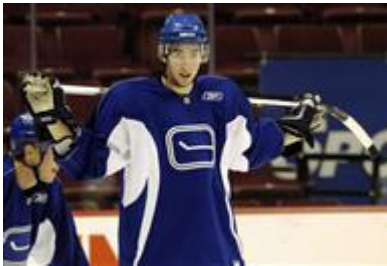


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## High wind cited in Canuck's death

Bal Brach, Canwest News Service



Mark van Manen/Canwest News Service

RCMP in New Brunswick say high wind gusts may have played a factor in the motorcycle accident that claimed the life of a promising young NHL player Thursday.

Vancouver Canucks defenceman Luc Bourdon, 21, was killed instantly when his motorcycle hit an oncoming transport truck on Highway 113 near Lameque, N.B.

"The motorcycle is unrecognizable. It's in thousands of pieces," said RCMP spokesman Sgt. Derek Strong. "The tractor trailer operator did everything in his power to avoid the collision, but it was already too late."

Investigators are considering a number of factors that may have led to the crash, including wind gusts.

"Wind is one of the things we're looking at in our investigation . . . the members on scene remarked that the wind was quite strong (at the time of the collision)," Strong said.

Traffic analysts will be conducting an in-depth investigation to determine the sequence of events that led to the death.

"We don't know how fast he was going . . . we're interviewing witnesses to see if speed could have been a factor."

Police confirmed that driver inexperience could have played a role in the crash as well.

Bourdon had received his motorcycle licence two weeks ago.

"Just because you have two weeks' experience doesn't mean that's the cause of the accident, but it is one of the things we're looking at," Strong added.

Meanwhile, the small francophone community of Shippagan, N.B., Bourdon's hometown, is in a state of mourning.

"I don't know if you know Shippagan," Guysma Hache said on the phone from there. "It's a very

small city - only 2,500 people. We are a French community. The kids around here, they dreamed to have a chance to see Luc Bourdon bring the Stanley Cup here. He was a hero. That was the dream of a lot of kids."

Hache coached Bourdon for seven years, until he was 12.

"In our house, we were very close to Luc. I used to have (an outdoor) hockey rink at my house. All the time, he was here to play hockey with my two sons.

"I lost a good friend today. I lost one of my sons."

National Hockey League Commissioner Gary Bettman said Friday "to honour a young life ended long before its promise could be fulfilled," a moment of silence will be observed prior to Saturday night's Game four of the Stanley Cup Final.

"The National Hockey League family grieves with the family, friends and teammates of Luc Bourdon," said Bettman in a statement.

"We send heartfelt condolences to the Vancouver Canucks' organization and the community of Shippagan, N.B."

The funeral arrangements for Bourdon are not yet finalized.

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