

## Aurora's Sikura among late cuts for NHL's Blackhawks

By Jake Courtepatte

The hockey world will have to wait to see what top Chicago Blackhawks prospect Dylan Sikura can bring to the ice.

The Aurora native was one of the final players to be cut from the NHL club's roster on Sunday, being officially assigned to the Rockford IceHogs of the American Hockey League, the Blackhawks' farm club.

"I think sometimes when you're out there you just kind of overthink a few things," he said from the team's training camp. "There's a lot thrown at you within these two weeks with the systems and everything and you kind of catch yourself thinking too much out there sometimes. I think you've just got to rely on your instincts and sometimes you've just got to play the game of hockey instead of systems and stuff like that."

Sikura was thrust back into the NHL limelight over a handful of preseason contests, taking to the wing while putting up a pair of points. Ultimately, he was the odd man out of a tough situation.

"Obviously I want to stay here," said Sikura. "This is the place I want to be. At this point it's tough to say what's going to happen. There's positives to both, obviously you see a guy last year go down and lit it up down in the (AHL) and come back up and sign a nice contract, so obviously there's some pros going to Rockford and you obviously want to play in the NHL. At the end of the day just control what I can control at this point."

The 22-year old Sikura spent most of three seasons with the OJHL's Aurora Tigers, before becoming a prominent piece up the middle for the NCAA's Northeastern University Huskies over the past four seasons.

Over four seasons at Northeastern, Sikura averaged more than a point per game, with 58 goals, 88 assists and 146 points in 137 games.

Sikura's college career ended with an upset when the Michigan Wolverines beat Northeastern 3- 2 in the first round of the 2017-18 NCAA tournament. He signed an entry-level contract worth \$925,000 with the Blackhawks shortly after.

He played in five contests with the big league club last season, flashing his potential in picking up three assists.

As for the assignment to Rockford, Sikura does not see it as a demotion, but rather an "opportunity."

"Yeah, it's something that kind of lingers around during this time of the year, but just trying to play my game and see what I can bring to the table," he said. "Obviously there's going to be some tough decisions to be made and that's going to happen."

"Every guy is working for spots, and I've put in my best effort and I'm confident I'll eventually get my spot."