

### **Hitmen Players Study Medieval and Renaissance Literature**

**Calgary, AB (December 10, 2013)** - Twelve Calgary Hitmen hockey players briefly traded backchecking for *Beowulf* while pursuing part-time studies at St. Mary's University College this year.

The players recently completed St. Mary's introductory English literature course with an examination of John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*.

Goaltender Mack Shields said his first taste of university coursework was challenging. "The course was demanding and we studied a high level of literature. Our essays and writing were expected to be a lot better than they were in high school."

Shields said this intensity of study wouldn't be possible if St. Mary's wasn't willing to be flexible with the Hitmen's "strenuous schedule."

The course was delivered exclusively to the players through a special arrangement between St. Mary's and the Hitmen club. Classes and exams were planned around the team's schedule, helping the players earn transferable university credits that might come in handy in the future.

"The Western Hockey League offers players one year of university for every year played in the league," Shields said. "These classes just help us chip away at a degree while we are still playing."

Dr. Jocelyn Williams said this was "one of the most unique and therefore one of the most rewarding" teaching experiences in her 18 years as an English professor.

The players brought their maturity and strong work ethic to class, but left pretensions and expectations at the door. Although most of the students had never heard of Milton or *Beowulf*, Williams said they would never have pretended otherwise. "These students taught me a different way to teach and have renewed how I look at literature," she said.

The teaching assignment also led to a new passion for Williams, her husband and daughters aged 10 and eight. The family members are now regulars at Hitmen home games, fully decked out in Hitmen jerseys (all signed by the players, of course.) "We've become fans for life," Williams said.

Saskatoon native Shields, now in his second year with the Hitmen, said Williams helped bring Medieval and Renaissance literature to life. "Dr. Williams really helped us out a lot, by making the lessons friendlier for us. Without such a great teacher, it would have been a lot harder."

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