

Hometown hockey hero among 2020 Stanley Cup champs

The San Jose Sharks went to Tampa Bay for a date with the Lightning last December. Sharks forward Barclay Goodrow was out with his parents walking after dinner and professed his admiration of Tampa Bay's arena and location.

He loved how the hockey arena is right off the water and how warm the weather is.

"He said, "you know if I was ever traded, I can come here," Goodrow's mother, Janice, recalled.

Little did Barclay know he planted an unintentional seed. It was, of course, only a hypothetical.

In February, Janice and her husband John spent the weekend in New York for the Sharks' road trip. They always do that. Barclay departed with the team to head to Philadelphia while his parents grabbed a flight back home.

While driving back home to Aurora, Janice and John received a phone call from their son. He had been traded to the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"We were shocked because...nobody really had any indication that he was going to be traded. It was literally 20 minutes before the deadline."

Tampa Bay General Manager Julien BriseBois sought Barclay. He dealt Anthony Greco and a first-round pick for Barclay Goodrow and a third-rounder. He needed a big centre and after Barclay scored the game-winner in the first round of the playoffs against the Vegas Golden Knights last season, Sharks general manager Doug Wilson was persuaded to offload his centre to Florida.

Little did Goodrow know the seed he had inadvertently planted was about to blossom into reality.

Goodrow was the second significant move in eight days before the deadline. On February 16, the Lightning acquired New Jersey Devils forward Blake Coleman.

Following an arduous move from California to Florida, from one lifestyle to another, both Janice and John wanted to check in on Barclay and his girlfriend Madison.

It was March 12 and no more than 30 minutes upon arrival in Tampa Bay, Janice and John saw the NHL had decided to shut down. Goodrow's parents flew home early and that was the last time they would see their son for six months.

What seemed to be a lost season was swiftly recovered by the NHL. The bubble was introduced. The playoffs were back. Finally, there was hockey, but at a cost. Players sacrificed their time with family as a move away meant they wouldn't be able to see their loved ones.

From their home in Aurora, the Goodrow family watched as the Country Day School alum helped his team secure second spot in the round-robin.

Their first-round matchup was a familiar foe; the Columbus Blue Jackets. The Lightning opened up the series with a victory in Game One that saw both teams go head-to-head for five overtimes.

After fighting off last-season's demons, the Lightning went through the Boston Bruins. Then they went through the New York Islanders. For years, pundits criticized the Lightning's inability to win the Cup with the squad they've had and singled out Jon Cooper for not finding success.

Well, they had the chance in a Cinderella story that emerged out of the western conference.

The Lightning had a date with the Dallas Stars.

Originally, the NHLPA permitted spouses and girlfriends into the bubble, but with many of them in the United States and those who worked would have to book off more than a month of time due to quarantine protocols, a maximum of four family members were allowed to fly over to Edmonton.

'We quarantined for two weeks. We quarantined from the fourth of September to the 19th, when we went out. Because it was a moving target date, we didn't know when we were going,' Janice explained.

She and her husband had to be ready. The NHLPA sent a charter flight to pick up parents in other areas and it was only parents on the flight to Edmonton.

On the plane, Janice and John got to know a man named Craig Campbell. He said to the couple 'you want to see me at the end,' Janice said.

He is one of the Cup Keepers who carries the illustrious Stanley Cup trophy to the winning team.

Janice and John had to quarantine upon arrival. Four negative COVID-19 tests were the ticket to roam within the bubble that cordoned off hotels and the Rogers Place from the rest of Edmonton.

They watched the first two games of the finals on television.

Then, it was finally time to see their son, whose joyous reaction said it all.

The family got together with an NHL camera crew to take part in a life-in-the-bubble series the league was recording before Game Three.

At night, the long-awaited moment came to watch a game live for the first time months, in a box high up in the arena with food and beverages available.

The Lightning led the series 3-2 heading into Game Six. Five years ago, in 2015, against the Chicago Blackhawks, the Lightning lost the Stanley Cup finals 2-0 in Game Six handing the Blackhawks their third championship in five years.

Here, the Lightning reversed history. They defeated the Stars in Game Six, 2-0. The franchise brought home their second Stanley Cup.

Time to see Craig Campbell again, and time for the Goodrows to celebrate with their son Barclay, who becomes the second Aurora native in as many years to win it all (Robert Thomas last year with the St. Louis Blues).

'On the ice, after they won the cup (because we were allowed to go on the ice with them), and then into the dressing room, that was an experience. Coop said to us, 'we got this Cup because of those trades we made,' Janice said.

'He said, 'I gave Barclay his job and he did it.' He was so thrilled and so excited.'

The last time the Lightning were crowned champions was back in 2004, when the team defeated the Calgary Flames in seven games for their first ever Stanley Cup victory.

Traditionally, players could bring the cup back to their hometowns. However, this year, Janice Goodrow says that isn't going to

happen. They hope that will change in 2021.

But for this year, Aurora and potentially Country Day School, won't be able to enjoy the presence of the 89.54-centimetre trophy.

Until then, for the Goodrow family, it's a moment they'll never forget in one of the most unique competitions the NHL has ever seen.

Janice and John say they were thankful for the chance to go to the bubble to see their son and watch his Stanley Cup triumph with the Tampa Bay Lightning unfold.

The family commended the determination from the NHL to plan a bubble to ensure the season is finished and a champion is crowned. She admired the valiant efforts from all players and their families.

By Robert Belardi