

# HUMAN INTEREST

## The save of a lifetime - La Salle , Pennsylvania

Sep 20, 2005, 17:37

It didn't involve a goalie going spread-eagle on the ice to make a breathtaking, glovehand stab of a whistling puck destined for the back of the net.

It didn't decide a game or clinch a playoff berth.

This save did so much more - it preserved a human life.

Longtime La Salle High assistant hockey coach John Haggerty pulled off his own version of "Miracle on Ice" last week when he came to the aid of Mike Martinelli, a La Salle junior and Eagleville resident who had his jugular vein severed in a freak accident during a preseason workout.

"I didn't run through a burning building or anything," said Haggerty, who's in his 12th season on the La Salle hockey staff. "I'm just very happy everything turned out right. It wasn't anything special."

There are a lot of people close to the Martinelli family and the La Salle community that don't share those modest sentiments.

"We are very fortunate to have had John Haggerty as our guardian angel," said Ernie Martinelli, Mike's father. "He literally stuck his fingers in Mike's neck to stop the bleeding and kept them there until they got him into surgery (at Chestnut Hill Hospital). This just points out how important it is to have someone trained for a medical emergency on hand."

Haggerty, a certified emergency medical technician, spent five years on an ambulance crew.

His extensive training in first aid was never more beneficial than when Martinelli was cut by the skate blade of a falling teammate.

According to Ernie Martinelli, Mike was back checking in front of the net during a scrimmage when an offensive player tripped over the goalie's stick. As the player fell, his skate came up and caught the unsuspecting Martinelli in the neck, severing the jugular.

Haggerty was on the scene in a New York minute to attend to Martinelli.

"It was a freak accident, like getting struck by lightning," said Mike Martinelli, a two-year varsity player for the Explorers. "Hags is a certified EMT and he knows his stuff. If it wasn't for him, I could have bled to death."

Mike Martinelli, who is expected to make a full recovery in six to eight weeks, is already counting the days until he can lace up the skates and get back on the ice.

Hockey players are known for their resiliency and mental and physical toughness, and Martinelli seems a perfect fit for that template. He's been playing competitive hockey since he was 7 and never suffered a broken bone or needed so much as a stitch to close a wound.

That string of good fortune came to an abrupt end last Monday, but luckily for Martinelli, Haggerty was there to keep the situation from escalating into a tragedy.

"It was pretty amazing," said Ernie Martinelli. "Fortunately it was the jugular instead of the carotid artery. That would have created a whole different set of problems. We'd like to bring

some awareness of this to USA Hockey. You know they teach all these coaches about the game itself and how to handle the kids. But there's a real need to have someone trained for a medical emergency.

"Through no fault of their own, the other hockey coaches at La Salle admitted they wouldn't have had any idea what to do if John hadn't been there. He was on it immediately, and we're trying to find a way to thank him for what he did."

Seeing Mike Martinelli move on through life to become a healthy, productive, responsible adult could be enough of a reward for Haggerty, who would have had a significant hand in making that happen.

"We're expecting Mike to make a full recovery, with no limitations," said Ernie Martinelli. "We feel very blessed."

"This is a life-saving story."

Only days after his narrow brush with death, Mike Martinelli is also searching for the words to say "thank you."

That might be a more difficult task than stopping an opponent from scoring on a 3-on-1 break.

"I was in the hospital three days," said Mike Martinelli. "We have a follow-up appointment this coming Thursday with the surgeon, and if everything goes according to plan, I should be able to start playing again in a couple of months. This will be my third year, and I want to get it right. I love the game, and can't wait to get back out there."

"Right now, we're just trying to figure out a way to thank Hags."

Like most true heroes, John Haggerty doesn't see himself in any special light. If you ask him, he was just doing his job when he came to Martinelli's assistance. Using his fingers as a tourniquet for more than an hour would say otherwise. It all added up to one of the greatest saves in the history of hockey.

*Copyright © 1995 - 2005 PowerOne Media, Inc*

From EMSNetwork News Your **best** source for EMS News.

we . search . so . you . don't . have . to

<http://www.emsnetwork.org/>

© The contents of this site, unless otherwise specified, are copyrighted by © EMSNetwork, 2000-2005. The news provided is for personal use only.