

Winnipeg Sun: Everyone who ignored Kyle Beach has blood on their hands

By: Scott Billeck

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How did we get here?

To a place where Kyle Beach — formerly identified as the victim, John Doe — in the Chicago Blackhawks sexual assault investigation, is the one apologizing to the subsequent victims laying in Brad Aldrich's wake.

"I'm sorry," Beach said during a 26-minute-long interview with TSN's Rick Westhead on Wednesday. "I'm sorry I didn't do more, when I could, to make sure it didn't happen to (someone else)."

Where are the apologies from everyone else?

We're talking to you, the people who allowed this tragedy to happen to Beach, a prospect in the Blackhawks organization and a black ace during the team's 2010 run to the Stanley Cup, who was allegedly abused by Aldrich, the former video coach in Chicago.

Where's the apology from Stan Bowman, who resigned after a damning 107-page report was released Tuesday by Jenner & Block LLP, following a lengthy investigation?

What about Al MacIsaac, the senior vice-president of hockey operations, who took the same way out, stepping down before he had to step up and face the music.

What of the other men in the room? Joel Quenneville, the usually well-respected NHL head coach, currently with the Florida Panthers, who knew all along and didn't do a damn thing to help his player.

John McDonough, the club's president? He turned the other way too, it seems.

And what of Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff, who was an assistant general manager at the time, and was in the same room with all of those other people of power on the night of May 23, 2010, when they were advised of the complaints against Aldrich?

Like everyone else, he did nothing.

You don't have to read the lengthy, scathing report. You merely needed to listen to Beach, fighting back tears, his voice cracking as he spoke Wednesday during a stunningly emotional interview.

"I felt like I was alone and there was nothing I could do and nobody I could turn to for help," Beach said. "And I didn't know what to do as a 20 year old. I would never dream, or you could never imagine being put in this situation, by somebody who's supposed to be there to help you and to make you a better hockey player and a better person and continue to build your career. Just scared and alone with no idea what to do."

Instead of handling a serious situation seriously, a group of hockey men seemingly did the only thing they could think of at the time — they swept it all under the rug and enjoyed their eventual Stanley Cup win. Because in hockey, winning means everything, even if that includes ruining the life of a player.

At all costs, right? And all the men in that room that night said, 'Amen.'

"I reported this and I was made aware that it made it all the way up the chain of command by 'Doc' (James) Gary and nothing happened," Beach told Westhead, the dogged reporter who helped bring life to a story the Blackhawks and all involved tried to suppress, and did so successfully for a decade.

"It was like (Aldrich's) life was the same as the day before. Same every day. And then when they won, to see him paraded around lifting the Cup, at the parade, at the team pictures, at celebrations, it made me feel like nothing. It made me feel like I didn't exist. It made me feel like, that I wasn't important and ... it made me feel like he was in the

right and I was wrong. And that's also what 'Doc' Gary told me, that it was my fault because I put myself in that situation. And the combination of these and him being paraded around, then letting him take the Stanley Cup to a high school with kids after they knew what had happened. There are not words to describe it, there really isn't."

And guess what? The cowardice of a bunch of hockey men, too enthralled with a piece of tin and their own career ambitions, allowed for another player — a high-school student — to become a victim. Another Kyle Beach. Another Theoren Fleury. Another Sheldon Kennedy.

Hell, on his way out, Aldrich also groped a Blackhawks intern, according to the report.

If only one of those souls in that room that night found the right bone in their body to make a decision that was correct, instead of the collective wrong one that was made.

Maybe that would have saved Beach from this:

"I did not talk about it, I did not discuss it, I didn't think about it," Beach said. "And now that I'm beginning to heal, I begin to look back and it definitely had impacts on my life. I did stupid things, I acted out, I snapped ... I did things that I never could imagine doing. I relied on alcohol, I relied on drugs and ... I'm just so relieved with the news that came out yesterday, that I've been vindicated, and I can truly begin the healing process."

Ten years of torture. Life-long scars.

And for what?

Bowman is now the disgraced ex-general manager of the Blackhawks. McDonough is now the disgraced ex-president and CEO.

Quenneville and Cheveldayoff? They have separate meetings coming with NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, with the latter's chat coming on Monday.

How will that go? Bettman made it clear in his statement that he needed to collect more information from the respective parties before declaring a verdict.

From the perspective of anyone who watched the Beach interview on Wednesday, it's hard to imagine how Cheveldayoff keeps his job.

Ten years on, Beach is still hoping the NHL will do the right thing — this, after saying they ignored him, along with USA Hockey and even the NHLPA, the union for the players who are supposed to have their interests at heart.

"I hope, through and through, that Gary Bettman takes this seriously, and that he does his due diligence, that he talks to, not only (Cheveldayoff and Quenneville), but Stan Bowman, John McDonough and anybody else that has information to offer before he makes a decision," Beach said. "They already let me down. They wouldn't investigate for me then so why would they now?"

It's a good question.

As is how two organizations — the Jets and the Panthers — can feel confident that their respective employees involved in the Blackhawks scandal would do anything different the next time a similar situation arose.