

Aurora's Sikura drafted by Chicago Blackhawks



By Jeff Doner

Aurora's Dylan Sikura has taken the next step in his young hockey career after being drafted by the Chicago Blackhawks in Philadelphia last weekend.

The 19-year-old forward knew he had a good year, but was still a bit surprised upon hearing the news.

'It's pretty surreal and it still hasn't really hit me yet,' he said. 'It was pretty cool to see my name go up there. I guess it's the start of a long journey and it's just nice to be recognized for the year I had and [for] our team. It's a good feeling for sure.'

Sikura was chosen 178th overall in the sixth round, which caps off a strong year for the Aurora Tigers' skilled forward.

He finished the 2013-14 OJHL season with 64 points in 41 games and followed that up with 21 points in 21 playoff games, which helped the Tigers reach the OJHL finals.

Being picked by a team that has drafted incredibly well over the past decade is a fact not lost on Sikura, but he said he had an inkling that if he was chosen it might be by the Original Six Blackhawks.

'I talked to them a fair amount throughout the year and a lot during the playoffs,' he said, adding that a scout had been out to watch him play throughout the season. 'As for the draft, I didn't really know what was going on, but maybe I had an idea of where I was going. I was kind of just hoping for the best and expecting the worst, but it's not the end of the world if it didn't happen. It was definitely a nice surprise.'

Sikura said he just stayed home back in Aurora while the draft was going on and periodically kept his eye on things. As the rounds wore on, hope started to wane until he noticed a couple of late Chicago draft picks still to come.

'When I saw Chicago had the next few picks I waited and then got a call from one of the scouts and he asked me, 'did you see who we just took?' Then we just talked about camp and whatnot,' he recalled. 'It was pretty cool.'

He will be attending the Blackhawks rookie camp from July 12 to 18, which he is expecting to be an incredible experience on its own.

He admitted to closely watching Blackhawks greats like Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews and Duncan Keith over the years and his

father is also a Chicago fan.

"My dad grew up watching Chicago," he explained. "He's actually been down to a few playoff games and said the atmosphere is crazy and they absolutely love hockey, so it's definitely a good city and a good organization to be a part of."

Born and raised in Aurora, Sikura has played Junior A with the Tigers for three seasons, where he amassed 134 points in 167 games. His success there under the tutelage of head coach James Richmond and the Tigers brass led to a scholarship to play hockey at Northeastern University this coming fall.

"Playing for the Aurora Tigers, when they offered me a spot in my first year, it was a pretty easy answer," he said. "It's pretty cool to play in your hometown and have the community behind you. It's obviously a good hockey town and we had a good year this year, so it was really fun."

It hasn't always been easy for the young speedster, however, and he said he looks up to his older brother, and former Tiger, Tyler for inspiration.

"He showed me the ropes throughout minor hockey. We both played in Aurora and then moved to York-Simcoe, but I remember he got cut the one year and it was kind of a shock. Then, the next year I got cut too, so it was good to have someone I could relate to and boost my confidence."

Sikura is now looking forward to showing his talents and learning at the upcoming Blackhawks camp, but also has his sights set on his first season at Northeastern.

"It's tough to say what I do from there, but getting an education is key, so four years would be ideal, but you never know what can happen if something popped out and they signed me," he said. "I've just got to work hard and see what happens."