

Aurora's Morrison joins NHL's Avalanche



By Jake Courtepatte

Aurora's Golden Boy of hockey knew his name would be called at the NHL draft in Buffalo on Saturday: he just didn't know by whom.

It didn't take long for Cameron Morrison to find out in the early morning, taken 40th overall by the Colorado Avalanche in the second round.

The Avalanche showed confidence in the 6'2", 207-lb. centre, drafting him above his ranking as the 46th-ranked skater in North America according to NHL Central Scouting.

"It's just nothing I've ever felt before," said Morrison following the draft. "It's an amazing feeling. All the hard work kind of paid off—it's indescribable."

Colorado's director of amateur scouting, Alan Hepple, said in a press conference Saturday he was impressed by Morrison's combination of size and skill.

"We like that he's a goal-scorer," Hepple said. "Good skater. And the one thing we noticed about him was that you typically don't see 'under-age' players score in those leagues, he scored a lot of goals and did it this year at Youngstown. He's a pure goal-scorer that has vision and plays a hard and competitive game."

Morrison was Colorado's second pick of the draft, after taking centre Tyson Jost with the tenth pick of the first round on Friday.

Following a full season with the OJHL's Aurora Tigers in 2014-15, where the Aurora native was second on the team in scoring as a 16-year old with 53 points in 49 games, Morrison went south last season to the USHL to play for the Youngstown Phantoms.

There he impressed scouts as the league's Rookie of the Year, continuing a pace of over a point-per-game.

"I felt like Youngstown gave me the opportunity to develop into a great player," said Morrison. "They gave me everything I needed there and it was definitely a great league to be in for my draft year. They keep producing top-end players."

He also recently competed at the under-18 World Championships for Canada, where Canada lost in a shootout to Sweden in the bronze-medal game.

Meanwhile, the next step of Morrison's rise-to-fame is not the pro ranks just yet: the 17-year old is a freshman-to-be at the University of Notre Dame next season, where he will play Division 1 hockey suiting up for the Fighting Irish.

?I've just got to keep focused on what I've got to work on, keep focused in the gym, and make sure I'm doing everything I need to do to become an NHL-ready player.?

Morrison expects to go to rookie camp in the next few weeks when he visits Denver for the first time.