

Valentine, Chris

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NHL star returns home

By HENRY BURY
Staff reporter

Belleville native Chris Valentine, a National Hockey League rookie last season, returned home Tuesday to pay a visit to his first school and some of his former teachers.

Valentine spent Tuesday afternoon in Harry J. Clarke School, helping out with the presentations of awards to more than 100 students for their athletic and academic accomplishments.

Valentine, who will be 21-years-old in December, attended Harry J. Clarke from kindergarten to Grade 3, before moving to Montreal with his parents.

After playing junior hockey in Sorel, he went to Hershel and was called up in November with the Washington Capitals. In 60 games, he scored 30 goals and had 37 assists, making him the fourth leading scorer with the NHL club. He was also tied with Wayne Gretzky and Bryan Trottier with 18 power play goals.

Tuesday's visit to his first school was the second one in the past decade. Two weeks ago he dropped by and was asked to present the awards during the school assembly.

"I'm excited about coming back here. I've come back to see a couple of teachers. I was eight or nine when I left here so I don't remember that much about the school. I do remember playing cards along the wall in the corridor when I was in kindergarten. I also remember failing spelling bees," Valentine said.

Despite not being in the school for nearly a decade, Valentine said he's kept in touch with some of his former teachers and friends. One teacher in particular, Sharon Reid, who

taught him in Grades 2 and 3, has been the recipient of several letters from Valentine over the first few years after his leaving Belleville.

"Sharon was very good to me when I was in school," Valentine said.

"What I remember about him," said Reid, "was his athletic ability. We used to skate outdoors in the rink and he would outskate the older kids."

"I told my dad that I thought there's a person in my class who's going to make it in the NHL," she added.

"In class, he was very good in math and reading and he had a real sense of humor. He was always very modest. He was a good student and very popular in our school," the teacher recalled.

Valentine's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Eardley, still live in Belleville.

His parents now live in Ottawa, and he'll be staying there for the summer, until training camp in September.

Valentine, who played on a line with Ryan Walter and Dennis Maruk, said he's looking forward to his second year in the NHL.

"Playing with both Walter and Maruk worked out very well," he said.



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