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## NBC4i.com / Blue Jackets' Dean Evason chosen as Canada's coach for world championships

**By Orri Benatar – Apr. 30, 2025**

Columbus Blue Jackets head coach Dean Evason will be heading to Europe to coach for his country in the biggest annual international hockey tournament.

The team announced Wednesday that Evason has been chosen to be the head coach for Team Canada at the IIHF World Championships, which begin May 9. Joining Evason on his coaching staff is Blue Jackets assistant coach Steve McCarthy.

"It's always a tremendous honor to represent Canada and I am humbled and grateful to have this opportunity," said Evason. "I'm looking forward to working with Steve McCarthy and the rest of our coaching staff and players to do everything we can to win a gold medal in one of hockey's most prestigious tournaments."

Evason is fresh off his first season as the Blue Jackets head coach, nearly leading Columbus to its first playoff appearance since the 2019-20 season. The 60-year-old from Manitoba served as Canada's assistant coach at last year's world championships in Czechia, where the Canucks finished fourth.

He has also represented Canada as a player, helping lead the team to the 1997 world championship in Finland.

The 2025 IIHF World Championships are being held in Stockholm, Sweden at the Avicii Arena and the Jyske Bank Boxen in Herning, Denmark. Canada will play each of its seven group matches in Stockholm, beginning with a May 10 game against Slovenia. The tournament ends on May 25.

IIHF World Championships groups:

### Group A

- Canada
- Finland
- Sweden
- Slovakia
- Latvia
- Austria
- France
- Slovenia

### Group B

- Czechia
- Switzerland
- United States
- Germany
- Denmark
- Norway
- Kazakhstan
- Hungary

## The Athletic / Why coaching Team Canada has deep, long-held meaning for Blue Jackets' Dean Evason

**By Aaron Portzline – April 30, 2025**

On the morning after the Columbus Blue Jackets ended their season, the dressing room and back hallways of Nationwide Arena were buzzing. Some players packed up their locker belongings and got ready to head home for the offseason, while others milled about, mulling their next steps.

Coach Dean Evason didn't meet with every player, but he sat down for a face-to-face meeting with a few players, especially those who were leaving Columbus quickly. Those who stay year-round will likely grab coffee or lunch with the coach, he said.

In the middle of all this, Evason received a call from the senior vice president of hockey operations for Team Canada's national team, Scott Salmond, who was in search of a coach for the IIHF World Championships and wanted to touch base before Evason started making offseason plans of his own.

"If you could be patient with leaving or booking flights anywhere," Salmond told Evason, "there's a consideration for you with Team Canada."

Evason had just finished maybe his finest season as an NHL coach, leading the young, patchwork Blue Jackets to a surprising 40-33-9 record, a whopping 23-point improvement over the previous season. The Jackets were the last NHL club eliminated from the playoffs, learning their fate with one game left in the season.

The season had been positive and lifting on the whole, but the ending — coming oh-so-close, but not getting there — was deeply frustrating to Evason. He could use a lift.

Salmond provided the tease. Three days later, the follow-up call came.

"(Team Canada GM) Kyle Dubas called and asked if I would be interested," Evason said. "And I said, 'Yes, of course.' I didn't even have to think about it.

"I know there are different circumstances as to why guys turn it down. But to me, unless you're hurt, unless you're injured, unless you've got something of significance going on ... if you can still play hockey, why not play hockey? And to represent your country is such an honor. It didn't take any time. I just said yes."

Evason left Columbus on Tuesday, flying to Vienna, Austria, where Team Canada will have two practices and a tune-up game against Austria. Then it's on to Budapest, Hungary, where they'll play a second tune-up game, and then Stockholm ahead of the tournament, which runs May 9-25 in Sweden and Denmark.

There have been other players who are more intrinsically linked to their national teams than Evason is to Team Canada. In Canada, that's golden-goal scorers Sidney Crosby and Marie-Philip Poulin, as well as the legendary Paul Henderson.

But Evason's inclusion with Team Canada has taken place at some of the most important times in his career — a strong World Junior Championship in 1984, his final year of junior before he turned pro; a World Championships appearance that helped extend his pro career in 1997; and now, as he's gaining attention as one of the NHL's top coaches.

## The beginning and end

Evason was coming off a monster 1982-83 season with the Kamloops Blazers of the Western Hockey League. In 70 games, he scored 71 goals and had 93 assists, a 164-point season that, incredibly, was second in the WHL.

Still, Evason said, he wasn't a lock to make Team Canada's entry the following season at the World Juniors in Sweden.

"I made it as a right winger," said Evason, who had 6-3-9 in seven games in the tournament. "Mario Lemieux was hurt prior to coming and it gave me an opportunity, I think, to probably make the team.

"The tournament was funky. We finished fourth because there was no playoff, no medal rounds. It was just a round-robin on points and then it ended. We lost to Finland. We tied Russia. We lost to Czech Republic. But we really would have liked a medal round, you know?"

Evason, who was a fifth-round pick (No. 89) by the Washington Capitals in 1982, made his NHL debut a few months after that tournament, playing two games at the end of the season. He was off and running on an 803-game NHL career with Washington, Hartford, San Jose, Dallas and Calgary.

Over his 15-year career, Evason was a feisty, indefatigable forward who spent most of his time under the opponents' skin. For longtime Blue Jackets fans, think Tyler Wright.

Just as Team Canada was there at the start of Evason's pro career, so it was a big part of the end of his NHL playing days.

Evason's contract was bought out by the Calgary Flames following his 1995-96 season, in which he had seven goals and seven assists in 67 games. As the summer moved along, there were no NHL offers, just a few AHL contracts on the table with invitations to the NHL training camp.

"I was skating in the summer, staying in shape," Evason said. "(Longtime NHL coach Andy Murray) comes up to me on the ice one day — this was his camp I was skating at — and he asked what I was doing next season."

That started a conversation that brought Evason back into the fold with Team Canada. Back then, Canada maintained a team that played its own season, much like the barnstorming days of old. They'd play tournaments all over the world, anywhere they could find games.

Murray was the coach, and he brought Evason along as one of his players.

"There were a bunch of 18-to-24-year-olds on the team," Evason said. "We went to the Deutschland Cup (in Germany), the Spengler Cup (in Switzerland), the Izvestia Cup (in Russia), the Globen Cup (in Sweden) ... we even went to Japan to play the Japanese National Team, because it was right before the Olympics in Nagano.

"We went to like 11 or 12 countries. I just soaked it all up. I had been bought out by the Flames, so I wasn't worried about money. I was skating my a— off, working out ... I was in the best shape of my career."

That spring, the AHL's Houston Aeros wanted to sign Evason for their playoff run. When he told Murray of the offer, Murray played his trump card to keep him. "If you stay," he said, "I'll take you to the World Championships."

Evason was the only non-NHL player on Team Canada's roster, which included some generational NHL stars: Rob Blake, Owen Nolan, Keith Primeau, Chris Pronger, Mark Recchi, Geoff Sanderson and a 19-year-old Jarome Iginla. Not only was Evason on the team, but Murray named him captain.

“He gave me so much responsibility. He trusted me,” Evason said. “You could see where it could be a challenge, but Andy had my back in that area. Plus, I’d played in the league, right, and I was only one year removed. I played with a few of those guys, so there was a relationship.

“The transition wasn’t terrible. It was pretty natural, actually. And obviously it was a tremendous honor.”

Back then, the World Championships didn’t have a medal round. The two top teams played a three-game series to determine the champion. Canada lost the first game to Sweden, then came back to win the final two. Evason scored the 1-0 goal in the deciding game.

“A little wraparound,” Evason said. “I jammed a rebound in.”

Evason said he was planning to start his coaching career the following season, but his play with Team Canada — throughout the season, but especially in the Worlds — helped extend his playing days. He had two offers in Germany and one in Japan, he said.

He played two seasons in Germany before hanging up his skates.

### **Back in the fold**

It was 13 seasons between Evason’s Team Canada appearances as a player, first with World Juniors, then the World Championships. It took 27 more years before he was back in the fold in a different capacity.

Evason, who had been fired by the Minnesota Wild in November 2023, was hired last spring by Team Canada to be an assistant coach. Who hired him? Rick Nash, who holds considerable sway in the Blue Jackets’ front office, is currently the program’s director of hockey operations.

Team Canada, with Evason on coach André Tourigny’s staff, finished fourth in Czechia. But that experience left a mark.

First, with the Blue Jackets. Nash played a big part in the Blue Jackets’ coaching search last summer under new GM Don Waddell, and he had only good things to say about Evason, based on players who’d played under him in Minnesota and in the minors, but also on the first-hand knowledge he gained at the Worlds.

The Blue Jackets hired Evason last July. His personality — driven and demanding, but with a capacity for people skills — worked wonders in a dressing room that was craving discipline and guidance.

In turn, his performance with Columbus may have helped drive the point home with Team Canada. One day after the Blue Jackets’ season ended, Salmond called.

Evason’s coaching staff will include Calgary coach Ryan Huska, Nashville coach Andrew Brunette and Blue Jackets assistant coach Steve McCarthy. Evason had already divvied up responsibilities before he left Columbus for Vienna on Tuesday.

“Brunette will run the power play and the (offensive zone) routes and sequences,” Evason said. “Huska will run the penalty kill, the (zone) entries and faceoffs, and look after the centers. (McCarthy) runs the defense. We’re still waiting on a goalie coach, but we’re in the process of getting one.”

Evason will have two of his players — 20-year-old center Adam Fantilli and 22-year-old winger Kent Johnson — with him, too. For both players, this will already be their fourth time representing Team Canada, including twice in the World Championships.

Fantilli (31 goals) and Johnson (57 points) both had breakout seasons in Columbus.

“Just to see them play as they did throughout the season, but especially at the end of the season ... how hard they played, how sound they played in some very important games,” Evason said.

“The great thing here, with us getting to have this experience together, is that I can continue to coach them to play in the right way. Not just offensively, but to continue their growth as all-around players.”

Evason said he’s already made mental notes about how he’ll get this team ready to compete in the World Championships, which means everything to European hockey fans but is often an afterthought in North America, even in a hockey-mad Canada.

The fourth-place finish last season should provide fuel.

“No question, it’s a motivating factor,” Evason said. To the Europeans, a lot of times, this is their Stanley Cup. They’ll do anything to win, and that’s the message that I’ll be giving to the players early.

“The Latvian team will block shots with their faces in order to keep that thing out of the net. Their commitment, like the other clubs (in Europe), is very, very high. As NHL players, you’re honored to be there ... but you’d rather be in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

“So we have to find a way to dial it up. That’s my job.”

## **Sportsnet / Celebrini, Fantilli headline Canada's early world championship roster**

**By Sportsnet Staff – May 01, 2025**

A day after unveiling its coaching staff, Hockey Canada named its first 15 players who will suit up for the 2025 IIHF World Championship.

The forward group includes Macklin Celebrini (San Jose Sharks), Will Cuyllé (New York Rangers), Adam Fantilli (Columbus Blue Jackets), Tyson Foerster (Philadelphia Flyers), Barrett Hayton (Utah Hockey Club), Bo Horvat (New York Islanders), Kent Johnson (Blue Jackets), Travis Konecny (Flyers) and Ryan O'Reilly (Nashville Predators).

On defence, the list features Noah Dobson (Islanders), Ryker Evans (Seattle Kraken), Brandon Montour (Kraken), Travis Sanheim (Flyers) and MacKenzie Weegar (Calgary Flames).

Dylan Garand (Rangers) was the lone goaltender named.

Canada is coming off a fourth-place showing in the 2024 edition of the tournament, which the hosting Czechs won.

This year's tournament will be held from May 9 to 25 in Stockholm, Sweden, and Herning, Denmark.

Canada is set to open round-robin play on May 10 with a game against Slovakia at the Avicii Arena in Stockholm.

## **Sportsnet / Canada announces coaching staff for world championships**

**By Sportsnet Staff – April 30, 2025**

Hockey Canada has officially announced the coaching staff for the 2025 IIHF World Championship, with Columbus Blue Jackets head coach Dean Evason set to lead the bench.

Rounding out the staff are Nashville Predators head coach Andrew Brunette, Calgary Flames head coach Ryan Huska and Blue Jackets assistant coach Steve McCarthy.

Evason, 60, is fresh off an excellent year with the Blue Jackets after they outperformed their expectations and almost squeaked into the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

It was his first full season in Columbus, and he'll bring along his assistant, McCarthy, who will make his international debut after spending the past five seasons with the Blue Jackets.

Huska is also coming off a strong season with the Flames, his second with the club. He has previously coached Canada internationally in 2011 and 2012 with the World Junior program as an assistant.

Brunette has served as the Predators' head coach for the last two seasons and will also make his international debut.

The event begins on May 9, 2026, in Stockholm, Sweden, and general manager Kyle Dubas, along with the rest of the staff, are expected to announce the roster later this week.



## Cleveland.com / Cleveland Monsters drop first game of Calder Cup division semifinals, 3-2, to Laval Rocket

**By Matt Lofgren – April 30, 2025**

The Cleveland Monsters dropped game one of the North Division semifinals of the AHL Calder Cup playoffs, 3-2, to the Laval Rocket inside Rocket Arena on Wednesday night.

The best-of-five series picks back up on Friday night for game two.

Laval was the best team in the AHL during the regular season, finishing with an AHL-best 101 points. That was six points better than second-best Hershey, and 20 points better than the Monsters.

But on Wednesday, the Monsters went toe-to-toe with a fresh Rocket squad coming off an 11-day break between games and had chances to take the win.

After a scoreless first period, Joseph LaBate got things going for the Monsters with a power-play goal with just under eight minutes left in the second period. Offensive chances for the Monsters were limited for the rest of the period, opening the door for the Rocket to respond.

Scoring two goals in the final 3:51 of the second, the Rocket took a 2-1, with the second coming on the power play, lead into a crucial third period.

Monsters' goaltender Jet Greaves, who finished the year with a sensational run for the Columbus Blue Jackets, made a crucial error turning over the puck on a short pass in the Monsters' zone that the Rocket's Brandon Gignac intercepted, then found Owen Beck for a one-timer goal.

"We gotta help him out, talk to him, but if we don't have anything (then we) can't try to force plays and we gotta help our goaltender out with talk," Monsters head coach Trent Vogelhuber said. "Just gotta advance the zone. It's not fun, but sometimes we've just gotta punt it. (Greaves) is outstanding at handling the puck. Obviously he wanted to have that one back.

The goal put the Monsters in a 3-1 hole with just under 15 minutes to play in the third. The Monsters were able to get off a few good looks, but were denied by Jacob Fowler for most of the period.

Throwing the kitchen sink at the Rocket's tough defense, the Monsters got some hope not only for the game, but for the rest of the series when defenseman Denton Mateychuk netted his third goal of the playoffs with just over two minutes remaining to cut the lead to one.

Despite a 6-5 push in the final seconds of the game with a few looks, the Rocket came away with a game one victory built on defense.

"Real good defensive team, they are, but I thought the second period there where the game stalled for us a little bit," Vogelhuber said. "When we broke the puck out clean, dug in and got it past the blue line, we had some success. But that stretch there in the second period (we) got a little east-west-y and then they turned the three-quarter ice game on us, and we take a penalty, and they get that second goal.

"(We were) fairly even five-on-five, they probably had more zone time, but lots of things we can improve on, and we're right there one goal away.

The loss is Greaves' first since way back on March 17 against the New Jersey Devils, and the Monsters' first loss this postseason. The Rocket outshot the Monsters 32-25.

"I think we've got to stay in support so we can get the puck out of our zone so we're not defending," Vogelhuber said. "We got underwater there for minutes where (we) got stalled and then were chasing

the game and we had five defensemen for the entire game and they're underwater and trying to catch up there, so we've got to give them a little bit of help.

"They're hard to make plays (on) through the middle of the ice, they defend really well. They reload really well. So, we're gonna have to work for it, but lots of good. Lots of things we can build on and lots of things we can learn from as well."

Losing the penalty battle turned out to be costly for the Monsters as well. In Vogelhuber's eyes, his team needs to play their game, and not play into their opponent's.

"I thought we've got a little bit of room to improve there, take a slashing penalty in the back of somebody's legs and two stick penalties that aren't retaliatory, but unneeded," Vogelhuber said. "That's part of their game. Part of their DNA. There's guys on that team that are going to try to get under your skin, and you have to take a punch this time of year, you gotta let it go.

"That's the way they wanna play, so we've gotta keep our heads."

## The Associated Press / A legacy of hope and laughter for Gaudreau brothers as family, friends and hockey community grieve

**By Dan Gelston – April 30, 2025**

The family called him John. It wasn't until John Gaudreau played for Boston College that he picked up the "Johnny Hockey" nickname that followed him through 11 seasons in the NHL.

His mother, Jane, gleefully recalled the "Johnny Hockey" T-shirts and sing-song chants BC fans bestowed on their beloved wizard on the ice. At home in New Jersey, younger brother Matthew, who also played hockey for Boston College, and sisters Kristen and Katie couldn't help but tease their brother with the nickname as his popularity and All-Star career grew through stops in Calgary and Columbus.

Take one night during the NHL Awards in Las Vegas, just one family story out of thousands of favorites, when Gaudreau tried to keep a low public profile on a family outing. Katie wasn't having it out on the Strip, shouting for all to hear, "Johnny! Johnny Hockey!"

"I can see John's face getting redder and redder and redder," Jane Gaudreau said with a laugh. "You walk down the street and no one knows who you are until Katie started making this whole big thing."

Everything was fine for the family when they gathered last August for Katie's wedding. John and Matt were the groomsmen and Kristen the maid of honor. What happened next, the typhoon of shock and grief that rippled from New Jersey through the heart of the hockey community, has been well-documented over the last eight months. The night before the wedding, John, 31, and Matt, 29, died after they were hit by a suspected drunken driver while riding bicycles in the Delaware River country south of Philadelphia, leaving a family forever shattered, with not enough time to ever fully pick up all the pieces.

They try.

From births to hockey tributes, through Instagram pages dotted with photos from the family scrapbook and a new foundation, to a playground fundraising effort at the family's beloved school, the Gaudreaus have pushed through dark days when even getting out of bed seemed impossible. They pull through, pull together, just as they did as a family of six in South Jersey, and try to focus on a simple mantra: Live their lives to the fullest in honor of Matt and John.

There is more hardship ahead and dark days are going to come and go. The driver charged with killing the brothers, a man prosecutors described as having a history of alleged road rage and aggressive driving, still faces trial.

But as Jane Gaudreau details her dream of a new, adaptive playground for the special education students at the school where she works, it's the good times that stir the most memories. Like when John playfully threatened to stab Katie with a fork at a restaurant for not finishing a stack of pancakes and surprisingly — and gently — followed through.

It's the stories that lift the spirits of Jane, husband Guy and countless friends and teammates who went through their first hockey season in decades without two men who gave so much to their growing families and to the game.

"It's great to keep their memories alive," said their sister, Kristen Venello, who rocks her Blue Jackets hoodie as a speech assistant at Archbishop Damiano School. "It is sad. But you think about all the good things they did and that's all you can think about. And how much they can help us still."

## The project

Archbishop Damiano School was founded in 1968 for children with Down syndrome and now provides services for 125 students with special needs from ages 3 to 21. Jane Gaudreau's brother attended the school and their mother worked there for 44 years. Jane was hired in 1984 and is still a finance associate there. Kristen, the oldest daughter, has taught at the school for almost two decades. Katie used to assist with the kids when she could and the two Gaudreau boys volunteered at the school when they weren't playing hockey.

In death, they can perhaps leave a permanent legacy at Damiano outside family and hockey.

Kelsie Snow lost her husband, Chris, a former assistant general manager with the Calgary Flames, in 2023 to Lou Gehrig's disease. She called Jane with a suggestion on how to navigate life through perpetual grief: Keep busy. Find a project. Jane and Guy embraced the idea and searched for the right one, until they realized the answer was right there at Archbishop Damiano.

The Gaudreaus and the staff at Archbishop Damiano threw themselves into fundraising for a modern playground that allows for everything from basic wheelchair accessibility to ramps and transfer platforms for the students. Students tacked their wish list for the playground -- wheelchair swings and even a sand box -- to the walls inside the school.

The Gaudreau Family 5K set for May 31 is expected to bring needed cash to the initiative launched by principal Michele McCloskey in October 2020. Raising the necessary funds over the last five years had been a slow build. So many friends from the hockey world and others now inspired by the brothers and the cause have since rallied around the effort.

"I know the boys would be proud of us," Jane said. "Both boys loved children, that's why we thought the playground would be perfect."

The Gaudreaus have another, more enduring project ahead of them as doting grandparents. Both widows have given birth since their husbands died. Meredith, who revealed during her tearful eulogy for John in August that she was pregnant, gave birth in April to the couple's third child, Carter Michael Gaudreau. Madeline delivered her and Matty's first baby, Tripp Matthew Gaudreau, in December.

Jane laughs when she describes how much the new additions resemble their fathers. Tripp has light hair like his dad; Carter looks like big sister Noa, and they both look like John.

"My husband keeps saying this," Jane said, "'I think God sent us John and Matty back.'"

Guy Gaudreau, a former hockey coach at Hollydell Ice Arena and Gloucester Catholic High School in New Jersey, had his sons on the ice at 2 years old and he's already making plans for Carter and Tripp. Matthew played for the junior ice hockey Omaha Lancers for two years, and when the family was invited back last month for a tribute night, Guy amused the family as he gave baby Tripp an introduction.

"He was like, smell the ice, this is the locker room," Jane said with a laugh. "We're used to that. He's just crazy like that. I was looking at (Madeline) and she was just laughing, shaking her head."

The Gaudreaus have kept busy, with fundraising, teaching and various outings that celebrated their sons. Guy has perhaps been at the rink the most since losing the boys. He joined practices for the Blue Jackets and spent time as a guest instructor this season with the Flyers. He hit the ice in Montreal and helped out Team USA at the 4 Nations Face-Off. The Gaudreaus led the Blue Jackets out of the tunnel at Ohio Stadium in front of nearly 95,000 fans at the NHL Stadium Series.

"I know sometimes we'll hear people, oh, this poor family, they have to go through this again," Jane said. "But it's been quite healing. Through this, I've had so many people tell stories of what Matthew or

John has done for them, or a hospital, or other people. They appreciate everything the boys did. They were grieving, too. It was a way for us to get out there and talk to people, hear different stories.”

Jane needed a gentle nudge from some Blue Jackets to attend the team’s annual Moms’ Trip to a February game at Detroit. Defenseman Erik Gudbranson surprised Jane with a persuasive call for her attend the annual bonding trip. The other Blue Jackets moms were so supportive of her on the trip, she said, “they knew if I was going to get upset before I even knew.”

“We needed her there,” Gudbranson said. “It wouldn’t have felt right if she wasn’t there.”

### **On the ice**

Sean Monahan and Gaudreau became tight when the stars played together in Calgary, one reason the Blue Jackets center was persuaded by his friend to sign with the team last summer.

Monahan and his family settled near the Gaudreaus in the same Columbus suburb of New Albany, so close as neighbors Monahan counted just 25 steps between the two houses. After Gaudreau’s death, Monahan couldn’t even drive by his friend’s house on his commute to the rink. He and his family have tried to serve as a steady source of support for Meredith and her three children. Monahan even met Carter Gaudreau the day he was born (“good looking little guy, just like John”).

The Blue Jackets dedicated the season to the Gaudreaus and raised John’s No. 13 to the rafters. There’s a patch on the jerseys and the Blue Jackets wore Avalon Surf Shop sweatshirts as part of their “Johnny fit” collection. The team never failed to hang Gaudreau’s jersey in a locker stall for every game, home or away.

“He’s supposed to be here with us,” Monahan said. “It’s just one other thing we can do to keep his name around, keep his legacy going for such a special person.”

Motivated by the memory of their friend, the Blue Jackets were in the hunt for a playoff spot until the final week of the season. They fell two points shy, leaving the team with a “what if?” feeling over missing the playoffs while hurting over Gaudreau.

“It’s something that weighs on my mind and it’s something I think about every day,” Monahan said.

“There are no easy days, for sure. I try and live the way he did and it benefited me.”

Gudbranson also held Carter in the hospital and wrestled with the conflicting feelings of the joy over the birth with the sadness Gaudreau was not alive to meet his son.

“There’s a part of you that says this feels wrong that I’m holding my buddy’s son and he hasn’t met him,” Gudbranson said. “That’s hard to wrap your head around. Those kids will probably be 30 years old and I’ll be thinking the same thing. I don’t think that’s going anywhere.”

Gudbranson said that in large part because of Gaudreau’s influence, the season was a “a lot more joyous this year. We’ve enjoyed being teammates.” When the good times were rolling, the Blue Jackets tried to appreciate those moments just like Gaudreau did, the franchise player who was just one of the boys once the final horn sounded.

“Once the game was done, we were just buddies,” Gudbranson said. “He wasn’t necessarily Johnny Hockey to us. The personal side matters to us the most. But yeah, we’ve had conversations like, can you imagine if this guy was on our team this year? How good would he have been with us this year? Holy smokes.”

## **The road ahead**

Guy and Jane, married 42 years, almost never go out to dinner, overwhelmed by feelings of guilt over enjoying themselves, and those emotions also run deep with Katie. She told her mom, yes, she wanted to marry her fiancé, Devin Joyce, but wasn't sure a big wedding was the way to go. Jane said she simply told her there was no wrong decision, but to let the rage and sadness settle and take as much time as necessary make a decision.

The couple eventually rescheduled their wedding for July 11. Katie wrote on her Instagram post, "I guess this year has taught me to celebrate our love everyday, every minute."

"You know the boys, they'll be there with us that day," Jane said. "They would want you to have fun."

Jane added with resolve, "This guy already took two of the most important things away from us. Don't let him take away your wedding."

Katie reflected on that fateful night on an Instagram post how she had texted her fiancé "we forgot to practice our dip," during rehearsal to how a "phone call later, our lives would forever change."

The couple will get a second chance at a wedding, this one in memory of their brothers.

"I think we'll all be able to get through the day," Jane said. "I think it will be hard at first. We want to be there for her, support her. The other three had big weddings, it was so fun for our family to be together. I think it will be OK."

The Gaudreaus want people to remember how the young men lived, not how they died. Sometimes that is difficult: In mid-April, there was a hearing for Sean Higgins, the man charged with reckless vehicular homicide in the Gaudreaus' deaths, only a few hours before the Blue Jackets played the Flyers nearby. The family skipped the game for the Gloucester Catholic High School Hall of Fame banquet where Matthew was posthumously inducted.

The Gaudreaus have kept their thoughts about the court proceedings private, though Jane did write a pair of inspirational quotes on Instagram later that day, including one that said, "When you have a bad day — a really bad day — try and treat the world better than it treated you."

## **A legacy of laughter**

The 5K has filled its allotment of 1,000 runners for race day at a New Jersey park but anyone can contribute from home as a virtual participant. More than 700 people have already signed up, from New Jersey to Canada to Ireland, eager to help the cause, which includes an online memorabilia auction that stretches beyond hockey, with all proceeds donated toward the playground effort and its \$600,000 goal.

Jane, 62, said it's hard to remember much through the haze of heartbreak from the funeral and memorial reception, only that she figured more than 1,000 people stopped by the family home to pay their respects. With some distance, the family hoped it would be comforting to see everyone at the 5K and thank them for their love and comfort.

The current playground doesn't meet the needs of its students in its current shape, there are gaping holes in the turf and the swings and slides were not designed for children with disabilities. If the goal is met, the school hopes to break ground this fall and complete the project next spring.

"As a school for serving people with multiple disabilities, we really don't get a lot of traction," said McCloskey, the school principal. "I think through all the media attention, I think people see it, they see why this is important."

It seems trite to call it a silver lining but the family has searched in vain to find some meaning, some good out of the senseless deaths.

So they'll run.

For John. For Matt. For a cause the boys so robustly supported in life.

"It's not the way I'd want to build the playground, of course," Jane said. "I tend to believe they'll be up there, being able to listen to the children's laughter. They'll just really love the fact that the children will have a playground to play in."