

Thomas, Formenton named to World Junior roster

By Jake Courtepatte

Just minutes into donning the red and white for the first time, Alex Formenton made a case to stay.

The ex-Aurora Tiger, turned London Knight scored Canada's first goal of the World Juniors selection camp last week against the best in Canadian U Sports, an annual exhibition series to help determine Canada's roster for the upcoming tournament held in Buffalo.

"I think it was important to play well in my first game," said Formenton. "Obviously, you want to leave an impression. To get on the scoresheet certainly helps."

An impression he certainly did leave, as his was one of the 22 names left on the list come Friday following a grueling week-long camp.

Just two periods later, it was another homegrown talent who found the back of the net, when Aurora's Robert Thomas batted home a Kale Clague rebound, also cementing his name among the elite 22 to be watched by millions in only a week's time.

Hours before the announcement of the final roster, both added another point in the final game of camp against Denmark, a 5 ? 2 win that saw Formenton score the game-winning goal late in the second period and Thomas tack on an assist.

Neither forwards are strangers to the big stage. Both play in front of an average of just under 9,000 fans per night with the OHL's Knights, while Formenton has seen action in front of over 15,000 live fans in his short stint with the NHL's Ottawa Senators to start the season.

He is one of two players with NHL experience on Team Canada, along with King City's Victor Mete, loaned by the Montreal Canadiens.

Yet the IIHF World Junior Championship is a stage like no other for the teenagers. An iconic yearly event for hockey fans across the nation, last year's final between Canada and the USA brought in over 11 million viewers in Canada alone, averaging 4.2 million at any given time.

In all, 17.2 million individual Canadians tuned into the eleven-day tournament.

Formenton, who will be looking for playing time competing against a handful of returnees from last year's silver medal-winning team, is hoping his speed can impress both the fans and coaches.

"I think using my speed is one of my biggest assets," said Formenton. "Just using my speed on the forecheck and driving it wide." Canada officially opens the tournament on Boxing Day against Team Finland.