

Tribune-Review
Penguins LIVE

Parents of NHL player killed in crash forgive teammate

By The Associated Press

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ELMIRA, Ontario -- Dan Snyder was buried in his hometown Friday, and the parents of the Atlanta Thrashers' player said they forgive the teammate charged in their son's death.

Members of the Thrashers, including Dany Heatley on crutches, joined friends and family at the private burial for the 25-year-old forward. Dozens of mourners hugged each other at the cemetery. Heatley, the driver in the car crash, had a cast on his right leg and red flower in his suit lapel.

Graham Snyder read a statement after the service attended by players and hundreds of others in Elmira, 70 miles from Toronto.

"We are all human beings, and human beings make mistakes," Snyder said in an even voice. "We want you to know we do not lay blame on Dany Heatley for the accident that took our son from us.

"Forgiveness is also a part of being human, and we are here to support him through this difficult time. There is nothing to be gained from harboring resentment."

Among those attending the service were NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, union president Bob Goodenow, Toronto Maple Leafs president Ken Dryden, Leafs players Tie Domi and Bryan McCabe and former teammates from Snyder's minor league teams in Chicago and Orlando. The 90-minute service was broadcast on speakers to those outside.

Snyder died Sunday, six days after a sports car driven by Heatley crashed into a wall in Atlanta, throwing both men from the vehicle. Heatley, who needed knee surgery after the crash, has yet to comment publicly. He is charged with vehicular homicide and other counts.


Snyder's family and friends walked to the packed Elmira Mennonite Church, with young players tapping their sticks on the street in a hockey tribute as they passed.

Hymns and prayers filled the church, and Snyder's older brother, Jake, recalled how as youngsters they simulated a rink in their basement, complete with the singing of the Canadian national anthem.


"You spent your childhood years trying to be like me," Jake Snyder said, "and I'll spend the rest of my life trying to be like you."

Snyder grew up in Elmira and played junior hockey in nearby Owen Sound. Yesterday, police cordoned off the main road through the town of 7,800 to prevent a traffic jam as thousands converged.

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"We remember Dan Snyder," read a sign in one shop window, while a photo store across the street displayed jerseys and photos from his career.

The Thrashers won their season opener Thursday night over Columbus, and they gave the puck from the winning goal to Snyder's family.

"We're going to be playing for him," Thrashers general manager Don Waddell said. Asked about Heatley, Waddell said the player was "devastated."

"He's a 22-year-old good kid, a good kid who made a mistake," Waddell said. "It's going to be a long healing process for him."

Heatley, an All-Star in his second NHL season last year, is out indefinitely after breaking his jaw and tearing two knee ligaments. Waddell expects Heatley to return to the ice this season if legally permitted to do so.

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