

## Aurora's Vierling signs with OHL Firebirds



By Jake Courtepatte

Not yet old enough to drive himself to practice, Evan Vierling is already thinking big in his plans for his future hockey career. The Aurora native, who turns sixteen later this month, officially signed a player agreement package with the OHL's Flint Firebirds on Thursday, committing to the team that took him second overall in the 2018 OHL Draft, behind only York-Simcoe Express teammate Quinton Byfield.

Vierling said it was "very exciting" to finally put pen to paper with the Firebirds.

"I'm so thankful to have this opportunity to play in such a special league and a great city. To see the amount of fans that came out for an orientation camp in April was unbelievable. The coaches were amazing and I know they're going to push me to become the best player I can possibly be. This means everything to my family and I."

Described by the official OHL Scouting Report as a "smooth skating centre that has very good offensive instincts," Vierling recorded 63 points in just 33 games last season as a member of the Minor Midget York-Simcoe Express before being selected second overall by the Firebirds this past spring.

Scouted heavily by major junior teams prior to the draft, it was Flint head scout Dave McParlan that took a special liking to Vierling, calling the centreman "a complete package."

He can score, he has explosive speed "reminds me a lot of Jonathon Toews. He's smart, and dangerous when he gets around the net." Vierling will arrive in Flint for training camp in late August, and will wear number 41 for the Firebirds.

Still at only fifteen years of age, the potential for Vierling is strong if history is any indication: for 14 straight years beginning in 1999, the player taken second in the OHL draft went on to play in the NHL. Also, since 2010, four of the last six players selected second overall in the OHL Draft became first-round draft picks in the NHL.

An exciting career still ahead of him, the young Vierling's trophy case is already packed: he helped the Express to three straight OMHA Championships in his four-year tenure as an assistant captain.