

Matt Tassone

Matt Tassone has spent six seasons coaching for the Northern Alberta Xtreme and has won two U18 Prep CSSHL championships. After playing his minor hockey in Fort Saskatchewan, Tassone was drafted in the eighth round of the 2004 WHL Bantam Draft by the Swift Current Broncos, a franchise he would play 199 WHL games for. Tassone was a sixth-round pick by the Dallas Stars in the 2008 NHL Draft and played a total of 196 professional hockey league games across three leagues.

JM: Let's start with what are you watching on Netflix or TV right now?

MT: I'm actually watching the Formula One racing right now. After (Brayden) Toma told me about it, I kept seeing his text messages and Snapchats about it. I checked it out and kind of got into it. So that's what I've been watching. Also 'The Boys' is pretty good but that's on Amazon Prime. So those are two shows I'm watching right now.

JM: Yeah, I had heard from a couple people about the Formula One series so I started watching it. It's really good.

MT: Yeah, it is.

JM: Are you in to F1 at all?

MT: I used to go watch the Edmonton Prix and liked it. My uncle races Sprint cars so I've always kind of enjoyed racing. I was able to go watch NASCAR when I played down in the states, so I've always been into it and around it. I wouldn't say that I'm a massive fan, but I definitely enjoy watching it

JM: So that's kind of what you watch on Netflix and TV. What else do you do in your spare time or in the offseason?

MT: Biggest thing would be my little ones, they definitely take up a lot of my time having a five-year-old, a three-year-old, and a newborn. My oldest boy started getting into sports so the biggest thing is going to camps in the summer with him, or playing soccer. Both my daughter and him are in soccer now too so they take up my spare time. One of Tayden's and Braea's favourite things to do is to go finishing and camping. That's always a good time.

JM: What are you most excited to do once COVID is gone and we get back to normal?

MT: There's a laundry list of things. Obviously from a personal side of things and the business side I'm looking forward to being able to go into the rink and play games and have that competition, and compete, and have that energy again. But probably just for my family sake the last little bit I'd actually like to be able to get away and go do something in B.C. or in the United States or where ever it may be. But actually, going somewhere and just relaxing and soaking up the sun and enjoying time with my family that way. So that's probably my number one thing I'm looking forward to, to be honest.

JM: You've mentioned your family a lot, paint me a picture of the family live and pets and stuff like that.

MT: I've got a busy household. So, I've been with my wife for 11 years now. We have a five-year-old boy, a three-year-old girl, as well as a newborn who is six weeks, so busy house. We have two 12-year-old dogs, as well as Tayden has his frogs and fish too. My one sister is my neighbor and my other sisters actually lives in the community as well. Maybe it's Italian thing where you live very close to family but it's nice having them so close. It's awesome when it comes to just having family around my kids. I think that's important. They take them for bike rides and walks and they're awesome with the kids.

JM: Did you grew up in the Edmonton area?

MT: I did, Edmonton born and raised. So, I grew up here, lived here all of my life, moved out to St. Albert when I was 10, but always lived in the area.

JM: You kind of talked about going to B.C. and travelling. Where's your favorite place to travel?

MT: Favorite place? I enjoy Vegas to be honest. But if it was a family vacation, it would probably be Italy. I still have a lot of family there and we used to go a lot with my grandparents, they still have a place out there too. So as far as my favourite place to visit, Italy would be it. It's a pretty relaxed place, it's enjoyable, really beautiful. It's good to take family. But if it had to be a personal choice with maybe myself, or my wife, or buddies, I would say probably Vegas to be honest.

JM: And then maybe somewhere you haven't been, like a dream vacation, as well as a dream place to live if you weren't tied up with hockey?

MT: If I wasn't tied up with hockey, I would honestly love to visit Australia. I think that's something that's on my bucket list. I've actually had a lot of friends that went, one actually lives there now. I used to play with him in junior and he actually moved out there. Went to school there, actually played hockey in Australia, and he still lives there to this day. So that's probably the one place I would go visit. If I had to live anywhere, it would be Hawaii.

JM: That's a good one. If you had any job in the world, but it can't be related to sports, what would you do? I know this is a tough one for everyone because everyone's whole lives have been sports right.

MT: 100%. If I could do any job in the world and it didn't have to be in sports, I think I would be glad selling surfboards on the beach.

JM: That's an interesting one.

MT: Yeah, I'll sell surfboards on the beach.

JM: Okay, I got one more about your life and then we'll dive a little bit more into coaching. So, what's something that most people or the general public wouldn't know about you?

MT: I'm a pretty open book but I like movies. That's probably my one thing. I'm a movie nerd when it comes to it, that's all I did in Junior. We were able to watch movies for free so literally; I would go see every single movie that's in theatres. Sometimes I'll go to a theatre and make my rounds and watch three movies that day. I'll watch every single genre, not picky at all, just depends on the mood I'm in. So that's probably the one thing I guess people don't really know about me. Now with kids I'm not able to do it as much as I would like to when it comes to movie watching. Tayden is finally getting into The Avengers and comic book movies and Spider Man movies. So, to be honest, that's been awesome actually to re-watch and go through.

JM: How did you get involved with your current role?

MT: I stopped playing six years ago and I knew I always wanted to stay in hockey. I didn't know if it was going to be more on the skill side of things or the coaching side of things. As everybody knows the hockey world is a small world so there's always people that you're connected too. An opportunity to work in the CSSHL and coach presented itself. I jumped two feet in and started my coaching career. I really enjoyed being a part of a great program and league. Ever since then, I've kind of stayed put but moved up to the U18 division from the U16 division. And I've been here ever since. So that's kind of how I got involved.

JM: What about the CSSHL model itself do you like?

MT: I always tell my dad if this was something that was around when I was playing, I would love to do it. One thing I absolutely love is the attention to details when it comes to a league standpoint, in the sense you're on the ice every day, you have your workout. It's a little more of that college or junior schedule. I think it does a very good job preparing players to move on. And I absolutely love the showcase part. Being able to go down and play three different teams, but there's about nine different teams down there. It's awesome for the exposure part. It's awesome to be seen by a lot of people and just that atmosphere always at the showcases is always fun. There's always a lot going on and to be able to see a lot of great people in the game. So that's one thing, absolutely.

JM: Best piece of advice you've ever got in life, and it doesn't have to be hockey related?

MT: You know, mine was always simple. My grandpa and my dad always instilled in me to have a good, strong, work ethic and always be respectful to everybody. That's something that it didn't matter what I did, if it was cleaning out the garage for my grandpa, or playing sports, do your best to make sure that you're always working hard as well as being coachable, respectful, learning and growing. That's something that my grandpa constantly instilled in me and still to this day, I pass on a lot of those traits to my young ones. My grandpa did all the hard labor work in the coal mines and did all that for a lot of years. So, he definitely has a different perspective on life and work ethic.

JM: That's pretty good. Okay, last one. This is like your favorite or funniest or just even most unique hockey memories?

MT: God man to be honest, there's a lot of good ones. I don't know. Probably honestly, one of my best memories coaching wise, and I know it's been a short career in that sense, but probably winning CSSHL titles and just the boys starting a tradition of jumping into the lake with the trophy after they won. So that's something that they did every single year that we won in the league. That's something I will always remember, just seeing 20 guys sprinting into the water with the trophy. So, I think that's probably one of my best coaching memories. Personally, I played in a lot of good places and you're able to do a lot of amazing things with teammates. But one memory that sticks out to me was we're having a tough time and a tough stretch of games, we got to the rink thinking it's going to be a tough day ahead of us with our coach. And our coach kind of played the game a bit as well so, I remember him throwing down his credit card and telling us to leave the rink and go enjoy the day with each other. We ending up going to a rec room and out for supper. So, we literally went there, played games, bowled, the captain's kind of took us out on coaches' dime so that's a memory I have. After that we went on a seven or eight game win streak so got us back to where we needed too. But it always stuck out to me, it was easy to continue breaking us down and having tough practices but he took more of a holistic approach and cleared our mind and got us closer together. Just seeing 20 guys between the ages of 20-37 just being kids again and resetting ourselves. That's something I will always remember.