

TANNER CATALANO

Tanner's life ended tragically on the morning of Sunday, March 18th, during a traffic accident. Tanner was driving to work at 7:00 am when he was involved in a collision at the intersection of Brown and Val Vista. Tanner was not wearing his seat belt and consequently suffered major head trauma which overcame Tanner at 2:00 pm later that day. Tanner was 29 years old.

Tanner Catalano was born on November 11th, 1977 in Iowa, but did most of his growing up in Bismarck, North Dakota. It was here that he played for the Super Sophomore line on his high school team which eventually led to Junior A Hockey in Wyoming and California and finally a college hockey career in Buffalo, NY. Coaches at every level liked Tanner's speed, but loved the heart he put into every game.

Everyone at the Alltel Ice Den knew and liked Tanner. Not only was he a stand out on the ice, but he was a fixture at the rink whether he was scoring for a game or waiting for his to start or hanging out after his game finished. He played regularly on our team, The Dirty Rats, on Friday night as well as Team Eh? in the Monday night elite league. From time to time he could also be found playing in other leagues when someone was able to



convince him to play. Everyone wanted him on their team.

Over the years, a few of us got to know Tanner around the rink and eventually he consented to play with us on our Friday night team. We all knew how good a player Tanner was, but his quiet demeanor and contagious smile and laugh made him a welcomed addition to the locker room banter. After a few seasons Tanner became a leader not only on, but also off, the ice. He helped organized our yearly Vegas trip and was always on the phone trying to locate a goalie or players if we needed last minute subs.

Of course hockey was only one aspect of Tanner's life; and outside of hockey Tanner was also a son to John and Kim as well as a nephew and a cousin and a caretaker. It seems the dedication and loyalty he learned from his family he passed on to his teammates and friends. Many thought of Tanner as his best friend.

Tanner played in two California Hockey Productions tournaments recently. The first was with Team Corona out of Chicago in the Arizona Classic in which they were a runner up in their division. The last tournament we played with Tanner was The Las Vegas Classic Tournament. Tanner was instrumental in organizing a team for this tournament and

he was able to include two college hockey buddies from Buffalo (Pat and Vinny) to play with us. With Tanner and his friends' help we were able to win our division which seems a fitting farewell to Tanner.

Tanner's importance to the hockey community here in Arizona is also evident by the support his family and teammates have received since his death. Besides players stitching an emblem for Tanner on their jerseys or attaching a sticker to their helmets, The Ice Den has set up a scholarship fund in his name called The Catalano Scholarship Fund. This fund has been set up to help promote the sport of hockey in Arizona for younger fans of the game. Since Tanner's accident, The Alltel Ice Den has held a hockey tournament, is planning a golf tournament for early September as well as divisional All-Star Games in Tanner's name. Support from our community has been overwhelming and already the fund has close to \$10,000 in proceeds. These funds will be used to buy equipment for children beginning to play the game, and for those who want to play the game but are unable to handle the financial commitment. It is our hope that through this Fund and the yearly events, Tanner's memory can continue to live in our hockey community.

