

Aurora's Sikura named to Canadian pre-Olympic team



By Jake Courtepatte

National collegiate scoring leader, Hobey Baker winner, Olympic medalist.

All three are titles that could apply to Aurora's Dylan Sikura in 2018.

The speedy forward was one of twenty six players named last week to Canada's roster for the Karjala Cup, a tournament used to evaluate players ahead of the upcoming Olympic Games in Pyongyang, South Korea.

Just three seasons out from leading the OJHL's Aurora Tigers in scoring in 2014, Sikura's hockey career has taken off with the Northeastern University Huskies of the NCAA, leading the league in scoring so far this year as a senior.

He is expected to join the NHL's Chicago Blackhawks, a team that drafted him in the sixth round in 2014, starting next season.

Sikura finished sixth in scoring last year, earning him Hobey Baker nominee honours for the top collegiate player, and is expected to contend for the trophy again this year.

"We're thrilled that Dylan has the chance to compete with Team Canada," said Northeastern head coach Jim Madigan. "He's worked incredibly hard over the last several years to develop into one of the top all-around players in collegiate hockey, and to see him earn this opportunity is a testament to the effort he's put in on and off the ice."

If Sikura is successful in making the national team, it would be a heavy blow to the Huskies, who will be competing in the hugely popular Beanpot tournament at the same time as the Olympic Games.

"Obviously we'll miss Dylan's presence while he's away, but as a program we couldn't be more excited for him."

The Karjala Cup will run November 8 - 12 in Helsinki, Finland, and will showcase Canadian talent against Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Though making the tournament roster does not secure a spot in the Olympics, Canada general manager Sean Burke said the players certainly get an "inside track".

"We are bringing together a group of players who are on our radar for the upcoming Olympic Winter Games as part of our ongoing evaluation process, with the goal of fielding the best possible team next February," said Burke in a statement. "As a management group and coaching staff, our priority is putting the best possible team together, and we will continue to evaluate every Canadian player that's eligible to represent their country at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games."

Sikura is just one of two NCAA players invited to the tournament, along with Bemidji State sophomore defensemen Zach Whitecloud.