

How are our athletes from Aurora? Sports stars staying active in pandemic

During the pandemic, with chances of game time significantly diminished, we often find ourselves asking how Aurora's homegrown sports stars are faring in their respective leagues.

All professional and semi-professional leagues continue to be hampered by COVID protocols and what-ifs when a team and/or player comes down with the virus.

Who knows what will transpire out of all of this or how the rest of the year will pan out. But for now, let's take a look at some of our hometown heroes.

Derek Livingston

When Derek Livingston fully recovered from an ankle injury last year, COVID shut the whole world down.

"Since then, I've been able to do a lot more recovery and I'm feeling strong," Livingston tells The Auroran.

The Aurora native and Canadian Olympic snowboarder was able to slip back into his bindings last month to compete in the World Cup in Laax, the first competition back since the start of the pandemic and the first Olympic qualifier of the year.

In his halfpipe qualifiers on January 21, Livingston finished in sixth place. Two days later, when the actual competition began, Livingston finished in fifth place with 500.93 FIS Points and 45.00 Cup points.

"I honestly think that was the most nervous I had been in years; we had very few days on snow compared to years before. All that plays a big role when you're dropping into the first competition in 10 months, especially since it was the first Olympic qualifier of the season. Luckily, I was able to land my first run and that gave me a big boost of confidence!"

Livingston said he is grateful for the result and this puts him in a great spot to qualify for the Olympics.

"Currently there are only 2 more events on the schedule for this season, a World Cup and World Championships, both in Aspen next month," Livingston confirmed.

"With a lot of events being canceled this year, the qualifying criteria might change moving forward. Right now, I'm just focused on landing runs and making them count. If I keep making finals I think I'll be in good standing for the Olympics."

There are normally six to eight events per year. Livingston hopes New Zealand will open up their borders so he can head down south to train and hopefully compete more.

"I'm just so thankful that we have been able to travel, I know a lot of people can't right now and I'm hoping things start to return to normal soon."

Robert Thomas

Aurora's Stanley Cup champion Robert Thomas is sidelined with a thumb injury that will see him miss 4-6 weeks.

The Blues centreman last played on February 6 against the Arizona Coyotes.

In the third of seven consecutive games between the Coyotes and Blues, Thomas tied up the game at one-a-piece, jamming the puck through Darcy Kuemper's five-hole to tie the game at one.

In the same period, after just over three minutes of ice time, Thomas left and didn't return.

It was Thomas' first goal of the season. In 12 games played, Thomas amassed six points.

The Blues take on the Los Angeles Kings this Friday. Puck drop is at 8 p.m.

Dylan Sikura

The 178-overall choice by the Chicago Blackhawks in the 2014 NHL Entry Draft, Dylan Sikura is off to a nice start in the American Hockey League.

The 25-year-old Aurora native is now signed with the Vegas Golden Knights and is playing for their affiliate team, the Henderson Silver Knights.

Since his draft year, Sikura has played 47 NHL games, all with the Blackhawks, and had a great year with the Rockford IceHogs last season, posting 14 goals and 19 assists.

In six games with the Silver Knights this year, Sikura has four points.

The Paradise, Nevada club will take on San Diego Gulls Friday night.

By Robert Belardi