

Schools · Sports

# Conard Handles Hall, Luke Roux Scholarship Presented at Boys Hockey Game

December 27, 2023 · Add Comment



*Blake Ittleson of Conard is awarded the Luke Roux Memorial Award by Luke's family and his former coach. Also pictured (holding No. 16 jersey) is last year's winner, Gavin McGowan. Conard vs. Hall boys hockey. Dec. 27, 2023. Photo credit: Craig Rosenberg*

Conard goalie Blake Ittleson was honored in a pre-game ceremony at Veterans Memorial Rink in West Hartford.

*By Paul Palmer. Photos by Paul Palmer and Craig Rosenberg*

On a night that started with an emotional award ceremony, the Conard Red Wolves gave their fans everything they were looking for in a 7-2 win over the Titans Wednesday at Veterans Memorial Rink.

Before the opening faceoff, Conard senior goalie Blake Ittleson was presented with the **Luke Roux Memorial Award** – a scholarship in memory of former West Hartford Youth Hockey League and Farmington General's player Luke Roux, who was killed by a drunk driver just days after his high school graduation in June of 2022.



*Senior goalie Blake Ittleson of Conard is awarded the Luke Roux Memorial Award. Conard vs. Hall boys hockey. Dec. 27, 2023. Photo credit: Craig Rosenberg*

The award is given to the former WHYL player who “demonstrates Luke’s characteristics of humility, kindness, discipline, consistency and work ethic.” It is given by the Luke Roux Memorial Fund, which was founded by Luke’s parents, Carri and Steve, to help spread awareness for DUI prevention.

“Luke was very unique in his kindness and willingness to do whatever the team needs,” said Carri Roux. By coincidence, Luke’s father Steve coached Ittleson’s older brother, Evan, in the WHYL. “We are thankful to honor someone like Blake and to be able to spread our message.



*Conard's Blake Ittleson talks with Luke Roux's father, Steve. Conard vs. Hall boys hockey.*

*Dec. 27, 2023. Photo credit: Craig Rosenberg*

"It means a lot to me," said Ittleson of receiving the award, which was presented Wednesday night by last year's recipient, Gavin McGowan. "I've talked with a lot of his Generals teammates and they all say what an awesome kid he was."

In addition to raising awareness, hockey games are serving as fundraisers for the Foundation. Next Wednesday, the 2nd Annual Luke Roux Memorial Game will be played at Avon Old Farms where Luke played his high school hockey.

In front of a full house of students, parents, and former Hall and Conard players, the Red Wolves struck first when Braden Gainey scored on an assist from Julien Schneider just under seven minutes in. Conard - which boasts 10 seniors on its roster, compared to Hall which lost 12 seniors to graduation - was having the better of play and senior Aidan Emery scored the first of his two goals. Off a draw in the Hall defensive zone, Emery managed to score from the left side of Matthew Bonner's cage. But the Titans struck back 1:16 later when Zach Gerken's long range wrister floated over Ittleson's blocker to make it 2-1.

"We have a talented group of kids," said Conard coach Jason Olson. "They have a lot of skill and we have to put that into the team scope rather than the individual."

Conard is actually one of the favorites to win its conference this year and possibly make another run at the state title. They are powered by the strong defense that Ittleson anchors, and his d-men consistently close down the shooting lanes in front of him.

Seeing Ittleson win the Roux Award, Olson praised the goalie for his work on and off the ice. "He's a great kid that just does everything right. He is a leader without the 'C' on his chest."

Hall coach Colin O'Connor knew that it was going to be a tough slog with his very young team but said he was proud of what he saw. "I thought we played better than them at some points," he said. "We hung with them and they and their goalie are viewed as one of the best."

Fittingly, the game's final highlights came from the player honored before the puck drop. With just over 90 seconds to play, Hall turned up the heat and Ittleson made a series of saves, capping them with a glove save off a low shot that brought the Conard student section to its feet. "We played a little shaky in the first," Ittleson said after the game. "But we got back to how we play."



*Goalies Blake Ittleson of Conard and Matt Bonner of Hall lead the handshake line. Conard vs. Hall boys hockey. Dec. 27, 2023. Photo credit: Paul Palmer*