ever played in?

In high school, every time we played Eustace, it was a battle. The rink would be packed and the games were always intense. My favorite game against them would have to be for the Hachen Cup my Jr. year. They beat us twice previously and then we upset them in the championship. That was milestone victory. After the win, the guys in the room started to believe in the team and we knew we had something special.

Who are your favorite role models?

Mike Richards of the Flyers is awesome. I try to base my game off him as much as possible being an agitating center.

Do you view yourself as a role model for younger players?

I think so. There are so many junior teams and opportunities now. I always try to voice my opinion and share experiences with the younger guys so they make the right decision and take the right path hockey wise.



St. Augustine had arguably the best season in NJ high school hockey history. When you think back about the 2006/07 season, what were your best memories?

Going 23-0-0 is just an unbelievable feeling to this day. I miss showing up to the rink for practice with those guys shooting around and having fun. It was an awesome run. Every kid on that team gave it everything they had every night and that's what that made the difference. There wasn't a better feeling than holding up that State Championship trophy after we beat St. Peters.

Your St. Augustine team was absolutely loaded with talent. Yourself, Crowe, Stern, Macalino, Casale, Mara, Healey and many more contributed to the first undefeated season in state history. Your final three wins were against perennial Gordon powers Seton Hall, Delbarton, and St. Peters. Can you describe the sequence of events and preparation for those last three games?

Seton Hall was our first true test. The previous year Delby tied it up on us with a minute and beat us in OT, so we had bad memories in the quarter finals from the year before. We were in control and before you know it, the games tied. They were a good team but we stuck together and we pulled out the victory. Next game against Delby was a battle. That was our championship. We wanted revenge for over a year and finally we had our chance. I think we saw almost every team play and we felt that if anyone could compare talent wise, it was Delby. The game was neck and neck with each team having lucky bounces for goals. They tied it up late and again we were stuck. Everyone on the bench was thinking last year, déjà vu all over again. Macolino drove the net hard and the rebound popped out to Mara and we won it in OT. The championship against St. Peters was our final challenge. Our perfect season on the line. Leading up to the game we constantly stressed that without this win, our season meant nothing, that we had to win at all costs. Healy played awesome like he did the entire year. Casale and Ferry shut the door defensively and Stern fed Crowe who finished a beautiful breakaway to win the game with under 2 minutes.

Your celebration after your state championship victory at Mennen was something else. We saw your reactions on the ice. What was it like back in the locker room and the next days after that record breaking win?

The feeling was overwhelming and surreal. It felt great to win and be champions, but even better to silence all of our critics. Those games we wanted to win, but even more to prove everyone wrong who said we couldn't do it. I still have people ask me about the season today.

What was it like playing for Coach Fingerhut?

Tim was a players coach. Everyone respected him and trusted his coaching. He was great with the seniors and the captains. He knew we wanted to win more than anything. He put the pieces together and led us to victory.

You are basically living the dream of almost every NJ high school player being selected to play in USHL for the Chicago Steel. What advice do you have for the NJ high school hockey player community as they progress through their careers?

Don't take it for granted. Enjoy every minute of it and play your hardest. You never know whose watching. Don't let anyone tell you you're not good enough.

How were you recruited by the Steel?

Through midget major AAA with the Jr. Flyers.

Which USHL coach have you been most impressed with and why?

I would have to say our coach at the Steel Steve Poapst. It was his first season with the team and it was a good one. He turned the program around completely and won Coach of the Year in the process. He developed and taught me so much about the game that I didn't even know existed. When you get to the higher levels, your talent can only take you so far. It doesn't matter how fast you are, or how hard you can shoot because everyone can do it just as good if not better. It's the players who think and make the right decisions. They are the ones who separate themselves from the crowd.



Moving from NJ to Chicago to play for the Steel is a once in a lifetime experience but must also present several challenges. Can you tell us about this experience?

Waking up everyday going to the rink is a challenge. Every workout and practice is a battle, but as a team you grow. You become family because you're with these guys everyday for hours competing against one another. However, the overall experience is unreal. The team takes care of all your equipment and sticks which is awesome. Your on the road a lot, but its fun. You cant beat showing up in Lincoln and playing a pack house of 6,000 screaming fans.

What is the craziest thing you have seen happen at a game you played in?

There are some definite NHL'ers in the league, but I just think some of the fights I have seen were gruesome. Our goalie had 2 fights with 2 knockouts this year.

Can you tell us your plans for College hockey in the future?

Right now I have been just weighing all of my options. I have 3 to 4 offers already. I think I am going to wait until after the Fall Classic (USHL kick off tournament) to make any decisions. I want to be fully confident that I am making the right choice..

What do you think is the most important quality for a HS player to have in order to succeed at the next level?

Skill of course, but they want a player who's going to battle every shift and put it on the line every game. That's so important.

Do you think you will ever coach hockey in the future?

I am going to coach St. Augustine to a perfect 24-0-0 season after college. Sorry Tim.

Is hockey still fun?

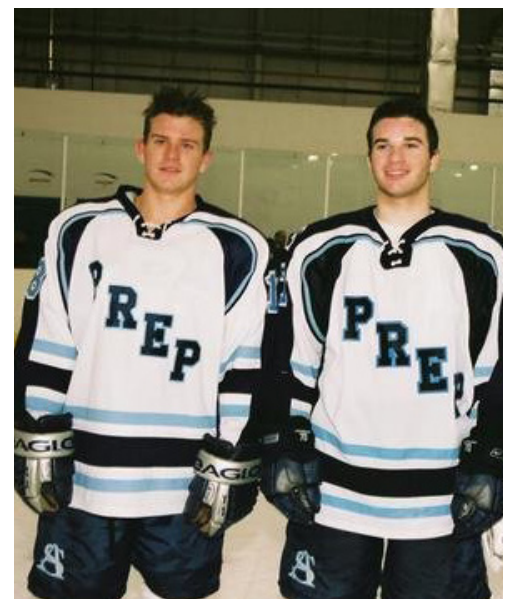
I love playing hockey, but at the same time it's a business now. It gets hard at times, but when you have a great group of guys in the room it makes it so much better. Coach is laid back and is always pulling pranks on us. Every Tuesday we watch the game tapes from the weekend. He makes a highlight reel of all the bloopers and gives an award for the best turnover or the best fall. That's what makes coming to the rink fun.

If you could script the next few years, what would happen in regards to your hockey career?

College of course. I would love to win a NCAA championship. Maybe go undefeated. We will see what happens.

If you could change one thing that occurred in the last 5 years, what would it be?

My jr. year we lost to Delby in OT. I still have nightmares of that game. I would for sure want to know what would have happened if we won that game.



Linemates Kevin Crowe (Left) and Dom Morrone (Right) of St Augustine Prep



I was at the Championship game at Mennen Arena in 2007 and the SA fans outshined St. Peters Prep Marauder Nation which is a major feat? What were the fans like during your championship run?

The fans at Prep are the best in the state. The Spirit club and Father Paul Galetto organized it all, including transportation for the away and home games. It's a great feeling to go out there knowing all your friends and classmates are behind you in every game. They played such a critical role in our success. I would rather play in front of those fans today than any other fanbase out here in the USHL.

One of the keys to your great success in that championship year was the goaltending of Kevin Healey. Can you tell us about your relationship with Kevin and the type of player and person he is?

Kev and I had a lot in common coming into our senior year. We both felt that it didn't matter how many shutouts he had or how many goals I scored, people only remember wins and losses. As leaders of the team, we stressed unselfishness, that it takes everyone to win the game, not one person. Kevin played awesome all year, especially in the playoffs, and was awarded NJ Player of the Year. We couldn't have done it without him.

