

# Hockey player can move on with plea deal

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Stouffville's Patrick McEachen has pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct.

The plea stems from an incident at Clarkson University in Potsdam, N.Y., last summer, where Mr. McEachen, a hockey recruit for the school, along with two other male recruits, were accused of having sexual contact with a then-16-year-old female camper without her permission in a dormitory.

The three men were working at the school's hockey camp at the time of the incident. The men were originally charged with sexual misconduct and child endangerment,

both of which are misdemeanors in New York State.

Mr. McEachen maintained his innocence from the beginning and pleaded not guilty at his initial court appearance last October.

The guilty plea was entered via mail last month. This was the first plea agreement offered to Mr. McEachen by the Franklin County District Attorney.

"(Patrick took the plea agreement) because it's such a long drawn out process," said Dan McEachen, Patrick's father, in an interview with The Sun-Tribune Thursday. "(The trial) may have happened late this year or next year. We didn't want to wait two years.

Pat wanted to move on with his life."

The guilty plea is classified as a violation in New York State, which means Mr. McEachen does not have a criminal record and he is free to cross the Canada-United States border, according to the elder McEachen.

Mr. McEachen also received a one-year conditional discharge and is prohibited from enrolling at Clarkson, where he received a scholarship and enrolled last year. He also had to perform 200 hours of community service, something the family anticipated and Mr. McEachen has already completed.

During the past 10 months, Mr. McEachen helped out at the rookie camp of the Stouffville Spirit Jr. A team, for whom he played two seasons, volunteered at the Markham Salvation Army and participated in events in Wellington, near Belleville, where the 19-year-old played hockey for the Dukes last season.

This past year has been a tough one for the McEachen family.

"Pat's always been a great student, a good person. Never got in trouble. It just caught us off guard," Dan McEachen said. "Once you get over the embarrassment of it, you try to put yourself in a place where you're going to do good things and work hard."

And that is what Patrick McEachen has been doing.

Over the past few months, along with working at the family business, he has upgraded a couple of his high school credits, just in case a professional hockey career doesn't pan out.

"He wants to go to a (Canadian university) with a strong business school," Dan McEachen said.

For now, he remains a hockey player and

come this September, Mr. McEachen will suit up for the Mississauga St. Michael's Majors of the Ontario Hockey League. He has two years of junior eligibility remaining. The Majors will host the Memorial Cup tournament, the national junior championships, next spring.

*'They dropped both charges, which were serious charges, for a reason.'*

One of the other co-accused also took the same deal as Mr. McEachen, while the third man accused has his case pending in Potsdam Village Court.

While Mr. McEachen is trying to move on with his life, the three men, along with Clarkson University, still face a civil suit, which was filed by the girl's parents in June.

The suit alleges the university was negligent because the girl was enrolled in the hockey camp, therefore, the school was responsible for her at the time of the alleged incident, which took place in a school dorm room.

The suit also claims the school fostered an environment that promoted and encouraged inappropriate behaviour between staff and campers.

"Honestly, I don't understand why they're doing the civil suit, but that is what they do in America," Dan McEachen said. "The plea bargain they were given, it was given for a reason. They dropped both charges, which were serious charges, for a reason."

Derek P. Champagne, Franklin County's district attorney, was unavailable for comment.



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