

Saints leave mark on NHL Entry Draft



By Jake Courtepatte

There was a distinct Sainthood presence at this year's NHL Entry Draft.

Three former members of the St. Andrew's College Saints hockey program realized a life's dream when they heard their names called in Chicago last week, the first Saints to be drafted into the NHL since Warren Foegele in 2014.

Robert Thomas was the first to go, taken in the first round, 20th overall by the St. Louis Blues.

"It's been a crazy week," said Thomas from the Blues' prospect camp. "It's been a quick turnaround, but definitely a lot of fun?it's exciting to know all the work you've put in over the years has paid off."

Self-described as a "smart, two-way centre", Thomas played at a point-per-game pace in his first season with the OHL's London Knights, also posting an impressive +41 rating.

A product of the Saints under-16 team and a graduate in the 2017 class, Thomas has also represented Canada at the under-17 level. Knowing the pressures of being labeled a first round pick, Thomas said it was the fans that really motivated him in his first few scrimmages at Blues camp.

"Just seeing all the people that are out there for just a scrimmage, it really pushes you. It motivates you to work harder in the gym, work harder on the ice to make that jump to the NHL."

The next Saint to hear his name was the captain, Morgan Barron, who became a New York Ranger in the sixth round, 174th overall.

"I am extremely honoured to be selected by the New York Rangers," said Barron. "It's a dream come true."

The Cornell commit spent the last two seasons with the Saints varsity program after coming from the Halifax minor hockey program, scoring forty goals in his junior season before being named captain for 2016-17.

"Morgan is a driven and dedicated young man," said varsity Saints head coach David Manning. "As a big player with outstanding skill, Morgan fits the mold of the classic centreman. He's equally adept at distributing the puck as putting it in the net, and doesn't let his defensive game suffer because of his offensive one."

Graduating defenseman Ryan O'Connell had to wait until the seventh and final round to hear his name, but it was the hometown Maple Leafs that picked him up with the 207th pick.

Though not on mid-season NHL draft rankings, O'Connell earned his way onto the list after an incredible end to the Saints season.

"Ryan is a dynamic player who is only beginning to reach his potential," said Manning. "To continue that growth as a member of one of the top programs like Boston University is quite special."

Also drafted was Aurora resident Morgan Frost, taken by the Philadelphia Flyers 27th overall in the first round. Frost cut his teeth in the York-Simcoe Express program before spending his Bantam and Minor Midget Seasons with the minor Barrie Colts.