

Aurora native lands high on NHL midseason draft



By Jake Courtepatte

Cameron Morrison's rise to the top tier of junior level hockey has been swift and precise, earning the attention of NHL scouts ahead of the biggest career move of his life.

Having received the honour of Rookie of the Year for the entire Canadian Junior Hockey League while skating for his hometown Aurora Tigers last season, it was inevitable that the then 16-year old take an early next step.

Morrison is now well on his way to his second rookie honours in as many years, currently second in league scoring for the Youngstown Phantoms of the United States Hockey League, the top junior hockey league in America. Surrounded on the leaderboard by players one or two years his senior, Morrison's outstanding play could affect his future in ways most Canadian teenagers only dream of.

In the NHL's midseason draft ranking report, released a few weeks ago, Morrison is listed as the 59th-highest prospect heading into the 2016 draft in Buffalo in June: meaning the possibility of a second or third-round pick if he continues his hot hands.

A spot opened up for Morrison on the left wing on the Phantom's top line when Kyle Connor, who cut his teeth in the USHL for three seasons, took off as a freshman to the University of Michigan. The first-round pick of the Winnipeg Jets earned the USHL scoring title in 2014-15.

Though his OHL playing rights are owned by the North Bay Battalion, Morrison is sticking to his guns about following a similar path to Connor through the NCAA. He committed last year to playing hockey for the Notre Dame Fighting Irish for the 2017-18 season.

"I felt like coming down here would be good for my development for college going into next season, to really grow as a player," said Morrison, who has put up 49 points over 45 games so far this season. "College is a different schedule than major junior. During the week you just work on your skills and practice and play games on the weekend. I think it can really do a lot for me as a player and student."

Morrison, a former Dr. G.W. Williams student, spent the entire 2014-15 season with the Tigers, notching 53 points over 49 games while adding almost a point-per-game performance in the postseason. He called his time under head coach James Richmond, now an assistant coach with the OHL's Mississauga Steelheads, a "great experience."

"J.R. really helped me work on my skating," said Morrison. "He's a great skating coach. He gave me a chance to prove who I am on

the ice.?

On the recent buzz of NHL interest, Morrison said he and his parents are still happy with the NCAA path he has chosen over that of the OHL.

?You have to keep focused on your own game and be focused on playing.?

Named the fifth-best developmental hockey league in North America by [thehockeywriters.com](#), the USHL's reputation has been on the rise ever since its first skater was drafted in 2006. Since then, 251 league alumni have played in the NHL.