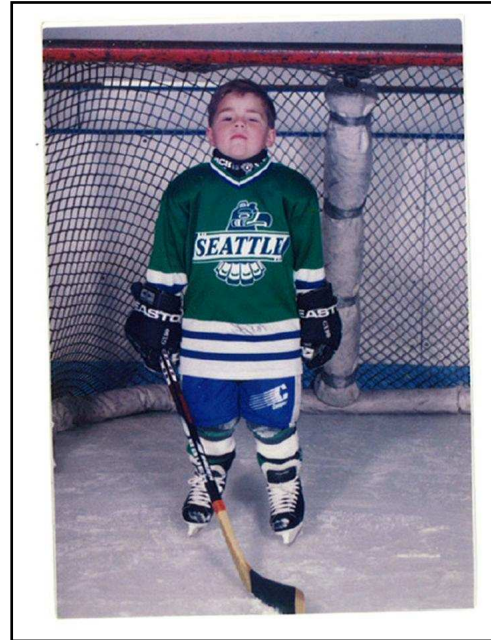


Anthony Petruzzelli – A 12-Year Journey from Learn-to-Play to T-Bird’s Training Camp

Kent, Washington August 25, 2008 -- Kathy and John Petruzzelli were all smiles tonight as their son Anthony took to the ice at Kent Valley Ice Centre wearing a dark-blue jersey with the familiar Seattle Thunderbirds logo on the chest. It was the first night of scrimmages for the Seattle Thunderbirds training camp. Anthony survived the T-Bird’s rookie try-out camp over the weekend and moved on to the first round of the three-day training camp.

Kathy Petruzzelli recalled the very first time son Anthony took to the ice at the age of three for a Learn-to-Play program in Tacoma. *“He was wearing a green T-Bird’s jersey.”* Dad John posed his son on the ice inside the goal net and snapped a photo (right.) The diminutive Anthony appears confident and even borderline cocky in the photo. Was he possibly dreaming that he might someday wear that jersey as a member of the Seattle T-Birds? The photo of three-year-old Anthony exudes a confident yes! Was John, his father and an avid hockey player himself, thinking that his son might someday wear a real Seattle Thunderbirds team jersey? Perhaps! It certainly crosses the minds of many parents of budding hockey players.



Twelve years after that photo was taken, Anthony was invited to the 2008 Seattle Thunderbirds rookie camp. Tonight, he put on a dark blue T-Bird’s jersey, #28, and took to the ice with 47 other hopefuls to realize part of his dream of being a Seattle Thunderbird.

Anthony got his fair share of shifts during the Blue T-Birds vs. White T-Birds scrimmage game. He played with confidence and poise. During one of those shifts he got slammed against the boards in a horrific hit in the corner that would cause any hockey parent to feel the pain from the other side of the boards. Anthony took that hit like a pro and continued on with the play as if he’d been there before. He didn’t shrink from the incoming hits and he didn’t shy away from throwing some of his own. He appeared quick and responsive throughout the balance of his shifts during the game, in spite of being the smallest player on either team’s roster. Anthony looked liked he belonged out there except when he skated next to the 6’ 5” and 231 lb 20-year-old veteran Ashton Hewson.

Anthony, age 15, 5’ 7” and 158 lbs, will likely not make the T-Bird’s team this season. Most 15-year-olds don’t. But, he’ll probably be invited back as a 16 year-old for next season’s camp. He’ll be another inch or two taller then, a few pounds heavier, and he’ll have another season’s worth of hockey playing experience and skill development under his shoulder pads.

For the 2008/2009 season Anthony will most likely be skating with the Kent Valley U-16/U-18 team at Kent Valley Ice Centre, just down the street from the Seattle Thunderbirds new home at the Kent Events Center. He will continue to develop and perfect his abundance of hockey talents. The T-Birds, nearby, will be able to watch and monitor his progress.

Following the scrimmage Monday night, Kathy Petruzzelli said, "*I'm very proud of Anthony. I'm just very proud.*" The photo of 3-year-old Anthony in the green T-Birds jersey was tucked away securely in the right hand pocket of her coat. Anthony's dad, John Petruzzelli, will be shopping for a new jacket tomorrow. He burst the buttons off the one he was wearing Monday night at Kent Valley Ice Centre. But, who wouldn't burst some buttons?

Congratulations to Kathy and John Petruzzelli. Like many parents before you and the many to follow, you hauled your child to cold ice rinks at o-dark-early on weekend mornings when you would have preferred to sleep in a bit, or mow the lawn. You've laced up skates on tiny feet, suffered through injuries, bought the equipment, paid the ice fees, coached him, schooled him, encouraged him when he won and comforted him when he lost. You've spent a small fortune on gas and you've worn out automobiles transporting him to practices, hockey camps, games and tournaments throughout North America. I could tell by the smiles on your faces as the two of you watched Anthony skate with the T-Birds tonight that the long journey from learn-to-play in Tacoma to Seattle Thunderbirds training camp at the Kent Valley Ice Centre was worth the effort.

As for Anthony, he continues to pursue the dream that began as a confident three-year-old in a Seattle Thunderbirds jersey. He has a new memento for his collection of trophies, medals and hockey memorabilia. The T-Birds took individual photos of Anthony and the other camp participants Sunday afternoon at Kent Valley Ice Centre. Anthony was proudly wearing a Seattle Thunderbirds jersey. I'm confident he will treasure that photo forever.

Congratulations Anthony! You've made us all proud.

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