

TheSpec.com – Breaking News - Tot turned away from rink gets ice time with Leafs



Spectator file photo NHL hockey player and former Toronto Maple Leafs right winger Darcy Tucker, right, meets his namesake three-year-old Tucker Patterson and his father Dave at a golf tournament fundraiser for mitochondria disease research at the Carlisle Golf and Country Club last summer.

RACHEL DE LAZZER
THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR
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Little Tucker Patterson will live many a child's dream when he and his family get to watch the Leafs practice on Tuesday.

After his mother was told no wheelchairs were allowed on the ice at a Hamilton arena for a Sunday skate, the Toronto Maple Leafs wanted to give the terminally-ill three-year-old a special treat.

"They are going to watch the Leafs skate, watch the L.A. Kings skate, then hopefully we can get a couple guys to give a quick meet and greet," said Leafs community partnerships representative Jason Schwabe.

He says Tucker can also be pushed on the ice in his wheelchair after the practice at the Air Canada Centre.

Tucker is dying from a rare genetic disorder called Leigh's disease, which has taken away his ability to eat, talk and walk.

Tucker's dad, David, said they took him to a Leafs game a year ago and he had never seen such excitement on his son's face.

"We have pictures of him sitting straight up and just watching the guys skate around during the warm-up," David said. "It was just awesome to see how excited he was and how into the hockey he was.

"I don't know if he'll have that same (response) the way he is now because his sight has decreased."

A story about Tucker being turned away from the arena ran in The Spectator on Thursday. The city said the staff member who said no was wrong about the city policy.

The response from the community has been overwhelming, says mom Kari Patterson.

Offers include ice time with the Hamilton Red Wings and possibly a few Hamilton Bulldogs, and a skate-a-thon to raise money for research for mitochondrial diseases, including Leigh's.

Anyone interested in donating for the skate-a-thon can e-mail tuckersteam2010@live.com.

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