

Saints captain named to NHL's midterm draft list



By Jake Courtepatte

Though never a surprise to see a Saints name or two on the NHL's scouting, varsity Saints captain Matthew Stienburg's appointment to the list comes with an additional feat.

The forward from Halifax came in at number 179 on the NHL's Central Scouting Mid-Term Draft Ranking, an annual list released Monday that proves to be the pinnacle of draft eligibility among NHL scouts.

Stienburg is the only Ontario high school prospect to reach the list of 217 skaters.

After cutting his teeth in the Nova Scotia minor hockey league, Stienburg joined the Saints program last season in his junior year, playing at well over a point-per-game pace and showing enough leadership to swiftly earn this year's 'C'.

He says it is his work ethic and 'mental approach to the game' that helps him stand out from the crowd.

'I want to do whatever it takes to get better each day or to win a game.'

Eight points in seven CISAA games this season has been enough for scouts to take notice of the six-foot-one centre, who is committed to joining the Cornell University Big Red program next season.

He claims it was his development as a 'late bloomer' that ultimately swayed his decision to join the NCAA route instead of playing traditional Canadian junior hockey.

'College hockey gives me a little bit more time to grow and develop, but I think the big thing is for the education that comes with it,' said Stienburg. 'Getting the opportunity to play for a top hockey program and attend such a quality school like Cornell is something I couldn't pass up.'

Wherever Stienburg eventually falls in this summer's upcoming draft, that team will get a player positioned in one of the top developmental programs in the NCAA: Cornell Big Red has reached the NCAA finals tournament both of the last two years, and is under the tutelage of one of the nation's top coaches in Mike Schafer, who has headed the program since 1995.

'My decision to go to Cornell had a lot to do with the culture they have built and the team-first mentality they play with,' said Stienburg. 'One of the reasons I love hockey so much is the special bond you create with your teammates, and I think the culture coach Schafer has built at Cornell is all around that.'

Despite growing up a Boston Bruins fan, it is a former Calgary Flame and Toronto Maple Leaf that Stienburg says he idolizes as a Cornell grad.

?Joe Nieuwendyk. Being from Halifax we aren't as exposed to college hockey as much as the CHL but he was still somebody that I heard a lot about growing up because of all the success he endured at every level.?

Former Saint Alex Newhook, who spent parts of two seasons with the varsity program before moving to the BCHL's Victoria Grizzlies last season, also reached the list at sixteenth.