

"I'm just proud to be a Spartan."

Justin Abdelkader, Detroit Red Wings forward



FRANK GUNN/AP

Detroit Red Wings forward Justin Abdelkader celebrates his goal during the third period against the Pittsburgh Penguins in the second game of the Stanley Cup Final in Detroit on Sunday.

MICHIGAN MADE

By Zack Colman
THE STATE NEWS

The Michigan-made man is dying as we know it. As the state's auto companies file for bankruptcy and merge with foreign manufacturers, the Michigan-made man is disappearing from the nation's architecture. The car dealers offering low prices and zero money down will become less diverse on TV and radio airwaves during the coming months. Families will come home worrying about where their next paycheck will come from. Parents will tell their children to get out of Michigan and get out while you can.

But there is a hero for every drama. Even for the real-life ones.

So as this state continues to grip and cope with the losses of its economic backbone, the people at least have the Detroit Red Wings to provide 60 minutes of distraction.

But Michigan needs an underdog — but forward Justin Abdelkader is. As the National Hockey League attempts to market its game with Pittsburgh Penguins forwards Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin, it's Abdelkader — the Muskegon native and MSU alum who netted his first two

NHL goals in this year's Stanley Cup Final against Pittsburgh — who is taking the spotlight, and he doesn't plan on leaving it, either.

"I love staying in Michigan," he said. "I love playing here. I'm going to stay here as long as I can."

The call-up

Joseph Abdelkader's phone was ringing on Saturday, May 9. It was Justin.

Joseph Abdelkader picked up the phone, eager to speak with his son. It'd been two days since the Grand Rapids Griffins, Justin's team, were eliminated from the American Hockey League's Calder Cup Playoffs.

Abdelkader excitedly told his father the news. He was going to be in the lineup for the Red Wings in their second-round matchup with Anaheim. He was just unaware his father knew. "It was a proud group of six or



APPHOTO

Justin Abdelkader of the Detroit Red Wings talks during media availability for the NHL Stanley Cup Final on Monday in Pittsburgh.

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For an interactive map of Abdelkader's stops in hockey, visit stateneews.com/multimedia.

seven going up for the practice squad, and he didn't see himself playing at all actually," Joseph Abdelkader said. "It's funny, we found out Friday night and it got in (The Detroit Free Press) and it said Abdelkader (would take the) place of (Thomas) Koepcke and he didn't know it."

It wasn't too long ago that he and his family were sitting at a Buffalo Wild Wings in Muskegon, watching the coverage of the 2005 NHL Draft. Abdelkader had just won the Clark Cup with the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders of the United States Hockey

League and was about to head to MSU to play hockey.

"I got the call that I got drafted. I didn't see anything on TV, but I said, 'Yeah, by the way, I got drafted by the hometown team, the Detroit Red Wings,'" Justin Abdelkader said of being picked 42nd overall in the 2005 NHL Draft. "You can imagine how loud it was."

So when Abdelkader got called up for the playoffs, he grinded it out on the fourth line through series against Anaheim and Chicago. His status in the starting lineup was on a day-to-day basis. Muskegon followed every shift he skated — Joseph Abdelkader said he has to pinch himself

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