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GIRLS

Thumbs Up

Rosemount's Sophie Stramel recalls late father's support in the corner of the rink.



by [Heather Rule](#) December 9, 2023



Rosemount's Sophie Stramel. (Photo courtesy of Breakdown Sports Media / Rick Corwine)

The arena at Veterans Memorial Community Center in Inver Grove Heights was packed with fans for last season's girls hockey Class 2A, Section 3 championship game between Cretin-Derham Hall and Rosemount.

But when Rosemount's Sophie Stramel tied the game early in the third period and later scored 38 seconds into double overtime to send the Irish to the state tournament, there was one piece missing from the celebration: Her father, Dave Stramel, who passed away nearly two years earlier.

"He would stand in the corner of the rink," Sophie said. "And I would look at him after every shift, and he would give me the thumbs up or maybe the 'you gotta do better' face."

Stramel had a thumbs-up season last year, helping to lead a young Rosemount team to its first state tournament since 2011. Though the results in the tournament – a shutout loss to Andover in the quarterfinal, another overtime win in the consolation semifinal before a second loss in the consolation final – weren't what the Irish wanted, they're hopeful for another strong season in 2023-24.

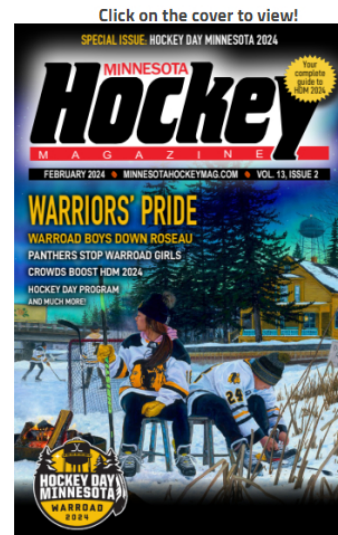
Sophie returns to Rosemount for her junior season and second year as a captain. She led the team with 15 goals and 35 points last season. She centers a line with her fellow captain, right-wing Cece Hanson, who scored 10 goals and 32 points last season. Stramel describes herself as a power forward with a pass-first mentality.

Through the first eight games this season, Stramel is tied for a team-high six goals to go with her four assists. She has a point in each game except a 4-0 shutout loss to Apple Valley on Dec. 7. Her most productive night so far was a hat trick in a 5-0 victory over Farago on Dec. 3.

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most productive night so far was a hat trick in a 3-0 victory over Eagan on Dec. 2.

Co-head coach Jennifer Williams called Stramel a phenomenal hockey player with strength, speed and smarts. Aside from those qualities though, Williams said it's Stramel's leadership that makes her special.

"She knows how to lead a group," Williams said. "She's inclusive. She's great in the locker room. She's not afraid to speak her mind and speak up. The players on our team need a little motivation from her, she's the first one to jump in and say it.

"So, that's what I love about Sophie."

In September, Sophie announced her commitment to play hockey for Minnesota State University in Mankato.

Just like Sophie and Hanson are close on and off the ice, so were their dads when it came to watching their daughters play hockey. The proud papas always stood in the corner of the rink to talk hockey and watch the girls play.

Seeing their dads together was one of Hanson's favorite things, she said, adding that she and Sophie would just look at each other "and we'd giggle."

"Because up in the corner, away from all the other parents, would be our parents just giving us little signals to move our feet faster, find open ice," Hanson said. "They care about us so much. I just love their connection. It was so awesome."

Growing up, her dad, and her mom, Gretchen, were always Sophie's biggest supporters. Dave Stramel wasn't a hockey player; he played football for the University of Nebraska.

He died on March 19, 2021 at age 46. The night before, eighth-grader Sophie recorded an assist in Rosemount's 5-1 loss against Eastview in the section semifinals, ending the Irish's season.

In his obituary, it stated that most of Dave Stramel's free time "was spent at a rink or field doing what he loved most, watching his children play sports." Sophie's older brother, Charlie Stramel, plays hockey for the University of Wisconsin and was drafted by the Minnesota Wild this year. Younger brother Cooper Stramel also plays hockey. Their dad "had a huge impact" on all of their lives," Sophie said.

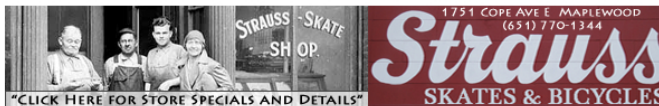
"Our postgame talks, he was very, very hard on me," Sophie said. "But I think that's what made me such an amazing player that I have become to be.

"He's obviously one of my biggest role models."

Even though her dad isn't in the corner of the rink anymore, Sophie can still look over and see Hanson's dad keeping the tradition going. Now instead of Dave Stramel, Hanson's dad is usually accompanied by different hockey dads from the team.

"He still stands in the same spot, and it's really awesome," Sophie said.

The original version of this story appeared in the 2023-24 High School Preview Issue of Minnesota Hockey Magazine.



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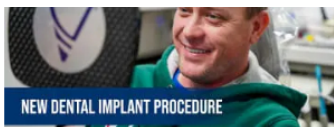


Heather's love for watching hockey started when the Minnesota Wild came to town in 2000. Before that, she caught a few Minnesota Moose games as a youngster, and more recently she's kept up with the Austin Bruins and Fargo Force. She's a writer, freelance journalist and blogger who previously worked as a news reporter in Austin and Fergus Falls, Minn. She enjoys watching sports and closely follows the Wild, Minnesota Twins, IndyCar Series, tennis and prep sports. Heather keeps up her sports blog [Thoughts from the Stands](#). You can follow her on Twitter/X [@hrule](#) or Instagram [@hrule](#).

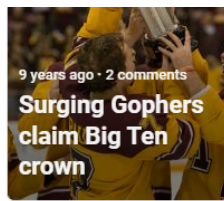
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