

Couple gets engaged at Austin Bruins game

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Dan Swanson knew he wanted to do something big.

So when he was thinking of ways to propose to his girlfriend, Hillary Tapp, he went with a location that was both big and meaningful: An Austin Bruins game at Riverside Arena, where the couple had their first date.

"This was just something that I decided I wanted to do," Swanson said. "She's the one that's horrible with remembering dates, so I wanted to make it memorable."

Swanson popped the question at center ice Friday night during the first intermission of the Bruins game. The two were randomly — or so Tapp thought — selected to play the intermission game involving a race to dress in hockey gear with a shopping cart. With the arena dark and a spotlight on them at center ice, their song "Just the Way You Are" started playing. Tapp had no idea about the proposal — until the song came on, she said.

"I thought I was going to win," Tapp said afterward. She had raced down to the other end of the rink with her cart. Swanson said a few words before popping the question, including and then telling the crowd, "She said yes."

"Totally unexpected," Tapp said. "We knew we were headed in this direction. I had no idea it would happen now."

They became the first couple to get engaged at a Bruins game, and also at Riverside Arena, according to Mike Delhanty, community relations director for the Bruins.

"At first, we thought, there's never been anything like this... how would we make it work?" Delhanty said.

The couple grew up together in Brownsdale and have known each other for 25 years. He now lives in Nisswa and works off-shore in oil field services. He's home for five weeks and off working for five weeks, but they talk on the phone every day. Tapp lives and works in Austin.

They reconnected when they happened to meet at an Austin church Feb. 5 of this year, and "everything's been awesome," Swanson said. She contacted him after that first meeting, and they met up for lunch at Kenny's Oak Grill the next time he was in town. They talked for probably a couple of hours, he said.

"You always hear that cliché, 'love at first sight,' or 'you'll know when you meet her,'" Swanson said. "It's certainly true."

Swanson knew he either wanted to go with their first-date spot or first-kiss spot (the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center) for the proposal. His other idea was to pull a banner behind a plane at the nature center.

Neither Swanson or Tapp is a big hockey fan. In fact, that first-date Bruins game was the first hockey game Swanson had ever been to. So why choose that venue and such a big stage for the proposal?

"I think it's just the fun of it," Swanson said. "I'm not going to lie, I've always been an attention seeker."

Swanson also did things the old fashioned way, by asking Tapp's parents for permission to marry her. Both sets of parents for the newly-engaged couple were at the arena to witness the proposal, and share some hugs and a few happy tears afterward.

"I'm really happy that they were here," Tapp said.