

## HOME SWEET HOME

### Casey McCoy returns from Togo after 3 weeks of quarantine/house arrest due to botched COVID test



Casey McCoy, left, was finally reunited with his daughter, Ellie, and girlfriend, Lacie, after his lengthy plight. Contributed photo

By Scott Thoma  
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When his feet touched American soil on Saturday evening after nearly a month being quarantined and under house arrest in Togo, Casey McCoy didn't bend down and kiss the ground. He didn't pump his fists in the air. Nor did he let out a primal scream.

"I didn't really do anything because all my moments had been used up," he said. "I knew I was almost home, yet I couldn't really process anything."

McCoy has been in the news for several weeks now since the wedding he and his girlfriend Lacie Packard attended in Togo turned into an unorganized, chaotic and suspicious turn of events caused by Togolese doctors, police and local public officials.

After over three weeks of be-

ing stuck in Togo in West Africa due to a conflicting negative COVID test, McCoy did the one thing that led to him eventually being released. He hired one of the best attorneys in Togo, Lazzare Sousupke.

It turns out it was money well spent.

"If not for him, I would probably be in prison over there right now," said McCoy.

McCoy and Packard flew over 6,000 miles to Lomé, Togo in mid-December to attend the wedding of his friend and boss, Tyler Grinder, who married a woman native to Togo who wanted a traditional Togolese wedding.

After the ceremony, McCoy and Packard took their required COVID tests and both results showed they were negative on Dec. 22.



Casey, center, poses with his mother, Lois, and stepfather Vernon Heald, after arriving in Minneota on Sunday. Contributed photo

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### Snow much work to do

Top photo: City workers in Minneota and around the area were busy cleaning off the streets in town following Friday's 10-inch snowfall. Mascot photo by Brian Jeremiason ... Photo left: Workers were cleaning the streets in blizzard-like conditions in Ivanhoe this past weekend. Mascot photo by Reba Lipinski

## Hennen begins job at Yankees' affiliate

### Working in ticket sales office with High Class A team

By Scott Thoma  
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Even though Isaac Hennen is firmly seated at his desk in the office of the Hudson Valley Renegades, the New York Yankees' minor league affiliate, there is a memento sitting nearby that shows where his heart is still at.

Perched on a shelf directly in front of him is a miniature Minnesota Vikings helmet.

"I've always been a Twins fan, but I don't have a helmet for them, so I put my Vikings helmet there instead," he explained.

He might be better off not putting a Twins' helmet in an enemy camp.

Hennen, a 2018 graduate of Minneota High School, graduated in December from South Dakota State University with a degree in Sports Management



Isaac Hennen is all smiles in his new job with the Hudson Valley Renegades, a Class A affiliate of the New York Yankees. Contributed photo

and Recreation. He interned for three weeks with the Minnesota Vikings' camp in Eagan this summer and has worked in marketing with SDSU in both football and basketball.

Hennen also gained valuable experience working for Dale Fier at the Heritage Event Center south of Taunton in the summer.

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## Bowyer, Gronke named AAA winners

By Scott Thoma  
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Lauren Bowyer and Tyler Gronke have been selected Minneota High School's Academics, Arts and Athletics (AAA) Award winners this year.

The AAA Award honors high school senior throughout the state who have a 3.0 or higher grade-point-average and who participate in League-sponsored athletic and fine art activities.

Schools may nominate one senior boy and one senior girl for this award, complete the application form and submit it to the administrative region secretary by the deadline date specified by the region committee.

Bowyer and Gronke will be among the region finalists. Two award finishers from each

section (one boy and one girl) will be invited to a recognition banquet in March and Minnesota State High School League officials will announce the four statewide AAA winners at that time.

All 32 section finalists will participate in an on-court ceremony during the Class AA championship game of the boys' basketball state tournament. The statewide award winners will also receive a four-year \$1,000 scholarship.

Bowyer qualified with a 3.582 grade-point-average.

"I enjoy my studies very much," she said. "I have really enjoyed my two college courses this semester. It's such a great opportunity to experience what's to come. Being a part of the AAA has given me a great foundation to leave high

school and be successful in the next steps that I take after high school."

Bowyer enjoys her time spent as an alto in the senior high choir.

"Singing or playing in the band really makes a person well-rounded," she said.

Bowyer qualified for the state golf tournament last spring and finished 18th in Class A. She recently signed a National Letter of Intent to play golf next fall for the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

"Golf is a passion for me and I have enjoyed being a member of the Minneota golf team," she said. "It's helped me grow in many ways."

Gronke is sporting a 3.33 GPA this year.

"Starting my freshman year, I didn't put the right amount

of time into my studies and my grades reflected that," Gronke admitted. "The middle of my sophomore year, I realized I wanted to be a better student. I took the time to change my study habits and my efforts paid off as my GPA started to rise."

Gronke has been a participant in band since fifth grade, playing the drums. He is also in the choir.

"I really love playing the drums," he said. "I find myself tapping to a beat in my head whether it be at the dinner table, in the classroom or in my room at my desk."

"My parents made me join choir after I got into trouble messing around in a study hall. I found I really like it and enjoy the class."

Gronke has lettered in baseball and wrestling for Minneota.



Lauren Bowyer



Tyler Gronke

"I am in a small school environment and feel the necessary involvement in athletics is important to keeping the programs within our school thriving," he said. "My time in ath-

letics has help me with social skills, learning to work together with my peers, and most importantly, gaining confidence for myself."

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