

Central York Panther Grad and Carleton Raven Erica Buckley earns berth on OUA All-Rookie Team

Aurora resident Erica Buckley finished her impressive first season with the Carleton Ravens by earning a berth on the OUA All-Rookie Team.

Buckley, who finished sixth in Rookie scoring with 7 goals and 5 assists in 26 games, was pleased by the post-season league recognition.

"I knew coming into my first year that it was one of my goals. All the work and effort, especially in the off-season and over the summer, paid off. My strength coach at Carleton was really impressed when I reported to training camp."

The life-long Central York Panther described her hockey highlights in 2025-26: "My first goal, against Ottawa, got the monkey off my back. It was a relief to get the first one. Another highlight was against Guelph, the top team. I got a great pass in the slot and scored. When I scored that goal, I knew I could compete at this level and the best part was we won it in overtime. I also scored the tying goal versus Windsor and we went on to win that game, too."

Buckley described the best part about attending Carleton as a first-year student-athlete: "In general, Carleton isn't a huge school, but it's not tiny either. It's perfect for me. We have built-in friendships on the hockey team which makes settling into a new school much easier."

When asked if life in Ottawa during an old-fashioned winter created any extra challenges, the rookie Raven was nonchalant about the daunting snowfalls in the Nation's Capital.

"It wasn't that bad, it was like living in Aurora. One of the best things about living in Ottawa during the Winter was skating on the Canal. A couple of rookies joined me for a skate, we skated from one end of the Canal to the other and had hot chocolate at the end. The ice was good."

In addition to enjoying the longest skating rink in the world, Buckley also noted that she likes the pace of life associated with being a student-athlete at university.

"The first couple of weeks were actually slow. It was mostly introductory work in my classes. It picked up during hockey season and I found I had to do my homework at night after workouts in the morning and classes in the afternoon. Keeping up with things was really important, doing my work as it was assigned was important with hockey in the mornings and classes after that."

As we chatted on the phone, the first-year Raven described her busy Monday during which she had a morning workout, Chemistry Lab exam in the afternoon, and was studying for a Biology Lab exam on Tuesday morning. During her reflection on her academic and athletic successes at Carleton during Year One, Buckley expressed her gratitude towards the Central York Panthers for preparing her for life at the next level.

"I was prepared for this by the Panthers, especially in my Junior years. [Head Coach] Steve [Dempsey] focused us on foundations and drills and developing good habits on and off the ice. The Panthers' environment was always competitive, and we were pushed to be better, but none of it was personal. We all worked to get better as individual players and as a team and Steve reminded us that we were being prepared to be great university players."

It appears that the recipe the Panthers have been using has prepared their student-athletes like Erica Buckley to thrive at the next level.

Panther Grads Cranney and Lunney excel in the OUA

In addition to Buckley's success as one of the top rookies in the 14-team OUA this season, two other Central York grads had excellent seasons for their respective teams.

Mikayla Cranney?skating for the Queen's Golden Gaels?won the OUA regular season scoring race with 16 goals and 15 assists in 26 games.

Abby Lunney?skating for Nipissing University?finished 13th in scoring with 13 goals and 8 assists in 26 games.

By Jim Stewart