

A great season for Aurora's Rob Thomas

By Robert Belardi

Before the season was halted due to COVID-19, Aurora native and centreman for the St. Louis Blues Robert Thomas was showing signs of improvement in his second season in the NHL.

The Stanley Cup Champion recorded eight points in his last 10 games, including an 11-point month in February alone.

His lone goal in that spell came against the Chicago Blackhawks at home, back on February 25 to bring the Blues within one goal in the second period. A cross-ice pass from David Perron found Thomas alone in front of goal and the 20-year-old roofed the puck short side.

In total this year, Thomas has recorded 10 goals and 32 assists, along with a plus-minus rating of nine.

He recorded nine goals and 24 assists in his rookie season last year.

He's a quick skater, an agile forward with a nose for the puck and vision like a hawk down the ice.

According to SB Nation writer Dan Buffa, written on March 6, Thomas belongs in St. Louis for a long time.

In fact, Thomas was almost traded from St. Louis in exchange for Ryan O'Reilly to Buffalo on July 1, 2018. How different the roster would have been if he left.

Thankfully, the Blues valued him more than that.

The 20th overall draft pick in 2017 adds depth in the centre position that has O'Reilly and Brayden Schenn in the second and first line above him.

He is the third-line centre with Zach Sanford and Jordan Kyrou, as per Daily Faceoff, and is suiting that role exceptionally well for head coach Craig Berube.

There's a reason why he helped team Canada lift the gold medal in the IIHF World Junior Championships in 2018. There's a reason why he is playing well in the NHL now.

As for the Blues, the defending Stanley Cup champions are first overall in the Western Conference and in the Central division.

The Colorado Avalanche stand two points behind the Blues for the top spot.

The team also ranks first in the League for most goals scored by defencemen for the second time in the 52-year history with 45 goals. Only the Philadelphia Flyers and the New York Rangers are one goal behind the Blues for the top spot in that regard.

You know what they say: Defence wins championships.

The Blues rank in 5th for goals allowed, 4th in shots against and 6th in penalties. Behind the back line of captain and King City native Alex Pietrangelo, Justin Faulk, Colton Parayko and Marco Scandella is great goaltending from Jordan Binnington.

The Richmond Hill native is 30-13-7 with 2.56 goals against average and a .912 save percentage.

Also, in his second year in the league, Binnington has not shown signs of slowing down either, ever since being awarded the starting position for the team last year.

There will be a longer wait to see if and/or when the NHL year resumes. Until then, Thomas and the Blues have had an exceptional year thus far in their title defence.