

SAC Head Coach David Manning Reflects on a Special 44-win Hockey Season for the Saints

St. Andrew's College Hockey Head Coach David Manning looked relieved as we chatted in the La Brier Family Arena lounge on Friday afternoon.

Firstly, the teacher-coach had just handed back final exams to his students for review. Secondly, with his final marks submitted, he was able to kick back and reflect on his team's impressive 44-12 record and a winning percentage of .786.

This stellar win rate included a 17-5 record on home ice and Coach Manning acknowledged that the highlight of the Saints' remarkable season took place in the arena in which our interview was set.

He explained that winning the 40th Annual MacPherson Tournament in January at the La Brier Family Arena was the highest achievement of 2023-24.

At the beginning of the season, one of our targets is to win our own tournament. It's a premier event and the lineup of teams gets better every year. It was our 11th championship in the 40 years the tournament has been running and it was a big highlight for the kids. Our performance in the championship final was our most complete game of the year. We played a very responsible game. Paolo [Frasca] was selected the top goalie of the tournament and Dean [Letourneau] was selected as the MVP.

The tournament cast a spotlight on Letourneau, the 6'7" Saints forward who scored 4 goals and 8 assists in five games at the MacPherson. SAC's Assistant Captain, who is committed to Boston College, has been on the NHL radar since the beginning of the season, according to his Head Coach.

Coach Manning explained Letourneau's rise to NHL draft prominence.

Dean came into this season with high hopes. He's a big kid that can play. He's elevated himself into the prospect pool and has handled the pressure really well. He's going to be a first rounder; he's done enough this season to earn that status. Dean is so intriguing for so many NHL teams with his physicality, athleticism, and skill base. The potential is there for him to be an NHL player and he's so coachable and competitive.

Letourneau's NHL prospects and US College commitment are consistent with SAC's enviable record of placing its student-athletes in outstanding post-secondary hockey programs.

Coach Manning delineated the destinations of this year's grads.

Our Captain, Connor Arseneault, is committed to Cornell University; Jack Good will play for the Brooks Bandits in the BCHL before he attends Merrimack College; Rory Gilmour is committed to the University of Maine but will join Jack in the BCHL with the Brooks Bandits next season; Tyler Chiovetti will join the Green Bay Gamblers of the USHL; Luc Warner and Ryan Castle will suit up for the Blackfalds Bulldogs of the BCHL; Oscar Wu will also play in the BCHL with the Spruce Grove Saints; and Nicholas Ferrante will play for Haliburton in the OJHL after being drafted by Sarnia of the OHL. Luke Sinclair is committed to Princeton University, Lucas Prud'homme is committed to Quinnipiac University, and Kieren Dervin is committed to Penn State University.

With the placement of his players at great academic and hockey destinations, Coach Manning expressed his satisfaction with a 16-year coaching career at St. Andrew's College.

Since 2008, it's been a fun and supportive environment. I've been fortunate to have coached so many great student-athletes and to have had such a really supportive Head of School Kevin McHenry. We've benefitted from an amazing facility, too. The ascension of the program and our new rink was not coincidental. There's no doubt that we've attracted better players due to our facilities. It's been

serendipitous to be one of the constants of the program over these years and our coaching staff has done a good job.?

One of the factors that weighed heavily in the Saints' favor this season was avoiding injuries compared to last year when up to six players at a time were hobbled and on crutches.

?Last season, we had some catastrophic injuries?concussions, broken bones. This year, by comparison, we had very few injuries. Big credit has to be given to Natalie Figueira, our Athletic Therapist, and Andrew Abes, our Strength and Conditioning Coach, who kept our players on the ice this year, in great shape, and healthy.?

He also discussed the professional pride his coaching staff experiences yearly by turning out high quality student-athletes.

?It's enjoyable. All our coaches are teachers so we're pleased to see our graduating players prepared for the next level of their education and hockey careers.?

It certainly was mission accomplished this season for the 44-12 Saints and with a strong core of five forwards, three defensemen, and one goalie returning and their roster pretty much set, the 2024-25 season looks bright and promising for St. Andrew's College.

By Jim Stewart