

New Canaan residents participate in Skate 24's record-setting hockey game to raise money in fight against cancer

Jon Chik

Updated 7:37 pm, Wednesday, August 7, 2013

STAMFORD -- This was not your typical hockey game: 25 hours, countless 15-minute periods and well over 100 goals by each team.

And as the clock struck 11 a.m. at the Stamford Twin Rinks on Sunday morning, sending the contest into its 23rd hour, those players who remained, wearily but happily, expressed their feelings at the first Skate 24, an event created to benefit the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund.

"It's something new; I'm very tired," New Canaan's Dylan Har said. "Coach (Dave) LoPresti has had this idea forever, and he told me in March when I was still up at school, and right away I definitely wanted to do this. It's been a really cool experience. Just trying to get through all 25 hours is a challenge."

The contest, which ran from 1 p.m. Saturday to 2 p.m. Sunday, set a record for the longest hockey game in U.S. history, organizers of the event said.

The game was played by 60 skaters and eight goalies, mostly in their 20s and 30s.

"That's how many (players) we started with. How many are still here, who knows?" LoPresti, Skate 24's founder, said with a laugh. "For a lot of the guys, their body just wants to go to sleep. No one's out here getting sick or injured or their legs aren't working. It's more mental."

"Obviously, we're trying to set the game (record) for longest in U.S. history," Darien's Chris Siefert said. "We've gone home a couple times, but for the most part we've been here, on the ice and off the ice. We're having a blast though. When you're playing a 4 a.m. game, you're just trying to stand up straight and keep moving."

Since 1948, the Jimmy Fund has raised money for the treatment and research of cancer.

LoPresti said Sunday afternoon that the marathon didn't hit its target of \$60,000 for charity, but it did raise more than \$45,000. And he was thrilled with the dedication of the players.

"Guys are tired, some guys are starting to fall off, but all in all it's going really well," LoPresti said. "They went through the tough hours of the night, and some bodies are starting to wear down, but it's going well."

"We'll figure out (the amount of money raised), but people are surprised with how much they've come back with," said LoPresti, prior to the final count. "I think we'll be really close."

By late Sunday morning, the White team held a 138-123 advantage over the Blue team. Goals came in flurries, but there were also droughts, and even as the marathon game neared its conclusion -- relatively speaking -- players still showed a surprising amount of energy.

By the end of that particular period, White had boosted its lead to 145-126, though the game had actually been tied at 99-99 somewhere around 5:30 a.m.

According to LoPresti, the White team prevailed by a final score of 165-147.

The players' experience ranged from high school to the NHL.

"As far as talent level and age, there is a huge span," LoPresti said.

New Canaan's Max Pacioretty of the Montreal Canadiens wasn't able to play, but he stopped by to donate his stick for an auction, and Nathan Gerbe, who played with the Buffalo Sabres before signing with the Carolina Hurricanes for the upcoming season, played in the game.

"Both of them taking time out of their day meant a lot to a lot of guys," LoPresti said. "I think a lot of guys right now are saying 'never again,' but we'll see in a couple of months."

In addition to helping to set a record and raising money for a deserving cause, Hart said he enjoyed the opportunity to play alongside an NHL star.

"It was cool seeing Gerbe from the Sabres come out. I got to play with him and that was a lot of fun," Hart said. "You don't want to be there at 4 in the morning, but you're doing it for kids, so you've got to do it for them."

Knowing they were playing for a cause seemed to help the players push through to the end.

"I'm always up for stuff like this, especially since I do a lot of work with kids," Siefert said. "We've probably got a 40-year age range among the players."

He said that after the game ended, "The plan is probably to sleep for a couple days."

jchik@bcnnew.com; Twitter: @jchik17

