

Former Express, Saint earns high draft praise after bronze win



By Jake Courtepatte

Alex Newhook has come a long way since his time on the rock.

The seventeen-year old centre has seen his name rise to the top of the 2019 NHL Entry Draft rankings over the past two seasons, now with the BCHL's Victoria Grizzlies after a three-year stint between the York-Simcoe Express minor program and the St. Andrew's Saints varsity hockey team.

Earning a bronze medal with Team Canada West at December's World Junior A Challenge in Alberta certainly helped: he posted four assists in the tournament for the red and white, who defeated Czech Republic 3 ? 1 in the bronze medal match.

It was a step in proving he was heading in the right direction, after being a late cut to the Under-18 team just a few months prior. ?Going into a camp like that, all that's really on your mind is making that team,? said Newhook. ?If you don't do that, it's motivation. Proving them wrong is something anyone wants to do when they don't make a team. So, for me, keeping it in the back of my head at all times as motivation is what I had to do.?

After putting up close to two points a game in his hometown St. John's, Newfoundland AAA program at the age of fourteen, Newhook moved to Ontario and got his feet wet in skating with the Saints program, before leading the Express Minor Midget AAA team in scoring in 2016-17 with a whopping 74 points in 33 games.

?Playing at home and going up through the ranks there was great, and I loved it,? he says, ?but for me, at that time, I just needed better competition and more exposure, and going to Ontario was a good fit for me.?

Skating in one game with the Aurora Tigers as well that season, something quite rare for a player just turned sixteen, Newhook made the decision to head west to the Grizzlies program.

?I was looking at options to stay in Canada, and the B.C. Hockey League is obviously a great option,? said Newhook. ?It's looked at as probably the best Junior A league in Canada and maybe North America, so, to go out there and be in Victoria, it's a great city and a great organization. It's great to be there, and I'm happy with my decision.?

It is precisely these efforts that has risen his prospective ranking to an ?A' by NHL Central Scouting.

?In your draft year, you're going to have eyes on you no matter where you are or no matter what's going on,? he said. ?Trying to get better every day, every week and not really worry about what other people think or what other people are seeing ? that's what I'm focusing on.?

He said seeing his name among those at the top of the ranks is ?pretty special.?

?To stay amongst those guys and stay atop of that class is definitely motivational, but it's something you can't really worry about too much at this point.?

He is already committed to play NCAA hockey with the prestigious Boston University program next season, a commitment he made at the young age of fifteen.