



Saint Viator Senior Earns Prestigious Blackhawks Scholarship

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Frank Avino.

Saint Viator senior Frank Avino of Arlington Heights plays junior varsity hockey for the Lions, but the last thing he expected was a phone call from Jack O'Callaghan of the so-called "Miracle on Ice" team that won the gold medal at the 1980 Olympics.

That's what happened Tuesday, when O'Callaghan, along with former Blackhawks player Cliff Coral and Steve Conroy from ComcastSports.net, called to award Avino one of three Blackhawks Alumni scholarships.

"I was shocked," said Avino, a leading defenseman for the Lions, "that an Olympic gold medalist was calling to congratulate me on winning this award."

According to Blackhawk officials, awards are determined from a candidate's level of community service, volunteerism, good citizenship, as well as hockey talent. The three recipients receive \$5,000 annually over four years.

However, the phone call turned out to be just the start. On March 2, Avino will sit in on the Blackhawks' practice during Media Day at the United Center before he visits with some of the players afterwards.

On March 14, he will attend the Blackhawks' game and sit in the alumni box, before being introduced on the ice between periods. The formal scholarship luncheon takes place March 15 on the McDonald's campus in Oakbrook, where team members, sponsors and alumni will be in attendance.

Avino and the other two scholarship winners each will give a brief speech to thank their benefactors.

The scholarship recognizes Avino's activities on and off the ice. He has played hockey all four years at Saint Viator and his coaches say he has contributed to their surge to the state playoffs the last two years.

But he also is an outstanding student and one committed to service. One of his main involvements has been with the group STAND, or Students Taking Action Now for Darfur.

"Frank met all the key criteria," says his coach, Evan Poulakidas, "outstanding school work, giving back to the community, being a great teammate and of course his commitment to the greatest game in the world, hockey."

Avino has been accepted to Northwestern University where he plans to study mechanical engineering. With his rigorous major, Avino plans to continue playing hockey on the Evanston campus, but at the intramural level.