

Aurora Tiger rookie and leading goal scorer Andreas Mikrogiannakis commits to the Rochester Institute of Technology Tigers

Andreas Mikrogiannakis's commitment to the RIT Tigers last week was steeped in a high degree of familiarity with the NCAA Division 1 school.

His brother, Dimitri, is the captain of this year's RIT squad and entering his final year of NCAA eligibility.

After eleven games of OJHL eligibility, the younger Mikrogiannakis is the Aurora Tigers' leading goal scorer and offered myriad reasons for his post-secondary choice.

"I've seen the school. Last year, I saw my brother's games. They won the championship and it was great to see the size of the crowds at the games. I've always wanted to be a D1 hockey player and I know what I'm getting into."

Mikrogiannakis's connection to western New York is evident. The 5'8, 152-pound forward disclosed what he is looking forward to the most about living in Rochester as early as the 2025-26 school year: "Going to university in the US and playing hockey at the next level, but going to Buffalo to watch the Bills and the Sabres is going to be fun, too."

The Honor Roll student "who accrued an 81% average in Grade 11" is in his senior year at Cardinal Carter CHS and "would like to earn a four-year degree majoring in Business or Marketing while playing D1 hockey at RIT."

Mikrogiannakis outlined his goals as a student-athlete: "As a student, I want to maintain high grades and earn a GPA of at least 3.0 and average over 80% in all my subjects. As an athlete, it's been all about getting to the next level and playing to the best of my ability. I'd like to play professional hockey after college."

One of four Aurora-raised players on the OJHL Tigers' roster this season, Mikrogiannakis has been a bright light for his hometown's Junior A squad.

"Mikro" as he is referred to by team officials and players "leads the Tigers with seven goals in eleven games."

The graduate of the U18 Markham Waxers' program described his best hockey memories prior to playing Junior A hockey for his hometown: "Winning the OMHA last year with Markham with all my teammates felt so good. The team was very close. We all got along so well. Eight or nine of us had played on the same team with U16 YSE so it was special to win with the Waxers."

He described the difference between the U18 hockey he played with the Waxers and the Junior A hockey he is playing with the Tigers: "The age difference in U18 is only two years, but in the OJHL, it's four years. The pace is faster, players are bigger, and there's less space to operate. This affects the intensity on the ice, too."

Mikrogiannakis liked his team's intensity last Saturday in Aurora's long-awaited home opener "a decisive 5-2 win over the Caledon Admirals" during which the Tigers fired five power play goals.

"It was our best team effort and win so far this year. Winning our home opener was so important to the team."

In addition to this team highlight, "Mikro" acknowledged a personal OJHL highlight from earlier in the season: "Scoring my first goal in junior hockey in my first OJHL game versus Stouffville."

The slick puck-handler and quick skater attributes his early success in Junior A to Markham Waxer Head Coach and former NHL centre Dan Daoust who played eight seasons for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

?Coach Dan helped me a lot as a player. The Waxers' coaching staff allowed me to be free to play my best game. There was always a great vibe in the room and during our drills on the ice. My skills matched the team's systems and Coach Dan filled me with confidence.?

Mikrogiannakis also expressed his gratitude towards the current Aurora Tigers coaching staff which is guiding the youngest roster in the OJHL. He noted the advantages of playing on the rookie-laden squad.

?Playing for such a young team has allowed me to play regularly?taking a regular shift is so important. The coaching has been very good and they're definitely making me a better player. Coach Tom [Milne] has helped me understand the junior league and how to be successful on the ice.?

The club's owner, Jim Thomson, explained how important the connection between coach and player was in terms of Mikrogiannakis becoming an Aurora Tiger: ?Tommy knew Andreas. He knew Mikro's ability. Every time Andreas steps on the ice, something happens. With every shift, he has the opportunity to make something happen for our team. The other night, he got creative when he shot from behind the end line and tried to bank the puck off the back of the goalie's head. Mikro is learning that in order to gain space in junior hockey, he has to stay wide and out of the middle. He reminds me of Paul Kariya from my playing days.?

Having your game described similarly to that of superstar Paul Kariya is high praise from the former NHLer. Thomson, who played with Kariya in Anaheim, also suited up with the LA Kings, Ottawa Senators, Hartford Whalers, New Jersey Devils and Washington Capitals over his nine-year career.

During our interview, the Tigers' boss was sorting through jerseys that he'll wear this weekend for a Capitals Alumni game. He complimented his leading goal scorer before exiting for DC:

?Mikro uses his skills that have been developed for him-- especially all the excellent coaching he got from Dan Daoust with the Waxers. He plays the game the right way and has a nice 200-foot game.?

In addition to Mikrogiannakis, other Aurora residents on the current Tigers' roster include Tristen Aben, Luc Warner, and Assistant Captain Jack Rispin.

By Jim Stewart