

Reid, Nanne to serve as Hockey Day ambassadors in Kuwait

Nanne and Reid are joining the Fox Sports crew to share Minnesota festivities with troops in Kuwait.

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North Stars players Lou Nanne, Tom Reid, J.P. Parise and Murray Oliver took a USO tour to Vietnam in 1972.

“Quite a few stories and a great time. It was quite the foursome. There are two of us left,” Reid said this week, shaking his head, “so we’ll toast to J.P. and Muzz [Oliver, who died in December] while in Kuwait.”

Immediately after delivering the eulogy at Parise’s celebration of life service Friday, Reid hustled to a waiting car, jumped in with Nanne and jetted to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport with the help of a police escort to

catch a flight to Amsterdam, then a connection to Kuwait.

They're expected to arrive at 9 p.m. Arabia Standard Time, or noon Minnesota time, on Saturday. A military chaperon was to then bring them to Camp Buehring, in the Kuwaiti desert about 25 miles from the Iraqi border.

There, they will join a group that includes Fox Sports North's Jamie Hersch and KFAN's Dan Barreiro, who will bring Hockey Day Minnesota festivities to the Minnesota National Guard in Kuwait.

"It's to let the troops know how much we appreciate them," Nanne said.

Back in St. Paul, with two VH-60 Blackhawks, a CH-47 Chinook and a C1-30 aircraft surrounding a refrigerated rink, four high school games will be played at Holman Field — the first time hockey has ever been played on an active airport tarmac.

The Gophers will play the Badgers at Mariucci Arena at 5, with the Wild facing Arizona at Xcel Energy Center at 8. All the games will be aired for the troops in Kuwait.

"It's always a great day," Wild winger Erik Haula, an ex-Gopher, said of Hockey Day Minnesota. "Sometimes even after our game at the U, I'd go to the Wild game. It's a great thing that they do. People in Minnesota, I know they love it. Some people go to three games in a day. It's a great tradition."

Festivities actually began Friday night with games featuring the Minnesota Warriors Wounded Veterans, a game featuring St. Paul Police vs. St. Paul Fire and the Minnesota National Guard vs. Canadian Armed Forces.

Wild forward Ryan Carter, a native of White Bear Lake, coached the St. Paul Police. His dad worked for them for 30 years before joining the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office.

"I'm buddies with a bunch of the players, so it'll be a fun time giving them a

hard time and yelling if they're not playing well," Carter said before his coaching debut, won 3-0 by St. Paul Fire. "I was a visiting player playing the Wild once on Hockey Day, and I just love how the state rallies around this day."

The nightcap will see the Wild searching for consecutive wins for the first time since Nov. 16 and 20.

Devan Dubnyk, traded from Arizona on Wednesday, will make his home debut after becoming the first Wild goalie to ever get a shutout victory in his debut Thursday at Buffalo.

"It's a great rink to play hockey in," Dubnyk said. "It's loud and exciting. Another challenge. It's always tough being the road team coming into there, so I'm excited to be on the other side of it."

It'll be weird for Dubnyk to face his former team so soon after being traded from there. He loved his short stint in Arizona after signing there last summer. After a difficult 2013-14 season in which he was traded from Edmonton to Nashville to Montreal and ended up in the minors, Dubnyk revived his career working with Coyotes goalie coach Sean Burke.

"It was a combination of going in there with [Burke] and [coach Dave] Tippett and all the coaches in that organization and them showing me the confidence right from the day I showed up there," Dubnyk said.

"It's real simple with Burkie. He's a big guy, he played a similar style, so it's about beating the play and being set for the play and being patient on your feet. He told me he had all the confidence in the world that I could stop the puck from there, so if we put in the work to be ahead of the play, then I can just go play goal and have some fun."