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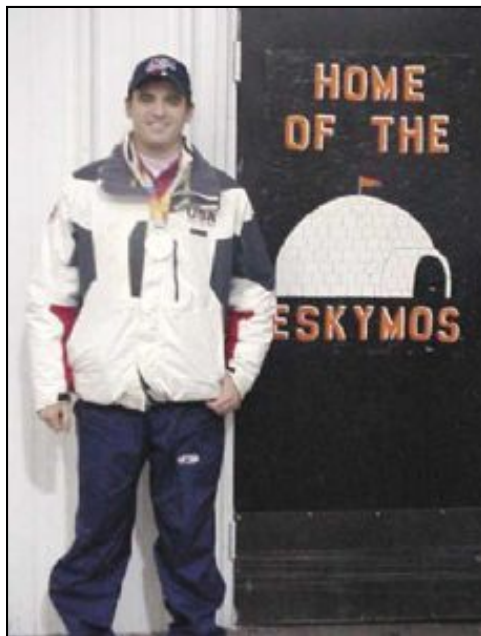
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## Golden visitor: Way returns to visit alma mater icers



**Brian Way visited the Escanaba High School hockey team Saturday and was honored before the game with Hancock. Way helped the United States win the gold medal at the Deaflympics. (Photo courtesy of Bonnie Butryn)**

By Brandon Veale - bveale@dailypress.net

**WELLS** — Brian Way, member of the USA's gold medal-winning Deaflympics hockey team, returned Saturday to the Wells Sports Complex where he played as an Eskymo.

He was honored before Saturday's Escanaba-Hancock game.

"It's exciting to be here, watch them and get the applause they got, for me," Way said.

Before the game, Way visited the Eskymo locker room with his gold medal and passed it around to the players.

"It took a while for it to get around, because they were really looking at it and in awe of it and rightfully so," assistant EHS coach Ward Johnsen said.

Johnsen is Way's uncle, and travelled to Salt Lake City to watch the team play Sweden.



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The Americans won 4-1, but spent plenty of time in the penalty box. This was not all negative for Way, as it meant he got extra ice time on the penalty kill. Being chosen for that assignment by coach Jeff Sauer, a two-time national champion at the University of Wisconsin, made Johnsen happy.

“When he was playing high school hockey, we try to pride ourselves on the penalty kill unit. It’s interesting, when we went out and watched him, to see a coach like Coach Sauer see that he had the skills to be able to play the penalty kill,” Johnsen said. “It just reinforces that we’re teaching the right stuff back here in Escanaba.”

Way was back in the area to visit friends, check out the game, and see a dentist, as he broke a tooth in the U.S. team’s 4-3 win over Canada.

Way’s family followed the competition on the Deaflympics web site.

“We were watching it all the time,” Sally Way, Brian’s mother, said. “We were clicking on the computer constantly.”

Sally Way said the tournament was a great moment for her son.

“For Brian, I think it almost felt like this was the Olympics. This is the type of thing he could excel in with that disability,” she said.

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