

Carolina's Chiasson killed in accident

By David Droschak
The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Teammates and family members of Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Steve Chiasson remembered him Tuesday as having a "zest for life" and a determination on the ice that produced a solid 13-year NHL career.

Chiasson, 32, was killed early Monday when his pickup truck went out of control and rolled. Chiasson, who wasn't wearing a seat belt, was thrown from the vehicle.

A hour-long private memorial service was held for Chiasson at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, just minutes from where he was killed. His funeral will be Saturday in his native Peterborough, Ontario.

"This still doesn't seem real," goaltender Trevor Kidd said after the service.

Members of the Hurricanes entered the church holding hands with their wives or girlfriends as a large photo of Chiasson in his uniform rested on an easel to the right of the altar.

The team and the rest of the organization was joined by NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and director of hockey operations Colin Campbell, former coach of the New York Rangers.

Chiasson's wife, Susan, and the couple's children, ages 7, 4 and 2,

followed the team, holding roses. When 2-year-old Stephanie approached the altar and saw the photo, she shouted, "There's my daddy."

It was an emotional afternoon for the team, which learned of Chiasson's death less than 12 hours after being eliminated from the Stanley Cup playoffs by Boston on Sunday night. Former Carolina player Stu Grimson sent words of prayer. Nelson Emerson, traded to Ottawa in midseason, flew in for the service.

Some players stared straight ahead while others cried. Chiasson's best friend, Ray Sheppard, buried his head on his wife's shoulder as Susan Chiasson addressed the congregation.

"I can just feel him here," Susan Chiasson said. "He wasn't a hockey player, he was my best friend."

"He lived life," she added. "All of you go home and hug your significant other and kiss your children."

Kevin Dineen, the team's captain last year, spoke for about 10 minutes, as did Sheppard, who had a tough time holding it together. Sheppard, who roomed with Chiasson on the road, talked of his friend's honesty and integrity.

"I'll take that with me for as long as I live," Sheppard said. "He'll be in our prayers forever. We should all be grateful for him."

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