

# CHARITY GAME BENEFITING BE THE MATCH TO LEAVE LASTING IMPACT

👤 Ryan Cowley 🕒 December 11, 2015

"Since the beginning of my days as Kings fan, which hasn't been as long as I wish, I've seen the picture of this young man they call Tanner. The moment I first saw it, I was fascinated, and I needed to learn his story."

Those words were spoken by Becky Carpenter, a resident of Riverside, Calif., who was asked to take part in a charity hockey game this coming weekend to benefit the Be the Match foundation, which she enthusiastically accepted.

"I was honored, and thrilled," Carpenter added. But it was the work into organizing the charity game that made the upcoming experience worthwhile.

"In the past months, I have had the honor of meeting so many wonderful people and have been a part of so many people who are giving so much of their time, of their effort, of their heart and soul to bring awareness and support this wonderful cause. Why? Because we are family. Steve Raboin doesn't just have family by the name of Raboin, he has a huge family of fellow Kings fans. A family that loves him, a family that supports him, a family that helps him endure through his challenging times, a family that carries on the love for Tanner."

After a long battle with Chronic Granulomatous Disease, Tanner Raboin passed away in April 2011 at the tender age of 19. Yet, as difficult a time as it was not only for the Raboins but the droves of people Tanner had touched in his life, his family had already registered with Be the Match, an organization dedicated to finding marrow transplants. In fact, two days before Tanner's passing, BTM was partnered with the Los Angeles Kings as part of the team's Fan Appreciation Day at STAPLES Center during a game against the Anaheim Ducks.



*Tanner Raboin (left) and father Steven. (Photo credit: Diane Raboin)*

"Because of our dedication as Kings fans and season ticket holders," Tanner's father, Steven Raboin, told me in 2012, "We have met hundreds of wonderful people, who came to (Tanner's) aid when the Kings partnered with 'Be the Match' with the intent to find a match for Tanner. The night of the partnership, BTM registered 307 people."

"The fact that we have the potential to save a life is amazing. As individuals, we can do this in many ways. I want to ensure that nobody has to go through what my son did in his short life."

Since then, Be the Match has come a long way. By October 2014, Steven informed me that a goal of raising \$10,000 had been met and that 500 people were added into the registry thanks to his contributions. Overall, there are 12.5 million people in the registry.

As for the upcoming charity game, the senior Raboin could not be more proud of Knights of the Forum, which is the Kings-related Facebook group organizing the event.

"To see the Kings family mature and take interest in BTM is really awesome," said a glowing Steven. "The fact that they too are excited about advocating for the cause, it's really what I dreamed of.

"I always hoped that over time, through diligence and education, that our goal would become theirs. It's a blessing and it's emotional, but really exciting."

Fans hoping to attend next Sunday's game will be able to meet Steven Raboin in person as he will "help staff a booth at the game where fans can learn about Be The Match, get swabbed, and make donations" according to a June press release from BTM and Knights of the Forum.

Steven also told me that Kings' legend and longtime TV color analyst Jim Fox will serve as an honorary coach.

"It is my pleasure to participate in the Be the Match game at TSC," Fox said. "I appreciate everything Kings fans have done for our franchise and when I met the Raboin family after Tanner's passing, I was not only touched by their support of the Kings but I was so inspired by the stories of how much Tanner loved his Kings.

"The Raboin family and friends have come together through so many different avenues to keep Tanner's inspiration alive and the Be the Match Charity Game is an example of that. I applaud the Raboin family and Knights of the Forum for organizing Be the Match so that we make sure we are doing whatever we can to educate and get the word out about bone marrow matching."

*Alternate poster for Be the Match charity game presented by Knights of the Forum (Image credit: Rico Alonzo)*

Also, Jennifer Pope, Senior Director of the Kings Care Foundation and Community Relations for the Kings, has helped out by offering memorabilia with certificates of authenticity for silent auction as well as Bailey, the beloved team mascot, and the Kings Ice Crew.

"The Raboin family is part of the Kings family, so we are happy to support in any way we can," Ms. Pope told me. "Be the Match is a great organization that we work with throughout the year, so this was an easy decision for us. We hope the event raises a significant amount of money for them."

Said memorabilia includes autographed pucks, jerseys and stick blades from former and current Kings such as Zigmund Palffy, Alec Martinez and former 70-goal-scorer, Bernie Nicholls, who will be playing in next Sunday's contest.

If you would like to check out or bid on any of the items in the auction, please [click here](#).

"I've seen (Tanner) lots of times, understanding he was a huge Kings fan," Nicholls told me. "I always enjoy doing things for people, I always enjoy doing charity games for whatever cause.

"For most athletes, hockey players especially, they love to give back whenever they can, and when I was asked if I would like to participate, I obviously wanted to do that."

While so many have been involved to make this game a success, we would have to go back a few years to see who the initial idea belonged to: longtime Kings fan and a close friend of the Raboin family, Chris Brito.

"It was about a year after he passed that the game came to mind," Brito told me. "I had always thought of ideas, but between school and life things sort of got put on the back burner."

A Kings season-ticket holder, Brito said that he had spoken to his ticket representative about the idea. From there, the Kings organization contacted Brito about having a game.

"The Kings thought this would be a cool thing to do as a beer league game," Brito added. "They never thought it would get this big.

"The Kings were the ones that gave me that push to do it and talk to Andros (Gonzalez)."

Gonzalez, who is the lead administrator for the Knights of the Forum group, was immediately on board with the idea.

"Our group reps agreed to the game and it was to be a challenge for each group to see who can raise the most funds.

"I then assembled a team of people and experts from the group that have experience in events like this, and the rest is history."

While Brito and Gonzalez both had a strong feeling that this would take off, neither could have predicted just how much traction this idea would garner.

"Never ever in my mind did I see this game getting so big," Brito admitted, "I just wanted to do something for Be the Match, and honor Tanner who was a huge fan, and one of the bravest people I know."

With the game less than a week away, the final tune-up is in the books and the players, along with Steven Raboin, are eagerly awaiting the big game.

“The final practice went well,” Raboin exclaimed. “The teams are very evenly matched, as everybody seems poised and ready to go.”

Having lived in Eastern Canada for so many years, my allegiance to the Los Angeles Kings was based solely on the on-ice product of the team. However, in recent years, thanks largely to the emergence of social media, I have interacted not only with a plethora of loyal fans but with a family who has showcased on so many occasions how deeply they care for each other and what lengths they will go to to help one another. The saga that is the Raboin family’s partnership with Be the Match and the Los Angeles Kings is a prime example of said camaraderie.

Even this writer admitted to the senior Raboin that his knowledge of Chronic Granulomatous Disease and the Be the Match foundation was, at best, limited. However, thanks to Tanner’s story, that has changed immensely. While he is not a betting man, this writer can also safely bet that he is not only speaking for himself.

What started as a selfless cause from the Raboin family to an idea from Chris Brito to a tireless campaign by Be the Match, Knights of the Forum and countless fans has turned into a much-anticipated charity game that will turn a fun-filled afternoon into a worthy cause – a cause that may very well save a few lives.

From top to bottom, whether spearheading the campaign, playing in the game, staffing booths or taking tickets, every single party involved in making this charity game a reality ought to be proud. To not only help organize the event but to garner the critical attention the coordinators have has not been an easy feat. Of course, when success means not only keeping Tanner Raboin’s legacy strong but helping so many others who need life-saving bone marrow or cord blood transplants, the challenge in putting together such an event becomes secondary.

Despite the majority of those involved, this event is not exclusive to Kings fans but to hockey fans who are hoping to see a quality game. More importantly, this event is about people supporting such a worthy cause not only as great hockey fans but as greater human beings.

This writer could not be more proud to know the wonderful, selfless humanitarians who have made this charity game possible, which takes place at El Segundo’s Toyota Sports Center this coming Sunday, August 16, at 3:00pm PST.

For more information, visit [www.kotfcharitygame.com](http://www.kotfcharitygame.com)