

Tigers d-man Locke commits to UOIT Ridgebacks



By Jake Courtepatte

Kyle Locke is capping off his five-year junior hockey career with a step into the OUA.

The 6'1", 207-lb. defenceman has signed with the University of Ontario Institute of Technology Ridgebacks for the 2016-17 season, enrolling in the school's commerce program while hoping to bring a big presence to the blue line.

"What I want to bring is just a big, steady defenceman that can jump up here and there," said Locke. "For the most part, I just want to play my position and be reliable on the backend."

Locke will be joining a club that is certainly on the rise.

Head coach Curtis Hodgins has already done wonders in only his first season behind the bench, with the Ridgebacks setting a program high for wins in a season with six games remaining on the regular season schedule.

"It's definitely exciting, knowing how young they are and how much they still can grow. I want to be a part of that, I want to grow with the team, and hopefully with that we can even break some more records."

A part of the Aurora Tigers' program since the midway point of the 2014-15 season, Locke has made his presence felt as a physical defenceman while also finding his scoring touch this year. Through 42 games this season, he sits fourth on the team in points with twelve goals and eighteen assists, while leading the team by a long shot with 90 PIMs.

In 84 games with the OHL splitting time between the Guelph Storm and North Bay Battalion, he racked up 84 penalty minutes.

"The way he skates - he's a very mobile, great skater and very strong," said Hodgins. "His game is probably more suited to the CIS level where guys are a little bit bigger and he can actually play physical because it's very tough to play physical in the Ontario Junior Hockey League with the amount of penalties that are called now. I think his style of play, the fact he's very mobile and strong will equate very well to CIS hockey."

Though the leagues may have their differences, Locke expects to see a lot of the same faces in the OUA.

"In the OHL I've seen a lot of talent, and I'm sure a lot of guys in the league next year have played there. With the OJHL, I got to actually go back to the basics, getting a chance to play a lot and play a big role. Hopefully that experience can help me."

The native of Aurora is looking forward to getting started with the relatively new program, first developed in 2008.

?I know a lot of the guys and I've heard great things about the program and the change room, so that's definitely a huge factor,? he said. ?It's close to home where my parents can come out and watch. It's a new facility, I love what they've got going on here and it's a good atmosphere I'm feeling, so I wanted to be a part of that.?