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The Free Press

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To a Mankato boy who fought hard against leukemia and the supportive community who embraced him and helped him with his struggle. Known for his passion of hockey, 9-year-old Anthony Ford demonstrated to all who met him what it means to live life to the fullest. He died on Wednesday.



Many of the Minnesota State University men's hockey players learned much about life's passion as they befriended Anthony. They became his big brothers, visiting him in the hospital, taking him on the road to hockey games, trying to raise money to help with medical costs. For the last two hockey seasons, every youth, high school and college hockey player in town had a sticker on his or her helmet with the initials AF in support of their biggest fan.

Members of the hockey community have been there for him during his 18-month battle with illness, and they will be at his funeral. And because their lives touched the life of Anthony Ford, they should know that the boy's last days were richer because of them.

To Minnesota State University sports teams for signing what look to be a good crop of recruits in basketball, hockey and wrestling.



Maverick hockey coach Troy Jutting, facing the loss of five key forwards from last year's team — including David Backes, who signed a pro contract — took aim at and signed four new forwards this week.

Included in the group was Zach Harrison, a point-per-game player for Faribault Shattuck-St. Mary's School. The elite Shattuck team reached the national tournament where Harrison scored four goals and three assists in four games.

MSU wrestling coach Jim Makovsky also recruited some top notch wrestlers with the added bonus of many of them being from south central Minnesota. Travis Elg of Windom/Moutain Lake-Butterfield-Odin, Justin Schwanz of St. James and Andy Forstner of Madelia Truman all have a chance to have an immediate impact for MSU wrestling.

Coach Makovsky believes the incoming grapplers might just be the key to taking down three-time defending national champion University of Nebraska, Omaha.

Finally, MSU basketball coach Matt Margenthaler is reaching for the best and the tallest in his recruiting efforts. He signed Doug Plumb, a 6-4 guard, who holds the record for scoring at Hastings High School, and who averages nearly 24 points per game. Margenthaler also signed two 6-7 players from Iowa and Landon Benson, Mankato East's 6-9 center.

Should be an exciting season for all teams next year.