

NHL player visits native St. Lawrence

BY DON TURPIN

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After a victory, Laurentians always celebrate; but this past week it wasn't soccer, it was a celebration to welcome home NHL hockey player Mark Fitzpatrick.

He was visiting his mother and his now retired father, who have taken up residence in their home town of St. Lawrence, after living away on the mainland for many years.

Mark, now 32 years old, left St. Lawrence when he was nine, with his parents following after the close down of Alcan Fluorspar Mines in 1977. They went to Kitimat, British Columbia, where his father obtained employment with

the Aluminum Company of Canada.

Mark's father, Gerald, better known to people in the soccer circles as 'Moose Fitzpatrick', was an authority soccer player with the older St. Lawrence Laurentians. His wife, Violet, is the daughter of Millie and Levi Pike St. Lawrence. They were more than pleased as well to greet as well their five-year-old grand-daughter.

Mark was officially welcomed home July 8 with a big bash at Laurentian Place which was sponsored by the St. Lawrence Laurentians Soccer Association.

Mark arrived in time to welcome the Laurentians team as they arrived home after winning both

their games during the weekend played on the Avalon Peninsula. Some members of the team are friends of his, whom he played with in the many indoor floor hockey games at the St. Lawrence Recreational Centre before he left for the mainland. He said he was kept up to date on all their soccer activities through the St. Lawrence Web Site and the Southern Gazette.

The Laurentian Place was filled to capacity with young and old as he spoke for about half an hour. He recounted many stories that occurred during his 12-year career, playing as a goalie in the National Hockey League.

He vividly remembered when he broke into the NHL, when he was called up to play for the Los

Angles Kings. This player came over, patted him on the back and said 'Come along sonny; you're staying with me'. He was even more shocked when he went outside and got into a big Rolls Royce.

The player was none other than the Great One, Wayne Gretzky!

"He was a great mentor to me, which gave me a great start in my hockey career and we both became good friends," said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

In his hockey career he played with NHL teams New York Islanders, Carolina Hurricanes, Chicago Black Hawks, Florida Panthers and Tampa Bay Lightning.

He is now retired from the NHL and living with his wife and family in Florida.