

Formenton, Thomas named to World Junior roster



By Jake Courtepatte

There is a good chance this year's World Junior Hockey Championship will have a touch of local flavour.

Aurora will have twice the opportunity to watch some homegrown talent at this year's prestigious tournament in Buffalo, as both ex-Tiger Alex Formenton and Aurora native Robert Thomas earned invites to this week's selection camp in St. Catherines.

Both players, at only eighteen years of age, are attending their first national camp.

"I try to work as hard as I can, and to be recognized for that, it's pretty cool," said Formenton. "I'm just going in excited. It should be a fun camp and hopefully, I can make the team out of it."

"Watching Team Canada and all the games on TV, that was probably the best part of Christmas every year. They've had a lot of success and to be part of this selection camp is special."

Getting his first NHL experience early this season in one game with the Ottawa Senators, Formenton has put up 21 points in 17 games since returning to the Knights. He was a key cog in the Junior A Aurora Tigers' offense in his first junior year in 2015-16. Thomas, a native of Aurora and product of the York-Simcoe Express system, has burst out offensively in his first season as Knights' captain to sit fourth in the league in scoring.

Despite his high-scoring prowess, the first-round pick of the St. Louis Blues in 2017 will have to work like any other to make the final cut, one of eleven first round picks invited to camp.

"With a talent pool as deep as we have in this country, we believe the 22 players eventually selected from camp will give us the best chance at bringing home a gold medal," Shawn Bullock, Hockey Canada's senior manager of hockey operations and men's national teams, said in a statement.

In his third season with the Knights, Thomas is well aware of the talent pool available at the camp, which consists of eleven OHLers.

"At the summer showcase it came in that (Juniors) could be a possibility," he said, "and I have to keep working hard and have a big camp to make it, in reality."

The 32 will be whittled down to 22 by final cuts next week.

Former teammate Victor Mete will also be a familiar face to the pair, loaned by the NHL's Montreal Canadiens to the team earlier this week, the only NHLer to be given permission.

The trio was instrumental in the Knights' run to the OHL Cup semifinals last season.

Canada kicks off their schedule with a pre-tournament game in London on December 20 against the Czech Republic. The regulation round opens, as is yearly tradition, on Boxing Day.