

Brother, team skate through the pain

By Robert Carroll
MPG Newspapers

If stage four really did exist, then why hadn't it knocked on Tim Kane's door, helping him recover from the greatest pain he had ever known?

The first three stages, after all, were quick to appear, pushing and tugging Kane through denial, anger and sadness. But just where was acceptance? And why was it taking its sweet time in finding the Thayer Academy senior?

"I wasn't sure I'd ever get to acceptance," Kane said last week as he stood outside his family's West Plymouth home. "I'd been through all the other stages. Anger was the worst. I needed to accept what happened. I knew it was the only way to move on."

Early on the morning of Sept. 11, 26-year-old Jennifer Kane went to work

on the 100th floor of the north tower of New York City's World Trade Center. She was never heard from again, leaving a permanent void among her family, including parents Faye and George, and brothers Tim and Matthew.

Stunned by the loss of his cherished sister, Tim Kane found himself searching for the lust he had always carried for life, a passion that particularly reared itself every time he stepped onto the ice to play hockey.

"I was lost. Who wouldn't be?" he said. "Fortunately, I have a close family. As for hockey, I'm blessed with great teammates."

The terrorists attacks came as Thayer Academy hockey players were beginning to plan their pre-season schedules. Dry-land training and captains' practices were set. Kane, one of the state's

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Staff photo/Robert Carroll

Sign of respect — Jennifer Kane — as well as her initials — is never far from brother Tim Kane's thoughts.

Thayer team works through loss

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highly regarded young goalies, was ready to make this final high school season a memorable one. But then the world changed forever.

The Kanes headed for New York, where they searched in vain for any sign of Jennifer at Ground Zero.

"I came back, and hockey was just starting," said Kane, 18. "I knew I had to play. Jen would want it that way."

Still, it wasn't easy. People in school were surprised to find him still playing. "They kept telling me that if it happened to them, that they lost a sister or someone like that, they'd curl up and never put the skates on again," he said. "I couldn't do that."

And so Kane took to the ice, albeit with a very heavy heart.

"I used hockey to help me get away from all that happened," he said. "I needed it to take my mind off things."

And for short spurts, it did just that. But not always. Jennifer, who had also attended Thayer, always made a point of taking in her kid brother's games when she visited home. He missed her.

It took an after-practice visit from a teammate to get Tim Kane back on track.

"I had a teammate tell me he had talked to the guys, and they all wanted to remember and honor

Jen," said Kane. "They had an idea."

With the help of a team member's parent, orange and black stickers designed to match the school colors were drawn up. Each one sports a large "JK" for Jennifer Kane. Every player proudly slapped one on the back of his helmet.

"When I make a save and I see the guys heading up the ice with the puck, I look to see the stickers on their helmets," said Kane. "It gives me a great feeling."

And through 14 games entering this week, Kane has translated that personal comfort into some of the best hockey he's ever played.

A two-year starter competing in the powerhouse Independent School League, Kane carries a 26-18 career record, with a 2.54 goals against average and a save percentage hovering around 90. Solid numbers given Independent's reputation as the toughest high school ice hockey league in the *country*. Thayer has produced such National Hockey League stars as Jeremy Roenick of the Philadelphia Flyers and Tony Amonte of the Chicago Black Hawks.

"I was talking to our goalie coach recently, and he told me Tim is playing the best he's ever seen him play," said Thayer Academy head coach Jack Foley. "That's great news, because I know it's been a journey for him to get to where he

is after all he and his family have been through."

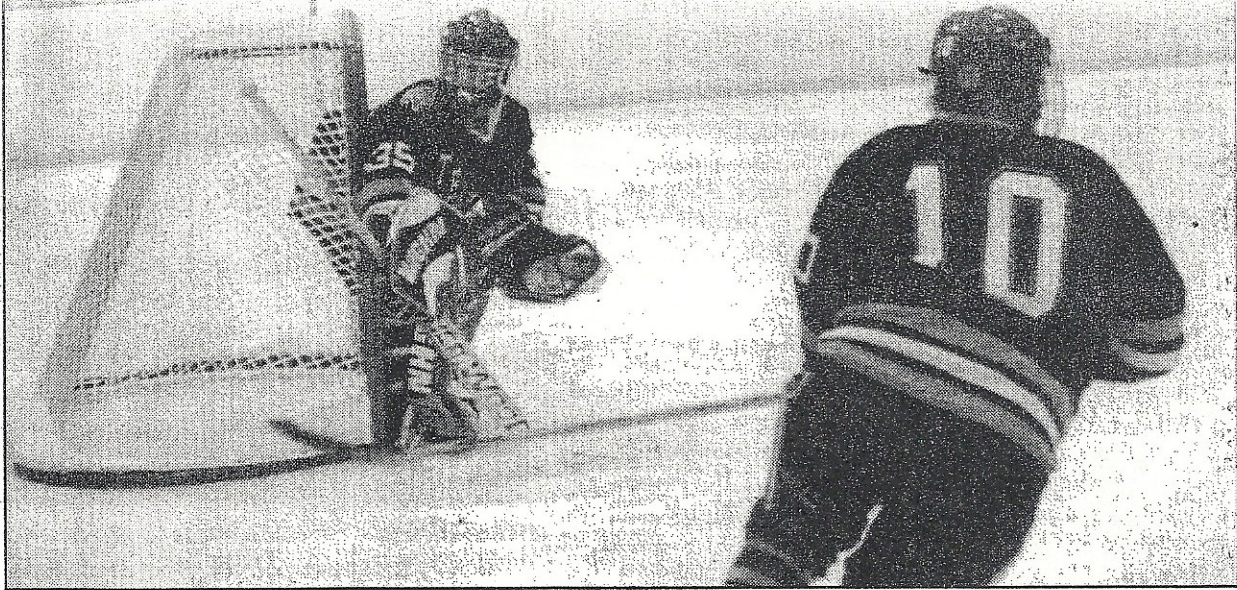
Another heart-warming moment for the Kane family came during the annual benefit hockey game between Thayer and Archbishop Williams. School officials announced a portion of the money raised from ticket sales would go toward building a plaque in honor of Jennifer Kane, one of their own.

"We've received such a great outpouring," said Faye Kane. "It hasn't been easy on any of us. Somehow, Tim has been able to keep it together. We all have."

Come March, Tim Kane will again suit up as part of the prestigious Hockey Night in Boston annual tournament. Last summer, he backstopped the South Coast team to a record-setting sixth overall tournament crown. Next fall, he'll be playing net for Tufts University, which had long recruited Kane.

"I know it sounds funny, but I attribute the way I'm playing to Jen," said Kane. "When the puck hits the post and stays out, instead of going in, I just know Jen had something to do with it. I feel she's there at every game. I've accepted she's gone, but sometimes I think she's there watching me and helping me."

Finally, the fourth stage is reached.



A big assist — Thayer Academy teammates have helped Tim Kane (in goal) deal with the loss of his sister.